

# Alaska Girlhood

*R. F. Bartholomew*

Eden was a winter  
when gods skated the earth.  
They'd warm themselves by the fires  
that lit the man-high snowbanks  
bounding primeval lakes.  
Their shadows fingered the forest  
under the black eternal sky.

I was a child and remember  
the time before feeling died,  
deep nights when  
the auroras strode in columns  
across heavens so clear  
they crackled with danger.

And we were gods-in-making,  
following the paths they'd forged  
through the snow, sometimes to the edge  
of the known ice, sometimes beyond.  
Or, holding our toes to the flames,  
breathing the dry pine heat,  
we heard their laughter and their somber talk,  
drinking it in with wassail and hot milk.

In our infancy we knew all things:  
the sublime with the unspeakable, both  
writing themselves in our formative minds.  
We saw, accepted in our innocence  
which was not innocent but  
a great quilt of snow.