

The Eskimo

Pauline Lacanilao

Pauline Lacanilao was an Instructor at the DECL from 2012-2013. She was also a lecturer at the Ateneo De Manila University. She graduated with a degree in English (Concentration: Creative Writing) from the Montclair State University in New Jersey. Her work has appeared in *Kritika Kultura* and *Saved Magazine*.

"...coats his knife blade with blood and allows it to freeze there."

-- Paul Harvey, *Times Daily*, August 21, 1966

To illustrate sin, a pastor
I know recalled an article in
Which the author described
How the Eskimos hunt wolf:
They stick a blade frozen
With blood, handle-down
Into the tundra, and sleep.
By dawn, they find the wolf
Having done the gory work
On its own, beside a clean
Blade, dead. The wolf, the
Audience so concludes, like
The sinner, laps at death with
Greed and gets it. But I think
Of the hunter in his seal-skin
Tent, sliding the knife in pious

Ceremony, out of its sheath,
Dipping it meticulously, into
The vat of cold caribou blood
Hour after Arctic hour, breathing
Slow over his secret patch of
Ice, and I cannot charge the
Wolf, dumb savage, slave to
Its senses, with sin. No, the
Hunter in his hunger waits out
The night -- on any whim, may
Plunge the knife blade-first
Into the snow to spare a dog
Its life, or kill it quick mid-lick
To spare it a slow death, but
In the stillness of midnight
Chooses to look past the tract
Where opposites touch and
Fork into decision, and forges
Headlong instead towards
Himself. Daybreak drowns out
Every howl except that of the
Wind, as nature drops its
Consolations into the sea of
Red ice leaking out the wolf's
Split face, and threading
Through the hunter's heart.