

## *George Bilgere*

### SOLSTICE

The sad light of winter afternoon  
leans against the Sears store in its parking lot,  
the great, yellow cube of butter moving  
blandly under the clouds, the green script of Sears  
written on the sky sometime in the fifties,  
the people coming and going, their arms  
full of merchandise from Sears, the Sears  
employees, or associates as they are now called,  
neatly dressed and friendly, moving with confidence  
amid lawn and garden products, housewares  
and Sears lingerie, hefting Sears all-weather  
radials and tidying up piles of good-quality,  
reasonably priced work shirts and slacks,  
their movements across the ancient linoleum  
seemingly effortless, although I know  
from experience that their feet are aching,  
that their eyes stray wistfully to the big  
industrial face of the yellowed Waltham  
as they think of their next break, of slipping  
behind the scenes into the associate lounge  
for ten minutes to have a Coke and some chips  
from the vending machine, maybe a smoke  
if they haven't quit already, tilting  
a chair back, putting up their feet, dropping  
their chins and letting the mind go blank  
in the company of two or three other  
tired associates of Sears, sharing stories,  
making restful sounds, almost falling asleep  
to the hum and whirl of this great, nationwide  
retail engine that is fading now, downsizing,  
shuddering like a dreaming dinosaur  
in the last light of the millennium

but where, nonetheless, for now  
the associates doze, nametags pinned  
to their chests, safe in the huge heart of Sears.