



Photograph from Chronically Vintage.

Dennis Ross

Two Poems

Peggy's Trail

The bare cottonwoods hold up
the grey sky so it won't fall
and crush the big blue-stem grass

and prairie weeds, tan and brown now
with seeds having flown their nest.
Geese and ducks exchange gossip
across the lake nearby as I walk
the narrow trail into winter.

I hear a runner coming up behind
and step off to let them by. The crunch
of feet on dirt and gravel rushes past
and fades into the vanishing distance,
but no one is there, no fresh marks
on the trail, no red jogging outfit,
no lithe person out for a run.

The wind I tell myself or maybe
a too-vivid imagination.

Later the Tribune says that Peggy
ran that trail every day for years,
never missed, placed well in marathons.
She was killed by a car that morning.

Not Gentle

Now a cooling,
quenching oil on the red-hot steel,
a tempering of the metal
after the forge-fires of youth.
Now a sharpening and honing
of the blade,
preparation of the battles to come,

the gradual falling back under the press
regrouping
attrition
counter-attacks and sallies,
then the inevitable end,
surrounded
but sword still flashing
in the moonlight.

Dennis Ross's work has appeared in *Westview*, *Illuminations*, *White Pelican Review*, *Poetry Motel*, *Barbaric Yawp*, *Coal City Review*, and elsewhere.. His first chapbook, *Relatives and Other Strangers*, is available from Finishing Line Press.