

## POEM

### CHENA

1

(November)

(From GOD HAS BEEN LOOK-  
ING NORTHWARD ALWAYS.)

The crust of October waters  
goes down the Chena  
in little ice islands.

The King is sick  
and dripping yellow.

The sun arc lowers;  
The darkness thickens.

The gray lid of the sky  
is propped up  
by a pillar of yellow;  
two o'clock sun has fallen  
into a pit of crimson.

Islands anchor themselves  
on spits and sandbars.  
New crusts creep out  
toward the shrinking channels  
where the song grows  
throaty.

Night washes in, and the day  
breaks off its brittle minutes.  
The stunted alders  
shrink down  
into the rising whiteness.  
A wolf howls  
and the dogs take up the "  
chorus.

The Dipper has turned over  
and the milk flows down  
into white torrents.  
The stars drink deeply.  
The dance of the gods begins  
and the stars are washed  
in a sea of darkness.

—OLIVER EVERETTE  
Poet Laureate of Alaska