

# THE PROSE POEM: AN INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL

Volume 7 | 1998

**Tradition**  
Cristian Popescu

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## **Cristian Popescu**

### TRADITION

Ever since the No. 26 trolley began running, my family has reserved this very seat in this very car. Look at the little plaque with our family name. Here is where my father always sat, here is where my grandfather sat. They would sit motionless with a ticket in their hand, with a smile on their lips. Now it's my turn. Now I'm the one who maintains the collection of picture postcards of all the stops the 26 makes along its route. From my father I learned to paint the window every once in a while with clear nail polish to brighten the views.

When I decide to get off and see my wife, I place a manikin on my seat, a likeness of me, and I stick the ticket between its fingers. A manikin dressed in my wedding suit. And when I return, I find lipstick smeared on its cheeks from the young ladies who dare not kiss me in the flesh. Each night I bring my wife and children to the depot, I help them onto the car, and, perched on the driver's seat, I turn the crank and clang the trolley's bell on the hour until the first pale light of dawn.

Translated from the Romanian by  
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