

Maralee Gerke

Frontera

Small groups of people stumble
from the stairs of the *Fronteras Del Norte* bus
onto the parking lot of Martina's Market.

Standing beneath a "Welcome to Madras" sign
they shiver in ragged clusters of three or four,
smoking, drinking, eating burritos.

Skinny young men and dark-haired mothers
arrive in this dusty desert town carrying
the hopes of Sonora, the dreams of Guadalajara.

Suitcases and neatly tied cardboard boxes
are heaped around the knees of those
who wait for a cousin, an aunt, a promise.

Sleepy-eyed, some stumble back up the steps
and continue riding to Hood River or Yakima,
their *frontera* extending north as far as need.