

AWAY FROM YOU

Sounds of crickets and chickadees
 A wasp crawling on the inside of the porch screen
 Plaintive small whistle of a white-crowned sparrow
 Morning cicadas in the trees by the hot garden
 I think of holding gently a tight fistful of your black hair and kissing you
 A house chair left outside in the sun by the tomatoes
 You stood me before the doors I'd kept closed
 A jay honking and lecturing, won't stop, in the cedars — like me
 A huge black ant wobbling by as it carries another
 You have been the way that was opened for me
 Motionless planks slanted against the cabin-side and an empty tin bucket under them
 Against you I've limped till I could walk again and then beside you walked
 Till hurt and limping; and stayed, even when you did the hurting
 Whatever wildflower blossom you are, I'm still not sure of your name
 Weathered wood, new blooms, quiet peace, leaning tree, the open cabin door
 Everything, when I am in my thoughts of you, begins to signify
 I want to be, I want to have been, some of this to you

REGINALD GIBBONS

SOUNDS

A tree stood, once, among the ranks of forest fellows,
 Roots clutching earth like piercing falcon talons,
 Trunk upthrust to take his piece of sky.
 (As if hubris took shape in that tree.)

Within that soaring trunk, concealed from all
 But searching inmost eye, there grew a flaw:
 A defect of his wooden heart.
 So that, the higher and wider that he reached,
 The nearer he came to his destined fall.
 (Oedipus among the race of trees!)

With lightning crack the trunk splits wide
 And in the top begins a sigh
 That turns to rushing, roaring sound
 As tree falls headlong toward the ground.
 (A sound heard at Pentacost, then lost.)

And ever since that headlong fall
 Have lovers of their self-Sophia
 In practice of the philosophic craft
 Debated whether, if no man at some place within ear,
 There was sound as tree crashed on ground.
 (I'm told it's not the fall that hurts —
 Only the contact with the earth.)

* * * *

Close to Olympia, once, in a grove of soaring fir,
 I sat among an overnight retreat of Baptist men.
 In the early morning hour,
 As we consumed retreat in barracks bower,
 I woke to a sound which shuddered the ground:
 A steady, pulsing, driving snore
 From a brother on sleep's other shore.
 Then, on this grounding bassoon beat
 (As when sound returns to the Ode to Joy),
 The music began in that sleep-filled room:
 A symphony of snoring men.
 Of themes begun, echoed, and answered;
 Duets, ensembles, diminuendos and crescendos;
 The thrill of obligatto trills... Music from the land of sleep.

I longed for some means to record that song
 So I could play it again for the awakened throng
 As they sat in stony silence before
 The voice of one who cried: "Brothers, we
 Are so cold. So cold..."
 (Can Love awake to the sound of snores?)

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At a funeral, once, I heard this plaintive cry:
 "She's gone; I'm all alone. And I'll be lonely 'till I die."

* * * *

I had a dream. I dreamed of liberating Love
 That carried us to Heaven's gate
 Where angels, all, communicate.
 Now tell me, you, who are so wise —
 Midst crashing silence, sleeping snore,
 And little, lonely, selfish cry —
 The sound a dream makes when it dies.

JOHN L. WIEGARDT JR.
 Nov. 30, 1930 — July 9, 1987



ARTIST UNKNOWN, FROM "50 YEARS OF SOVIET ART"

NONE BUT WORMS

Oh, all the measuring instruments of mind
 begin to shrink as they approach the speed
 of light where young girl's thighs become extinct,
 consumed and swallowed up by uncreated night.

And that makes monstrous, those soft pastels
 of memory that taunt us in the sunset, nostalgias,
 the past stripped bare of solid pigmentation,
 and pain become a relic of desire.

Youth smiles back at us
 like a scarcity of dandelions
 and, oh, those sad farewells!

RICHARD SANDERS

DARK CIRCLE

My little one,
 they roasted pigs in Nevada
 as a test
 in the 50's
 and on the film you can see
 people with suits on
 in the confused pen
 and then on the vast
 stretching desert floor
 they slip the pigs into
 aluminum clothes
 holes cut in the sides
 and then they are placed
 into boxes on stilts
 all in a row
 and blasted with a nuclear
 blast to see how well their
 skin survives
 a plutonium wind.

So like human skin.
 So like suede on my shoes.
 So like the split in the
 avocado pit I keep above
 water to save,
 seeing the knotted thing
 inside that takes forever
 to grow,
 seeing my hair in braids,
 they wrap around my neck
 owning me.

I am a pyromaniac and
 my silken strands,
 ties for a Coleman
 lantern mantel.

SUSAN ANDERSON