

Literary Arts: Poetry

SEPARATE SOUNDS

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When summer hangs
over the cluster of houses down the road,
I like to lie still on the hill above it all.
Sounds drift up, bringing memories of distant summer days:
Hollow thumps of a basketball being bounced;
Dogs' sharp barks, softened by distance;
Cries of children who could be playing hopscotch or jumping rope;
The distinctive, not-yet-extinct clang of the cover on a metal garbage can.
Sudden snarls of a motorcycle starting up
fade to sewing machine-like growls,
that dwindle until they disappear.
Ladies' voices exchange greetings, probably as children are loaded into SUVs.
Unseen by me, in my mind the women are hanging clothes in adjacent yards.
The faintest beginning of a shrill buzz grows steadily, becoming strident,
And then diminishes until it is gone.
I am selfishly comforted; a siren that comes and goes without stopping
heralds hurt that is not mine.

(more)

Stringing together these separate beads of sound is,
barely heard but faintly familiar,
music from a radio somewhere,
tinkling tinnily in the background of my conscious.

Without thought,

or hope,

I strain to hear my mother's voice
calling me for supper.

But instead there comes only the lonely whistle of a train
approaching a crossing up the road,
and then a rushing clacking
receding into the distance.

I rise to return,

my first slow steps down the hill made swifter
by slips

and sudden slides,

and I lurch from the peace of the past
back into the present.

The separate sounds are, like the moment,
swallowed up by the cacophony of life.