

Bagatelle sans tonalité

by [Anthony Opal](#) in the [November 2, 2010](#) issue

I listen from the other room as slow bells ring,
as you take each glass from the water
washing it with the soapy canary yellow dishrag
that your mother knitted for us last Christmas.
And though I can't see your hands I can
hear the wetness like the sound of fingers
on a fogged car window, thinking about how
there is a certain beauty to the atonal, a certain
human quality to the arrhythmic. Like the trees
outside our bedroom which grow thirty branches
in every direction, or the clouds that move above them
in no particular pattern. Yet each and every summer
I will hear the sounds of small birds just before dawn
and later see the erratic transmissions of lightning bugs.
And so it is here, in this atmosphere. We wake up,
we begin to push the unseen weight, we shift
the glory, we do the dishes. And though the grand
rhythm is not of our choosing, it seems to be our
creaturely duty to show what this living sounds like
when the beat is missed or even remains unheard. This is
our rage and our subtle acknowledgment
that we do not feel alone as much as abandoned.