

# 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.