

George Hears Noises

Steve Shuman

The woman in the next apartment
yelps, loving someone over and over.
I want to hear her clear,
like a P. A. switch got left on,
but no, below my window
a car with bad power steering
angles in and out, driver cranking
the wheel, so shrill I can't hear.

Yesterday Sheila and I drove to Woodbine,
close to forgiving each other.
Our tires clipped I-29 expansion joints.
The radio said, "If you get lost,
come on home to Green River,"
but whatever we heard between us
went the way that radio tune went
when we drove under the power lines.

At seventeen, in Phelps' Park on a blanket
in the dark, I touched Sheila, first time,
under the elastic. She made sounds —
but mixed up now in my ear, with rubber
braking on asphalt on a near street,
the thud of car hitting a dog,
the high clipped howls sprinting away.
And Sheila's breath still in my ear.

I like to hunt Irv Yahr's pasture and timber
and I need to hear pickup tailgates
latched, wet foxtail and broomgrass
brushing my legs, flushed grouse
winging it. My shotgun won't wreck the sound,
but complete it — not the roar
in my ear at the shot, but the report
come back from the trees.

