

MORNING OTOLOGY

Poetry | M.P. Jones IV

Summer air condenses on the windows,
rattled as if by cicada screech.

When I was twelve my father stood
over the tires of an old scooter
we bought earlier that day
at a neighbor's yard sale,

filling them with free air
from the corner station
until the dry-rotted tires exploded from the pressure.

Now night's voice whispers
out of the ruptured membrane
between this world and the sound of silence.

The ringing ruined sex for Rousseau,
who heard it as death rattling
his ears, so he wrote instead, scratching a pen
across the soft palette.

The neighbor passes again
on the green mower.

Emperor Titus thought a gnat
had crawled in a nostril
to pick his brain as punishment

for destroying the Second Temple.

No oracle could forestall the madness

of that constant sound,
though they prescribed

Ibex tooth charms,

wild cumin and almond oil,

abstinence from wine,

opium and mandrake.

What is this space between
spoken and unknown, this smoldering
peal tolling like petals on the tabletop.

Darwin heard the sonorous note
when bedridden, suffering

a host of strange maladies
which afforded him world enough
and sound to stave away

"distractions of society
and amusement." When still,

locusts descend. Jaw swivel
like altitudinous passengers
without chewing gum.

When it is spring, I miss
the silence most, when it is summer,

when out morning windows,

song is in bloom.