

Transmission Redux

Sigman Byrd

Towering antennas, megahertz of cold
horizon beyond which all trouble blurs
or distinguishes itself, adjust, zoom,
recount the day's plush creases, the fetid shifting.
I listen, I am rinsed by the story,
Mountain Standard Time where the moon has
reached its nadir. But first the news: Baghdad
is burning; mudslides in Bangladesh;
where an estuary meets the sea
a floating dirigible. I am Sigman Byrd,
my life floods into other lives as if
an electromagnetic wave. In the reprise before bed,
in the yellow crackling of Texas, in the halcyon
days of 1974, I turn the radio on. America is
the frequency of Glenn Gould's piano,
a boisterous crowd when the center fielder
snags the ball, a voice in that crowd,
a ticket holder, customer, part of the backdrop
overheard, of all that is living. It hurts to be
part of the backdrop, the one imagined
in possession of deep pockets.
It hurts never to escape the broadcast,
to be the bait and bauble, plucked
from anonymity, the pale understudy of satellites.
I refuse all appearances in calendars,
the month of July, the Mariana Trench. If anything
is taken away, let it be the iron lung,
the false dawn, the woofers and tweeters.
I am the transmitter. In accordance with
the laws of twilight physics, I come here alone,
I transmit the message.
The message is: an asparagus boat has docked
in the harbor of delight; a bathysphere
is a type of Chinese restaurant in the blue
smoke of heaven. Awaken. Awaken and purge.
At top of the hour, I am all that remains,
so you may build from me a body, a shanty
underneath where the body can open.