

Karl C. Sandberg

## *SILENCE*

The sun is four hours high. The air is starting  
to stir from the south, heavy and dry with sun.

The birds are soaring high above and to the south,  
waiting for carrion. They circle without the  
least movement in their wings, as imperturbable  
as a slow thought in the mind, waiting for  
something on the desert floor to close  
its eyes and lose its vital heat.

So far above, how do they know when something dies?

I marvel at how irrevocably they wait.

They are a patient species.

I think they must not have the  
sense of time.

They are harmless, really, since they do not  
kill. Only what has already died, they  
pick clean, brothers to the south wind  
which I feel blowing through the creek beds,  
through the ribs of fallen saguaro, through  
the dry grass, picking things clean.