

# The Sound of a Going

*Nancy Hanks Baird*

There was one moment when he spoke to me  
and I knew his name,  
steam melting from the mercury,  
I saw his face.

Alone on the streets I have heard his  
footsteps behind me,  
a dry whistling in the leaves,  
a thickening of my shadow.

His voice roars on the waters,  
creeps upon the crimson bark.  
His is the crevice in my tongue.  
But mostly,

his, the lingering smell of linen  
in an empty doorway,  
a shiver in the dumb flame,  
the handprint creasing the blackened wall.

In our trouble,  
we squeeze stones to make them talk,  
wring out our rage at his silence.  
We sleep, longing for visions.

Our souls secret themselves in  
twists of meat and bone,  
lying beside our hearts  
in the long wait

for the sound of a going  
in the mulberry trees.\*

\*2 Sam. 5:24