

RUSSIAN BELLS

Carolyn Gelland-Frost

Konstantin Saradzhev was only seven
when he heard the one thousand
seven hundred and one
tones per octave of the great
bell tolling from the church tower.

Out of clouds of untempered frequencies,
gigantic bronze birds cried,
and he fainted.

Soon he could distinguish between
all four thousand of Moscow's church bells—
between two adjacent whole tones,
their half tones, flanked on either side
by a hundred and twenty-one flats
and a hundred and twenty-one sharps.

After the Revolution, the bells
were pried out of their towers like iron hardware.
Saradzhev followed them,
his entire luggage four
pairs of socks and two handkerchiefs.
He had composed more than one hundred symphonies
for bells now scattered, many lost,
beyond the ambush
of the prophet's ear
eavesdropping on the Lord.

RENDEZVOUS

Carolyn Gelland-Frost

Back then, all kinds of talk went on
between people and animals,
between rocks, trees, days and nights.
In winter, animals
swam up to their breathing holes
and offered themselves as food.
We thanked them for coming
and welcomed them to our family.

In those days, we felt an inexplicable
searchlight in our bodies.
We saw through mountains
and located lost souls.
We wrapped the sun's radiance in a cloth
so we could look at it,
and we received the likeness
of what we looked at.

Often, the sky's arms enfolded us,
and the lights of heaven
responded to our gentle
whistles and came closer.
Our rendezvous was in a landscape
that knew us,
and the earth, like a little ewe,
secured our hearts.

THE RACE

Carolyn Gelland-Frost

Thoroughbreds
roll the dice of their hooves
over and over.

Ventriloquists,
high in their stirrups,
whisper thunder to their bones.

Round and
round
the racetrack's halo

they chase
the smiling
god.