

## Long, Disconsolate Lines · *Jane Cooper*

*in memory of Shirley Eliason Haupt*

Because it is a gray day but not snowy, because traffic grinds by  
    outside,  
because I woke myself crying help! to no other in my bed and no god,  
because I am in confusion about god,  
because the tree out there with its gray, bare limbs is shaped like  
    a lyre,  
but it is only January, nothing plays it, no lacerating March sleet,  
no thrum of returning rain,  
because its arms are empty of buds and even of protective snow,  
I am in confusion, words harbor in my throat, I hear not one confident  
    tune,  
and however long I draw out this sentence  
it will not arrive at any truth.

It's true my friend died in September and I have not yet begun to  
    mourn.  
Overnight, without warning, the good adversary knocked at her door,  
the one she so often portrayed  
as a cloud-filled drop out of the cave's mouth, crumpled dark of an old  
    garden chair. . . .  
But a lyre-shaped tree? yes, a lyre-shaped tree. It's true that at  
    twenty-four  
in the dripping, raw Iowa woods  
she sketched just such a tree, and I saw it, fell in love with its  
    half-heard lament  
as if my friend, in her proud young skin, already thrashed by the  
    storm-blows ahead,  
had folded herself around them,  
as if she gave up nothing, as if she sang.