

*Wilderness House Literary Review 4/2*

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**Verner's Law**

*In the realm of Linguistics, and formulated by  
Karl Adolph Verner, Danish philologist, 1846-1896:  
a law stating essentially that proto-Germanic noninitial  
voiceless fricatives in voiced environments became  
voiced when the previous syllable was unstressed  
in Proto-Indo-European.*

The intimate discourse of tongues  
Streams forth from the caves of us.  
Our ears are rife with dings and dong.  
What rings the bell that saves us?  
Saves us from what, we sagely ask.  
Our abstract veins stand out with words  
We barely chew, before we risk  
Their brisk ding-dong on who might hear.  
Whether we snarl, or lisp, or growl,  
Subjunctives or indicatives,  
The language cops are on the prowl –  
We'd better watch our fricatives!