

Wilderness House Literary Review 12/4

Dennis Herrell
At the Podium

I was talking about something
when the wind whispered in my ear
a most serious secret
a gray thing happening my mind clinched
its fist

I remembered a figure of speech
saw an old man falling for grievous reason
everybody else walking past and beyond
there was no stopping he raised his hand for
help

My talk was interrupted by
people outside their huts some lying still
other sitting with heads in hands no food
no glimmer of light only the hopeless
hands

I knew I should continue talking
but the war kept serving blood men were in lines
for food and bandages leaning on empty rifles
a soldier with no eyes hand lifted holding white
flag

My mouth was moving without words
I could not materialize somewhere else gates closed
in the universe trolleys immobilized in San Francisco
subways died in New York termination no show of
hands

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Listen

Every time I raise my voice
and lift my head to speak
God is not listening

Every time I feel a want
and bow my head to ask
God is not listening

Every time I stand silently
and look to the mountain
I hear His words

Every time I witness a birth
I see His work

Picking Up Johnny

Police break down doors
begin the search for bodies
reporters gather.

Children dead in class
while a mother is driving
to pick up Johnny.

She is reliving
the pain and fear of his birth
but nothing like this.

Only two endings
she will go home with her child
or her heart will die.

The Subconscious

From the long-ago father
of my genes
over 99%
maybe

I feel your presence at those times
when I peel my toenails
groom hair excessively
snarl
with a quick show of teeth
watch
my son climb his favorite oak.