Even If It Did (Hampden-Sydney Review)

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EVEN IF IT DID

We say it didn’t but even if it did it’s not the way you think. It didn’t come with any kind of blessing attached, with birdsong or proper syntax or some cheap little freebie thrown in to say thank you, come again. If it came it arrived minus a piece or two depending on how we held it if we could hold it while looking for what we couldn’t even be sure was missing but know we didn’t lose. If it came at all there was no announcement, no rumble strip wake up call—we could have blown right by for all we know, convinced it didn’t exist unlike asteroid bits no one’s ever handed us or a menu someone has. Still, it didn’t have a name like Andrew Marvel or the Battle of the Bulge and if it did we would have changed it or pretended we didn’t know it or at least not advertise we knew it and that it asked us, actually popped the question though we acted like we didn’t hear on account of the river cresting and the busywork of expression. It would be different if we felt like it. We don’t feel like cookbooks or museums either or being consoled much less told to hurry up when we know what’s in the dark is right on the surface whereas broad daylight drives everything deeper down. As far as we’re concerned it doesn’t exist and so we attribute the unpealing silence to snow-stuffed bells, not cocoons filled with poisoned caterpillars; we make all kind of fuss over competing creation myths on grounds it never came to us, that it went that way or over there but never here.
We may have heard drumbeats, even shooting, 
throw in stadium fireworks, drag race tire shrieks 
but that is there and this is here
defined by its having missed us altogether, 
add to the fact our being here proves we are not 
just anyone who happens to feel like it.
We don’t feel like it because it doesn’t exist 
having never come to us but that’s okay
because no one is suffocating just now, 
no one is cutting themselves on a lot of wire
or playing the violin for the last time or getting 
lectured about personal responsibility
as other cargoes being fork-lifted by priestly
stevedores onto some sort of loading dock
are arriving express delivery without any regard
for feeling only to guarantee in no time
we are fairly aching with it and required
to comfort each other which becomes a kind
of worthy if not wholly satisfying passion.