

Merton at St. Anne's

By Daniel Holmes

Don't speak for me, I ask
 from a tool shed I've named
 for Saint Anne. I don't need you
 to bring speech to shovels,
 purpose to a saw known for felling
 twenty trees between sunsets.
 I have tried hard to be clear.

Stillness quakes here, a just-born
 breath picks up thorough trees
 and fashions wind. All I've done,
 or have allowed to be done in me,
 sitting on hard wood in a dawn choir,
 chanting – all of this speaks (I dare to hope)
 of a place beyond strife where first meets last.

The life of this people – my people – craves
 a stillness even these trees seldom know.
 The rage of American bodies
 has not escaped my pages.
 I have heard the Magnificat,
 the shouting and the killing bombs.
 I have tried to be clear.

If I am right and it turns out
 we should have done much more
 to instill this quiet wood in hearts,
 my request remains: do not speak
 for me, your unquiet Father Louis.
 The Spirit is now where it has been in you.

And if later some fearing poet
 ill-suited to his task tries

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to make flame from the kindling
of my distant scribbling and chores,
forgive him this hubris. He is lost,
one body among many who,
finding the present impossible,
listens through ages for a true note
struck to last, touching in kind

the wind-planted wood and the felling saw.