

How would you know?  
Because you once were young?  
Forget that. This is another day.  
The words they speak are as meaningless to you  
as the words you speak are meaningless to them.  
The pain they inflict upon each other  
is more than you could bear even in your wisdom.  
Simple acts—walking down a corridor, eating an apple—  
more dangerous than all your long-gone marches.  
Their middle school days are spent  
on the Ho Chi Minh trail.  
Their graduation procession is a steel strike in 1937;  
guns on every side, killing only the innocent.

Can you help? Are you serious?  
You built this wall. You drafted the slaves with your interstate  
highways  
and confined them with your tax policies  
and flogged them with your mandates  
from the comfort of your entitlements.  
You burned these villages. You fired the cannons  
for entertainment. You drank the blood of the victims  
for your evening cocktails. No,  
you cannot help. Not even in your death  
can you relieve them of the sorrows  
you forced into the crevices of their survival.

Better that you should not speak  
than to acknowledge your shame. In every word  
your spirit demands the limelight: mea culpa!  
I am sorry. "I!" "I!" Always and forever I, I, I.  
Better that you should not act  
unless your act is to spend what remains  
of your ungracious life  
cleaning up this vomitous inheritance.  
These are not your children. They are your victims.