

Attacking Panic

by Mathew Paust

As he burned he never moved a muscle, never uttered a sound, his outward composure in sharp contrast to the wailing people around him.

-- *David Halberstam*

No news picture in history has generated so much emotion around the world as that one. --*John F. Kennedy*

About a mile from home on my walk this morning
I had to pee so bad I panicked.

When I got back to my apartment I panicked
with an irrational need to eat the cheese Danish.

Right now, sitting here with my laptop, I'm panicking
trying to think of the next line in this poem,

and fighting a panicky urge to turn my head to see
in the lot outside my window who's slamming car doors.

Oops, now my sense of urgency is torn between focusing
on the assassin beetle sneaking across a pane of the window
to my front and the tendril of ivy waving at me behind it
from the edge of the building across the parking lot.

At least I've abated my panic about the "next line of this poem"
but now there's the next. Does it ever end? Do I want it to?
Is this the "...be or not..." crux of my "busy being born"
v. "busy dying" dilemma?

I know of one whose answer spans the void between conceit
and moral dominion, yes, goading me forever hold my pee.

mdp

