

Jeremiad

by [Sarah Gordon](#) in the [May 2024](#) issue

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“How dark and hurt and deep the world.”

—Sebastian Barry, *The Whereabouts of Eneas McNulty*

But how to help, to say nothing of being reconciled
to the fact of our present paralysis, the heroic desire for
purposeful life now strung on the clothesline, parked
in the garage, or misplaced, lost on that departing train.

The old empathies, bookmarks in our expansive
dreams, fired the paths of our youth—the heady
drive through the Alps, the spirited campfire disputes,
our promise of gracious service, echoing the strains

of the Gospel. Now, bewildered, we’ve lost the pace,
forgotten the word. Then we campaigned, knocking
bravely on strange doors of distant neighbors, calling
all to step up, step out, stand. Our blood ran hot.

Tonight we sit under a mute but generous moon,
not understanding a thing. How can this be, we say
to each other, our tongues thick from too much wine.
How could we ever have imagined this, the likely end
of our struggle and our children’s children impenetrable,
complacent, turning their eyes away?