

JOHN WALL BARGER

## **DREAMING OF A SMALL CALL FOR HELP**

One day in my middle age  
deep asleep beside my wife,  
I heard a grinding, thunder,  
Moses smiting rock,  
bone-shaking, loosening  
some unnamed certainty  
I'd taken for granted.  
I opened my eyes. It was  
my wife blowing her nose.

I shut my eyes, a snatch  
of my dream rises up.  
I'm perched on a branch  
of a leafy tree: two boys,  
bullies, on the path below,  
chatting. One gestures,  
a frog in his hand. A beetle  
crawls down my shoulder  
to my palm. The bully  
raises the frog like a talisman,  
squeezes. The frog calls out.

In bed again, overtaken by  
a smell—menthol? Lotion  
my wife smeared on her nose.

It was a memory.  
The bullies (both are gone:  
overdose; autoerotic  
asphyxiation) step away  
into the foliage.

My wife snores.  
I perch on the branch, alone.