

**Jed Myers**

## **White Fire**

The infant—near-bald peachy pate  
half in shadow half in light,  
in a room whose eastern wall's a plate  
glass fresco of midmorning in the lake country—  
lies on the carpeted floor in his one-piece  
blue flannel uniform, zipped into the wet  
and stench of instincts that will not abate

while he lives. He correlates  
a hand's drift above him in space  
with his vision. He blinks—the shape  
and shade of his palm and fingers persist  
against the white sky of the ceiling.  
He prepares, while it appears he waits,  
for the war that is always flickering

in the trees on the lake's far shore  
to get here. Each dusk, through the glass  
he sees the thousand small darkneses, crows,  
flying in over the water to gather  
in the high branches above the house—  
no one else notices. His mother,  
out of sight in the kitchen, stirs

the rice with its traces of iron and arsenic.  
The quiet hiss of the pot, the fine pop  
and gurgle of spittle that's trickled back  
into his reflex-wired throat, the hum  
of a mower crossing the neighbor's plot,  
drone of the three mosquitoes and one

black fly inches from his dripping nose—

these, along with the burble of hunger  
behind the shriveled umbilical stump under  
the tight teeth of his zipper, whir  
and rumble of a march. How like the soft thump  
and whisper of booted hordes approaching  
the highland border! His bootied foot whomps  
the floor—cadence of remote mortar fire.

How shall desire's tensions be discharged?  
I kneel with a white cloth to wipe the sweet-  
and-sour froth of spit-up milk off the pink  
and the pigmentless lanugo of his cheek.  
In the silver of his irises, that white fire  
flashes, as in the trees across the water,  
as the leaves, or swords, play the light.