

BRIAN JACKSON

The Snows of August

To Apollinaire's Ghost

It's snowing, Guillaume, across the frozen entrenchments
A sea of mud surrounds the maxim-gun emplacement.
The femur of a Hun juts from the wall of the escarpment
 some cosmic joker has hung a bandolier and shaving mirror
 from this lost and tragic skeleton.

Across the mist, I see the dead dance and waver
 Across no-man's land their bones bleached by the sun
 white against mud,
 a chiaroscuro of this abattoir beyond Raphael's skill
 beyond the skill of Leonardo
 Trading viscera for bones
All the spokes on Leonardo's wheel-splayed man are broken.

Here is winter in August, Guillaume.

That you wrote love poems to Marie, to Louise,
 and best of all,
 to your new love Madeleine.

Here is a new love poem, Guillaume.

You who made bomb bursts into sparkling and transient flowers
Who thought of walks on the boulevard of *La Chapelle* beneath the shells
whistling overhead
Who likened the chalk trenches to the ancient and beautiful walls of
antiquity
The *Don Juan of a thousand and three comets* whose Madeleine made
exploding shells into insolent nipples of heaving earth.
Who saw *cherry-color horses* and *machine guns of gold* and among
the roses, the severed hands of children.
To you, Guillaume, who left us when your head became marked
by the *Boche's* shell
and your poetry merged with another reality it could not overtake.
To you, Guillaume, who walked with the stars of your heart across the carpet
of the universe.
The snows of 1918 will last forever.

BRIAN JACKSON has been an itinerant scholar, attending the University of Kansas, the Jack Kerouac School for Disembodied Poetics (where he served as a teaching assistant for Beat poets Allen Ginsberg and Gregory Corso), New York University, Southern Illinois University, and the University of Illinois at Urbana and at Springfield. He holds a doctorate from Saint Louis University in trans-Atlantic Modernism. His recent scholarship explores the inter-relationships of visual art and modernist poetry, including Impressionism, Cubism, and Surrealism. Currently, he serves as Writing Specialist for the University of Illinois at Springfield.