Gregg Mosson

Letter by a French Soldier, 1916, Found at Verdun

I should’ve scribbled of this a week ago, but now we’re here:
The final road ahead—I’m told “The Sacred Way”—snakes
down through farmers’ fields to the rumble.

We are encamped at its mouth. Mammoth
lines of men file in, shoulder to shoulder
with those filing out. Marie, you’ll know
where I am when you read of Verdun. It was quiet
in our last spot. Grass sprung
in front of our trench. German machine-guns raked us
solely after supper. Well soon, I will be able to say
I came here, for this battle may end our trench life
if we can break these men. Now guess:
I picked up a lamb’s wool vest
on the way, from an old villager,
and chocolate—which I’ve stashed—
all for my necklace—the gold one Father
gave me. The wool will help me duck
winter frost in trench bogs
that’s coming. Don’t tell him though.
GREGG MOSSON is the author of two books of poetry, Season of Flowers and Dust (Goose River Press) and Questions of Fire (Plain View Press). He earned an MA from the Johns Hopkins Writing Seminars, where he was a teaching fellow and lecturer, and pursued a career as a writer and teacher, before studying law. His poetry and literary commentary have appeared in The Baltimore Review, The Cincinnati Review, Boxcar Poetry Review, and Loch Raven Review. For more information, seek www.greggmosson.com.