

The History of Armor · *Dennis Schmitz*

Gilles de Rais, so-called Bluebeard,
not called but occupied
by voices he cut from children at Black Mass,
does he seem our ancestor because he sacrificed

children, did the unspeakable,
a joy so involved that his silence echoed
his general Jeanne d'Arc who would not repeat
unto madness the order of heaven

that made her wear men's clothes?
a grown man doubled his weight;
he blistered, then callused over at every joint

for the sake of his armor.
women had no such protection.
the previous age's plague still clung—
field after field, sorghum & low wheat
rusted; a contradiction of weeds

bore down the riprap
granary walls. thin women eat
their way out of the sour grain
till they are soured, their skirts pulled
back winters to show fur & cloth

leggings. the church forgives them
the amputees & deserters
they gave birth to never forgave them.