

Coma · *Dennis Schmitz*

done with myself, I asked
to lie down with the stroke victims,
to be one with those who keep themselves
in being by concentration,
the war deaths who wake in a civilian eternity,

the army re-ups, the cancer-sufferers
who adore their own dying
for whom the fear of living again

blurs the fear of death:
a fatigue not with pain, but with habit.
already I've practice-slept

the Vietnam War through—
if My-Lai happens it happens in this unrelieved
dreaming that blooms white-haired

out of the brainlight traced on the monitor
by my bed—an aging the technician
waits for before he calls the White House

& Mr. Truman answers that
he remembers me as a boy spread
sleeping across a pew tired of the Lord

who let the Chinese cross the Yalu.
my wife has grown older
by the same relentless science that keeps her

awake. why can't I die
of this blindness rusted into my head?
what I once saw I saw unable to be moved,

a scapegoat, a secondborn—
in group therapy the last one to answer,
to make a memory. only the prosthetic

heroes can will to pick up
this world—sweating, they flail, they tap,
they pinch for it as it rolls

out of the therapist's hands, very small.