

LIEUTENANT GRAVES AT LA BOURSE

Face flat to the mud-earth, a soldier
sleeps. But no. You see,
clear as a flare
in darkness, a block

of saturated beige:
his moist foot, bare against the ground. This man
from Limerick
removed his boot
to pull—a corporal, smoking,
tells you—the trigger

with his toe. *The barrel, he says, was just
a cigar in his mouth.* Tomorrow,

billeted in La Bourse, the monsieur's daughter
lifts her gray skirt, unwashed
for weeks. You turn your eyes

to the field of poppies, silver
in the full moon.
She insists. She holds
the raised pleat with small hands
that remind you of soft dough.

There is a long gash, purple,
across her smooth thigh.
She bends to let the cotton fall
to her ankles. You begin to walk—
The Germans, their shells,
you say. *They cut down the poplars
like rows of spring tulips.*