

Bill Lantry

Dien Bien Phu

He holds her, in bent arms. His cigarette
burns its dry smoke through permed and perfumed
locks.
There's cheap scotch on his breath. His hooked mind's
blank
They're battling. And she holds the upper ground.
Almost he wonders how her tanks got there:
by sorcery or airlift? His troops blocked

he holds the ditch, like one in Italy
draws back like Hannibal, conceding Cannae.
And he's not here to battle, but descend
into the blazing pit, to purge this ring.
He asks his rustic orchestra to sing
like Banshees, while his elite columns wend

along the ridgecrest. Now his sergeants swear
on radios, the route is clear. Her ranks
untracked, pitch their homed rockets aimlessly.
The Czar, at Austerlitz, did not understand
the Emperor loved him. He halts, and frets,
pulls at the ring and, hardened, plunges down.