

SVETLANA BEGGS

**She-Child, Stalingrad, 1942**

*He is lying on a coat... just killed... Bombs are flying... And I feel joy.  
Smiling to myself. Crazy. I'm filled with joy because maybe, just maybe, he  
knew that I loved him...*

—Svetlana Alexievich

The loneliness of her war uniform is a dry  
Masculine green, not her size, but selfless  
In its service to lice circling the city of her thigh  
And the dead soldier before her before him  
Is a dazzle of an egg-yellow with a kiss underneath  
For death turns imagination into a mother

“Did you know of my love?” she asks  
The dead soldier’s only response  
Is a gentle nod, untying her  
Joy. Her happiness that he knew!  
So pure, so true, acidic and grim  
Spoilt milk’s yellow trim

I can’t understand how at this moment she is not me or you

**Svetlana Beggs’** poems and stories have appeared or are forthcoming in *Blackbird*, *Prairie Schooner*, *Dunes Review*, *CALYX Journal*, *Hayden’s Ferry Review*, *Pleiades* and elsewhere. She was the recipient of a work-study scholarship in poetry to Bread Loaf Writer’s Conference. A native of St. Petersburg, Russia, she lives in Seattle.