

The Student

The night the wolves came down,
the boy was watching, his mouth agape
like the wounds the pack
ripped in the flanks of his father's sheep.

He had never before seen so much blood
unleashed, meat torn from bone
and hanging in strips as the sheep
pedaled hooves in the dirt, struggled
to pull themselves away from the teeth.

His father came out the door behind him,
bellowed and fired a rifle at the pack
leader who turned and sprung
the fence, bolted across a field to the forest,
the others nose to tail behind as if
bound by a line that could not be broken.

The boy stood in the doorway a long time after,
stared wistfully toward the point at which
they'd disappeared as his father
stitched or slaughtered the wounded
and wondered how much of the farm
had been carried back into the woods.

The boy watched the moon boil overhead,
scratched at fly bites on his wrist,
licked his tongue along the edge
of his front teeth, then tiptoed
up the stairs and pounced into bed.

He hunts for sleep now.
He is counting wolves.