

We aimed our guns at him, this waif,
a schoolboy who should have been

bored to death in some dismal classroom, squinting
at crimped handwriting on a blackboard,

names from tedious years
carved into the desks,

ink-smearred loops and grooves:
Nigel, Stella, Austin. Herbert.

We pleaded, *Burden, take the blindfold.*
He shook his head and uttered

no, the word
piercing every conversation,

no matter what the subject,
no matter where you are, or what you've become,

whatever life you've gone back to, if you've aimed
a Ross MK II rifle at a schoolboy,

one of your eyes closed, the other
honing in on the white patch

pinned over the valves of his seventeen-
year-old heart...