

Source

I'd been traveling all day, driving north ?smaller and smaller roads, clapboard houses startled awake by the new green around them? when I saw three horses in a fenced field by the narrow highway's edge: white horses, two uniformly snowy, the other speckled as though he'd been rolling in flakes of rust. They were of graduated sizes?small, medium, large?and two stood to watch while the smallest waded up to his knees in a shallow pond, tossing his head and taking ?it seemed unmistakable? delight in the cool water around his hooves and ankles. I kept on driving, I went into town to visit the bookstores and the coffee bar and looked at the new novels and the volumes of poetry, but all the time it was horses I was thinking of, and when I drove back to find them, the three companions left off whatever it was they were playing at and came nearer the wire fence? I'd pulled over onto the grassy shoulder of the highway?to see what I'd brought them. Experience is an intact fruit, core and flesh and rind of it; once cut open, entered, it can't be the same, can it? Though that is the dream of the poem: as if we could look out through that moment's blushed skin. They wandered toward the fence. The tallest turned toward me; I was moved by the verticality of her face, elongated reach from the tips of her ears down to white eyelids and lashes, the pink articulation of nostrils, wind stirring the strands of her mane a little to frame the gaze in which she fixed me. She was the bold one; the others stood at a slight distance while she held me in her attention. Put your tongue to the green-flecked peel of it, reader, and taste it from the inside: would you believe me if I said that beneath them a clear channel ran from the three horses to the place they'd come from, the cool womb of nothing, cave at the heart of the world, deep and resilient and firmly set at the core of things? Not emptiness, not negation, but a generous, cold nothing: the breathing space out of which new shoots are propelled to the grazing mouths, out of which the horses themselves are tendered into the new light. The poem wants the impossible; the poem wants a name for the kind nothing at the core of time, out of which the foals come tumbling: curled, fetal, dreaming, and into which the old crumple, fetlock and skull breaking like waves of foaming milk.... Cold, bracing nothing that mothers forth mud and mint, hoof and clover, root hair and horsehair and the accordion bones of the rust-spotted little one unfolding itself into the afternoon. You too: you flare and fall back into the necessary open space. What could be better than that? It was the beginning of May, the black earth nearly steaming, and a scatter of petals decked the mud like pearls, everything warm with setting out, and you could see beneath their hooves the path they'd traveled up, the horse road on which they trot into the world, eager for pleasure and sunlight, and down which they descend, in good time, into the source of spring.

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