

Cultural Daily

Independent Voices, New Perspectives

Ruth Bavetta: Three Poems

Ruth Bavetta · Wednesday, May 4th, 2022

Stallion

When I was a young girl our neighbor, Bud, kept horses;
a bay, a palomino, and Blizzard, the white stallion.
Wearing fancy tooled boots, studded
cowboy shirt, and white Stetson, Bud
had pictures taken of himself astride
Blizzard—the horse rearing, front hooves raking
the air—to send to movie studios and agents.

Bud let me watch him wash and groom Blizzard,
who'd stand there allowing each hoof to be raised
and the caked manure prized out, the warm water
from the horse-washing station sluicing
over his body, all the while his big, black, ball-shaped
eyes gazed into the distance and his penis
lengthened like a fat and lazy boa.

One day a special trainer came to put Blizzard
through his paces in the stable yard.
I sat on the hitching rail watching the stallion's
muscles swell as he reared higher and higher.
Bud stood behind me, fingering my crotch.
There was so little I knew about stallions.

*

Grief

It creeps in clouds and foggy mornings,
amorphous, greyer than grim,
arrives by surprise when you were expecting
a day of sun. It feeds on your attention
like a petulant child, if you turn away it mutters
in your ear, threatening a squall of temper
if it receives what it perceives as neglect.

It will stand erect in your path, arms crossed
across its chest, daring you to push it aside,
to continue on your way toward what lies ahead.

It's never shy, has no compunctions
about crowding between you and a book,
pushing between you and the stove.
It follows you to the bathroom. Sometimes
at night, when it crawls into your cold
and lonely bed, you almost welcome its embrace,
but it will never warm you. On occasion
it will mark the days and weeks
without involving you at all, only to suddenly
burst into the open when you're in the market
or talking to a neighbor.

Or it may sit beside you on the couch
all evening. Not speaking, eyes turned
to the distance, seeing things that you cannot.
There will come a time when you will know
that it's no longer taller or broader
or stronger than you are, but no matter,
it will always be faithful.

*

Corpus

This body, this boat I've sailed on
for over eighty years. This boat
that passed so surely over the turbulence
of my teens—new breasts, new hips,
new emotions slipping restraint.

This body that carried the passengers
that were my daughter and my son.
This dinghy that let one marriage
slip but held the other in the measured
calm of a safe harbor. This body
with its cargo of days in the sun, of nights
guided by the twin stars of hope and ignorance.

This body that twice bore me past the shoals
of angry cells run amok, that weathered
a heart that swung in irregular cadences.
This body now bends and pulls and creaks,
gathering pain and stiffening joints,
the indignity of leaks. This vessel, this cruiser,
this liner heading for the unknown deep.

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