

# Variations on a Theme: Horses

written by Guest Contributor | April 12, 2019



1.  
During Sibelius' Symphony #2, horses gallop on distant pastures. Waves lift  
the reeds and  
muscles trade with trembling strings. I smell leather. Hollows fill and water  
splashes  
from hoof-beats. Out of step. Wind scatters the waves. A body cannot contain  
the liberations nor  
fires where sweet smoke rises and stars feel the repercussions. Hush. Silver  
burnish and polished  
brass. Pearl moon on hot leather. The water's unleveling.

2.  
At the internment, we set the horses free. They crossed the empty field  
through shadow and  
made a path to the burial. They gathered behind us. When we opened the  
ground, water filled the  
hollow. I felt the shovels in my chest. We set the ashes with fallen  
feathers into the underground  
river, left notes. The words were taken. The earth was put back in place and  
the dead began to  
travel. The horses retreated as if they came to the last gate and it closed  
in their faces. The weight  
is heavy. I know the horses will come back. Eventually they will go over  
break through.

3.  
In the ragged hymn, brass plates, a corrosion. About a hundred horses,  
racing. The body with its  
headache. We push back our chairs. Remembering the horse's posture, the body  
with its slopes  
and glorious veins, dilating. A poetry of silence. Of mares. Meanwhile, a  
boat founders in a

hurricane beyond rescue, a far sound we could hear behind glass. The heat has risen, and there is need for what will surely never come.

4.  
Blooded, going forward, at the pace of a heartbeat. Horses roll into the capillaries follow the conductor from the concert halls to other listening walls. Never for the last time, into ice with vodka and cranberry and lime, blankets wet and steaming.

5.  
On diamonds, they prance in iron shoes on roads through fiasco and strife. On the dark night, the strike. There was an opera in the house, and a crisis on the measures. A circle of quarter horses with braided manes run through the languages. They touch things that collapse: one great wall and a country on its continent. The circle run through graves and things that could be said only with reins.

6.  
In horsepower, the soloist excels, a seeming fragile body given over to its violin. She's a racehorse. The flanks and haunches. Ears back, ears forward. In the ebb of sound, supremacy. Chaos and howling war. We can't hear our own voices. We can't tune it out. Hay in the loft spontaneously combusted. The wind is holding out flags and the color is red. We brace against the wind, lean hard as they round. Heedless riders. When the wind dropped, we fell. Got up again. Shoulders in.

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*Music can hold enormous power in memories and experiences, transporting us instantly to an age, location, or person. What sonic joys, mysteries, disbelief, and clarity have you experienced? Identify songs of influence in your life and explore them like variations on a theme, melding syntax and song structure, recalling the seriousness or levity that accompanies. Whether it's an account of when a specific song first entered your life, the process*

*of learning to play a song, teaching someone a song, experiencing the same song in different places as it weaves through your life, unbelievable radio timing, sharing songs with those in need, tracking the passing down of songs, creative song analysis, music as politics, etc, I am interested in those ineffable moments and welcoming submissions of your own variations on a theme, as drawn from your life's soundtrack. Please email submissions to [meganentropy@gmail.com](mailto:meganentropy@gmail.com) and keep an eye out for others' [Variations](#).*

*\*\*("song" is a broad phrase: could be a pop song, a traditional tune, a symphony, commercial jingles, a hummed lullaby, 2<sup>nd</sup> grade recorder class horror stories, etc)\*\**



**Sheila Packa** has four books of poems, and she edited an anthology, "Migrations." Her writing has appeared in *Writer's Almanac*, *Cortland Review*, *Chicago Memoryhouse*, *Ploughshares*, *Jet Fuel Review*, *Rock & Sling*, and several anthologies. 2010-2012, she was Duluth's Poet Laureate. Four poems were used by Finnish composer Olli Kortekangas in a cantata premiered by the Minnesota Orchestra, conducted by Osmo Vänskä, in February 2016.