

where horses stood ground

by strannikov

where horses once were tethered grows their grass,
thick as bramble or briar, or ground bare as cave:
today, of course, meadows empty of horse.
hard to say how horses ever dared thrive—
given their employment options (drawing hearses
excepted), a wonder they once dared breed.
of other creatures, the first admitted
to our fields of slaughter, ranked and columned
in cavalries trampling their own red dust:
buried with riders who had gained their equine speed—
but not equine speed—their human speed, to pursue
and charge mad worlds and frantic horses hurled their way.

where horses once were herded dies their grass,
withered into dust, wisps of dust atop more dust:
plains alien to horses and their men.
deep set in shales once floors to shining seas,
beasts that never ate a horse swim in fossil streams
that never reckoned any herd's stampedes.
beasts that never dreamed of legs, neither four nor two,
thrived thirty-five billion days, ferocious to live,
forgetful of our eagerness to run or charge.

