

# crazyhorse



Number 80 Fall 2011

BRUSON



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Number 80 Fall 2011

Dear Reader,

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RENÉE ASHLEY

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*She Thinks about the Shapes Things Take*

She is her own apple her own various worm and wax She is  
easily distracted The obligatory head-shake—it's like when  
Hockney paints a chair you've got to walk around a chair  
It could be chair canted in no particular The idea you see  
is a place the logic of what had to be done Not aleatoric  
but divined *This There That* We become the same eye and  
there are more than two horizons in the mimical world In its  
rousing absences The space between us and the meaning the  
mind makes All the lyric complications of stile splat seat rung  
and rail Everything after a while

KATHARINE HAAKE

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## *Diptych: Chrysalis, Prayer*

### 1. A Memory of Chrysalis

One winter when the boys were young we visited a friend of my sister who lives in the mountains near a small pond where we skated. Lacking neighbors, my sister's friend rescues wild animals, especially birds of prey, and at the time we visited, was keeping one owl permanently in her home and two hawks, still mending before their release. All the birds had yellow eyes.

It was hard to tell what excited the boys more—the yellow-eyed birds or the promise of skating.

Each took to the ice according to his temperament, just as he had learned to swim—the older one determinedly mastering the biomechanics of stride and stroke, the younger one throwing himself into the water or onto the ice in a near ecstatic frenzy of motion.

As for me, bliss. No harm could fall to them here; we were out of the city.

I'd been a serious child myself, an interior girl who buried herself in books and, at least until late in adolescence, was loathe to exercise at all.

Then I learned to hike.

Of course, I had been hiking all my life, forced into it by Girl Scouts and, occasionally, my parents, but like my own sons after me, experienced it as torture.

A child's view of nature is detached, for what is nature to the child? It lies inert and unresponsive. You can throw rocks at it, but the rocks don't do anything back, just disappear, plop, into water, and then you have to find another rock. Also, nature is hot and uncomfortable, or cold and uncomfortable, and painful—your muscles ache, your chest burns. In later years you will come to crave this feeling, but for now you hate the trail and everything about it, including your parents.

All that changed when I fell in love and learned to follow the strong lines of my boyfriend's back deep into the woods, just as later I'd follow the lines of other men's backs up steep mountain trails, over improbable passes, along the rugged banks of mountain streams, although by then I would no longer know if it were the man or the trail I was following.

For it would be on these trails that I would grow, at long last, into my body.

Watching my sons on the ice that day, it struck me how much at home they already were in their compact boys' bodies, the little one falling and falling and laughing and claiming he liked to fall, the bigger one making his determined progress until he could outskate me and my bliss.

I couldn't know then how short-lived this

would be, although I'm not sure why I did not anticipate the self-consciousness that would come to each boy as his body betrayed him, increasing in size and plainly visible for all to see. Looking back into my own life it's impossible to pinpoint the moment this happened to me, for who retains a memory of chrysalis?

But when it happened to the boys, it took my breath away. One day, the older boy bent to the ground, clasped a rock in his hand, and then paused ever so slightly, as if he were thinking about it, before rising to loft it toward the far other side of the river. One day, the younger one clambered up the rocks above the banks from which he had flung himself year after year, and then paused ever so slightly before hurling himself off the ledge and into the frigid water below.

It would be years between those moments and when the boys would learn, finally, to manage the self-consciousness burgeoning inside their hesitations and become, like most of us, merely particular about their clothes, their socks, their haircuts, but during those years they could still sometimes summon the grace and abandon they'd once had on the ice where my sister's friend's unnatural birds perched on the inside waiting for them.

We returned to the house chilled and happy that day, the smaller boy bruised and over excited, the bigger one quietly accomplished. I'd turned an ankle but it wasn't bad. Although I was cold and looking forward, like the boys, to some hot chocolate or maybe a hot toddy, I hated that we were leaving, for now that we'd turned away

from the ice we'd begun our long retreat back to the city. But before we left, my sister's friend's husband wanted to show us his rocks.

The bigger boy, serene in his achievement, slipped his hand in mine to show himself to be compliant and interested, but the little one, as ever, careened about, spilling his hot chocolate and resisting any effort to engage him as we were led to a small and darkened room.

Have you ever seen a fluorescent rock? the husband said to my sons, not me.

And then he turned the lamp off, leaving us in total darkness until the younger boy calmed down a bit, before turning on his ultraviolet light and transforming their known world, for ever to see such minerals fluoresce is a wondrous thing. Most, in their natural sate, are dull and gray, constitutively rock-like, but bathed by the right UV spectrum of light, invisible to the human eye, they ignite with neon intensity and astonishing color. That they contain such radiance has always seemed miraculous to me, every bit as miraculous as how still my younger boy was made by their glowing. I could feel him beside me in the darkness, not moving, hardly even breathing, a cry of surprise and delight caught deep in his chest. A sensitive boy for all his rambunctiousness, he was held, in that moment, by mystery, and as my hand sought his shoulder, I felt flooded with relief and love, both boys sidling up close to lean their heads against my hips, where even now I can feel the trace of their rapture.

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Chosen by Richard Jackson as Winner of the Lynda Hull Memorial Poetry Prize

MOLLY BASHAW

---

*There Were No Mirrors in That Farmhouse*

Peacocks screamed us into ourselves.  
In wood, in wool, we welled up, about to appear.  
We could not decide if our faces were most ours  
in the yellow hawthorn, the cornhusk, or milk.  
In bonfires we stayed the same, in moss we aged.  
We called out to ourselves like one black ox  
braying across the pasture to the other black ox.  
And when the wind rose at night we heard  
the barn swallows gather and land inside us.  
Kerosene lamps threw our bodies onto the walls.  
Deer in the dogwood lee breathed us to sleep.

As if this were not enough to keep us there,  
we tied ourselves to the dun mare, we held on  
to wooden handles, we covered ourselves  
with wool and buttons, saying: my stonewall,  
my dark barn, my marmot, my ptarmigan,

my tilth, my kiln. We gathered heavy words  
until we were full as the silo once full of grain.  
When we dreamt of a ghost caught  
on the mulberry bush where silkworms chewed  
through a shawl, we woke again to clothesline  
carrying our stiff pants.

Late evening in the lit barn we  
brought the stone boat to a halt, soft-whistled  
our team back into its stall. It must have been  
because we had been separating stones  
from pebbles from stones so deeply gone  
they could not touch the plow, stones  
from boulders for our wall, that the hay bale  
we threw down from the loft, held together  
by two short pieces of twine,  
seemed weightless and full of light.  
The whole field still moving inside it.

---

ROBERT KLOSS

---

## *When Are You Going to Finish Don Quixote?*

In 1950, after the enormous financial failures of his first four pictures, Orson Welles was considered “out of control” and “not a team player.” Effectively blacklisted by the industry and his monies entirely depleted, Welles found himself sinking into “ever more depraved scenarios,” scrounging for adjunct work at community colleges, “teaching film studies, composition, whatever they’d take [him] on for.” He moved into a loft apartment populated with rats, the smells of exotic spices, surrounded by leery-eyed neighbors. He wrote syllabi on his Remington roll-top half drunk on Irish whisky, the moonlight guiding his way. Nightly he fell to his cot with bleary eyes and aching back. There Welles conceived an adaptation of *Don Quixote* where the dreamy old hero in armor and chain mail drifts through our modern world. Welles explained to friend and biographer, Peter Bogdanovich: “Quixote was never a modern man, Peter. The whole point of Don Quixote is he was always an anachronism with his romantic notions, his chivalry, his love of reading fiction—”

The film flittered on a back alley wall while vagrants, the only audience, watched with slumped drunken eyes. Flickering image: Welles and a young girl seated at a table outside a stadium.

“Was Mr. Don Quixote a bullfighter?” the young girl asked. “Not exactly,” Welles answered. “It’s a profession, not a vocation. A bullfighter works for money. Don Quixote was an aficionado.”

Welles often taught evenings, returning to his apartment in the early a.m., the near absolute calm of the streets, save the long off rattle of bottles toppling from vagrant’s hands, the skittering of rats. Those evenings he did not teach, Welles scripted and sketched costumes and sets for *Don Quixote*. He often took his dinners at his desk with “old Sam Woo kindly bringing [him] heaping plates of leftover fried rice, shrimp, and noodles and whatever else was lying around” from the China Dragon below. The dim lit loft apartment save the one lamplight, the flies rattling in the incandescence, his sleeves rolled, hands smeared of ink from the fumbling with typewriter ribbons, the well-thumbed paperback of Cervantes on his lap, on the floor, flung across the room. In the hours between fills of food Welles felt a “strange delirium” set in as scents of fish and Sam Woo’s famous chop suey wafted through the floorboards. “Very similar to a recent amputee who tries lifting objects because he yet senses the missing limb,” Bogdanovich has observed, “Welles worked on his picture these first

months because he believed it was *what he did*, not because he particularly wanted—”

“ . . . a blur of anxious students, half-drowsed students, one-sided discussions or half-silent discussions with half-filled classrooms, dead eyes, and open mouths, yawning, drooling.”

Those rare occasions inspiration struck, Welles worked through the night by the pallor of the moon, the street lights reflecting off rain-strewn windows, and indeed continued his momentum into the next day, through his commute. He clasped the stacked sheets aboard the streetcar, pencil nubbin clenched between his teeth, the jolting of the car, the coughing shouting sneezing telephone conversations of hooky-playing school children. Finally, he staggered into his morning classes, unshaved with shirt untucked, indeed often unwashed and splattered with chop suey. Students quickly learned to expect little discussion of their writing on these days; instead, Welles “slumped against his desk like he was out of breath,” sighed, “Ah, Sancho, ah old friend,” and gazed off “all dreamy eyed.” Some mornings silence alone followed these mournful exhalations and students chatted merrily on cell phones or doodled on notepads. Other mornings, Welles began speaking ten minutes prior to the start of class, perhaps even while he yet poured his coffee in the adjunct offices, and so he entered the classroom in mid-contemplation, going on “about sand and castles and horses.” A scattered few students later fondly recalled: “it was like sitting

there in the desert” with the “dust swirling” and the “dry heat” cracking their skin. Most students suggest they would have “just left” those days if not for the transfixing voice of their instructor. “You were bored and didn’t know what he was going on about but you could not help but sit there and listen,” many agreed. More than a few students suggested the one-time novice magician had “hypnotized” them or “piped in some sort of nerve gas” to keep them still.

“He thinks hes better than the whole world because he made movies but I never seen any of his movies I bet there all terrible movies—”

“[students] received calls at all hours where a strange voice would say ‘Welles means to speak with you’ and they’d be given instructions to a pub or a cafe.” There he’d sit in trench coat and black felt hat and kid gloves, with his grade book or a recent essay. Most often a plate of corned beef and boiled potatoes (“remembrances, Peter, of my boyhood spent trekking the lonely roads of Ireland, eating at the simple kitchen tables of farmhands; meals paid for with my canvasses, canvasses I convinced these good people would someday be worth a great deal, coming from a famous artist like me!”) before him, Welles stuffed his “fat purple face,” lips “shiny” with spilled wines and “meat grease—”

“Maybe the funnest teacher I ever knew but also real hard. I learned a lot! Thanks prof!”

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DEBORAH BOGEN

---

*Barbed Wire*

Tie me to a fence post : I'll keep those cows covered.  
Wind me 'round your wrist : we can go clubbing  
Tape me to your eyelids : you'll see why beauty hurts,

but I just do as directed : I stay on my side of the road  
crossing you, America : facing blue desert.

When the sun sinks : I'm your tiara.

When the bombs fall : I'm your last resort —

and I'm the electric ohm lighting up your bridgey  
neurons, the bloody teaching on the rebel's tongue.

So bring me coins to light your dark frescoes,  
you, becalmed there in the TV glow.

I never said my ankle was a turning point,

I never said I had a plan.

Chosen by Jaimy Gordon as Winner of the *Crazyhorse Fiction Prize*

MATTHEW VOLLONO

---

## *Samaritan*

I

When Henry first saw the girl she was standing at the top of the exit ramp on Glisan Street, holding a cardboard sign and asking drivers for spare change. Her bag was a secondhand rucksack, the flaps held in place with safety pins and knotted twine, her dreadlocks tied behind her head in a towering bundle. Her name was Alana, and she was nineteen years old.

They ate at the first place he could find, an empty Chinese restaurant where the waiters moved silently over the carpet, appearing suddenly after long droughts of absence, their hands clasped behind the small of their back, foreheads glistening. She told him she was a runaway and spoke about nights she spent sleeping in doorways or in homeless shelters; the food she'd stolen, the miles she'd hitchhiked, the violence she'd seen and how suddenly it had happened, like a firecracker exploding in the dark right next to her. Her voice was nondescript, her tone unvaried and distant. "You sound as if you're talking about somebody else," Henry told her.

"I'm trying to get to central Washington," Alana said, shoving her right foot underneath the leg opposite and rolling a cigarette atop the paper dinner mat. "My brother lives in Yakima. He said

I could stay with him. I just have to get there."

After dinner he found a cheap motel near 82<sup>nd</sup> Avenue and rented a room that smelled of cigarette smoke and lemon cleanser. The carpet was threadbare. Flies crawled up in the inside of a lampshade, their shadows black as beads. "I'm afraid this is all I can afford," Henry said, wiping away the profanity someone had scribbled in the dust clinging to the television screen. "I'm sorry. You deserve better than this."

She dropped her bag on the floor and smiled at him. "Not really."

On his first day as a layperson Henry bought a secondhand Volkswagen from a man he baptized some years before, paying cash out of pocket and driving off with all his belongings in a suitcase on the seat next to him. Seven days later he arrived in Oregon having no memory of the country he'd passed through, knowing only that he could not stay still, aware of a force hovering just beyond the edge of his thoughts, something evil and particulate, a kind of emptiness coursing through the bottom of the world. Images of the hundred year old church where he once said mass haunted him, causing hallucinations that left him nauseous, his trembling hands unable to hold even a pen. In dreams he saw himself picking rice off

the statue of St. Christopher after a wedding, the yellow stone buttress along the chipped cement plinth. He heard the din of church bells on those mornings after a rainfall, how the clang seemed to elongate and deepen inside the wet pavement of the South Bronx, pavement he had once walked as a priest, his hands folded behind his back. At truck stop lunch counters bordered with dented linoleum, where men sipped coffee and smoked cigarettes bought at Indian reservations along the highway, he saw Father McCarthy on the nights he poured bourbon for himself in the rectory after evening vespers, his right eye fogged with glaucoma, a web of dried spittle in the corner of the old man's lips. Other times Henry did not see faces at all, only shapes colored by the language of stained glass, the spirits of parishioners rising sinuous as smoke from a snuffed candle. Corn mazes, grinning cowboys, mysterious vortexes where the laws of gravity did not apply, plastic jackalopes, the world's largest ball of string—each roadside attraction, no matter how insipid, filled him with a sense of his own ubiquity in the world. He thought about the house calls he used to make, the times he gave Holy Communion in the homes of those parishioners who were sick, paralyzed or lame; traveling to neighborhoods where entire buildings lay in rubble and car fires raged freely in the street. He remembered the shut-ins whose living rooms smelled of naphthalene and decayed food and human shit; the times his homilies were interrupted by the sound of gunshots and the subway cars that moved past his face in a blur of dizzying graffiti.

Somewhere in eastern Oregon he had purchased a pistol. His plan was to drive to the coast. Once he reached the Pacific Ocean he was going to end his life.

While Alana took a shower Henry sat on the bed, watching the sliver of light beneath the bathroom door and wondering if she was telling him the truth. When the shower stopped he stood and paced the dim motel room, aware now of the sound of a woman's voice moaning on the other side of the wall, a woman he did not know, a woman his mind did not allow him to imagine. He sat back down on the bed, blocking his ears with the palms of his hands and shutting his eyes until his breathing slowed. When the bathroom door opened Alana emerged wearing only a towel. She smiled at him. "Mind if I sit down?"

Her bare shoulders, gaunt and scarred with what he took to be cigarette burns, contrasted sharply with her youthful, pretty face. When he did not answer she walked to the bed and knelt before him on the floor. Then she put her hand on his crotch.

"You don't have to do that," he told her.

"But you bought me dinner. And you're giving me a ride."

"I don't want you to."

"That's not true."

"Take your hand off me please."

"What do you want then? I don't understand."

"I don't want anything," Henry said.

She stood, suddenly embarrassed, and then hurried to the bathroom. When she came out she wore clothes. He watched as she knelt on the car-

pet, stuffing her denim jacket into her rucksack along with the boxes of leftover Chinese food—sticky white rice and cashew chicken and half an eggroll she'd asked the waiter to wrap in a cellophane bag. Henry knew it had been foolish to pick her up, a moment of poor judgment he'd mistaken for clarity, but right then, watching her try to compose what little possessions she had—her small shadow muffled by the cheap, hiccupping bulb—a feeling of shame washed over him. That familiar sense of his own faithlessness, as if his internal organs were being flipped upside down while his exterior remained righted, gave way to a foreboding. He needed a distraction, something trivial, something immediate. "Don't go," he told her.

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