

Dolly

She was my first horse,
only a pony, really,
square and stolid,
three times my age,
part mule, I thought,
stubborn and unresponsive
to my impotent commands
and my childish slaps
on her rump.

I'm sure they meant well,
my dotting grandparents,
by not giving me the
fiery chestnut stallion
who would have let me fly
over the pasture
to gain the woodland.

It was my job to escort
the cows home
for the evening milking.
I sat relaxed and arrogant,
near the break in the fence,
a baby cowgirl
in my western saddle,
reins draped over the horn,
waiting for the herd.
They came charging
like Pamplonan bulls,
udders swinging wildly.

Dolly galloped for home
as though she were Pegasus,
her shaggy little body
transformed into a bullet.
I held on to her mane
with both fists.

The fall was easy,
The mud puddle soft.
I walked the last quarter mile.
Dolly was already in her stall
placidly snacking on her oats.
She turned to glance at me
and I'd have sworn she laughed.