## The Conjuring

Nidhi Zak/Aria Eipe

how a horse, or more, rose from the water, still and gray as a lake how could they know the truth: an ambush of snow

how the crane called to its kin faint, auriga moving through a home, stranger, a shadow falling low across the limen

how a mare stood sentinel by the door, wise eyes wide unblinking foaling sprawling twin kings, a flagstone floor

how we bore your temper wild spur upon our backs a man hounded, as our mother yet outruns us, how she stuns us

with her pain, mooned belly heaving life, sharp her cries cursing their men days five lineal nine across the line

how the birds shift beneath lust's gaze, how they turned on you, swift as a whipping boy caught in a bind of rage

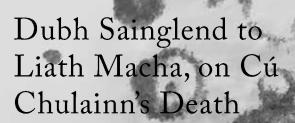
how they trembled, the fury filled sprites as you suffered the life you were denied then married to the envy of a bride

how they'll swear you loved but one of us, singular, true: balking, bridled, only one brother standing before you.



You were first from the shore of her, the dam who slipped us in the dark; who slung like coin her womb's worth at the door, left us to weave our tongues in each other's eyes; to lick the water from our backs, the Moorhen at our mouths. I smelled her once in fog, the night the sounds of war split beyond the fort — trills of curlew magicked into cries of slaughtered men, wind-tap of branches shaped to clanging blades. And when they saddled us and led us to the Valley of the Deaf, we tasted her on grasses, in the downwind rot of that hooked and sweet-flowered tree; heard her heave in the draws of river, her groan in pushing us from pools — white cascades popping at the falls our birth-bleached hooves. Was she in the blood that let from your eye? That shape aroused in the wine that spilled three times, or in the woman at the crossing ford, all sorrows and spoiled armour, who wept he was to die? Was her snort the gale that lunged

a spear of some warrior's spited kin, tore Láegh from his root like a soft-soiled yew, ran him as a spring beneath our hocks? What could I but run, and Cú Chulainn torn like a bag of meal, regarding with wonder that hole in himself — little rat rip, clean as a saddler's punch — like a blink in recollection, or a net laboured into shore only to see it fat with his own catch, and picked by many hands? I left him for the sorceresses, and salmon-snorted home; broke woodlands with my goosegrass breast, stamped crescents in mud and shale, startled a hag turning rope in the dew, passed strangers' palisades, and laughing children mad like calves at dusk, until I stood and shook before water in the glen. And when I dipped my shameful head to step beneath a mirror of the moon, your form went hurtling from the shimmer of my lips: turning in the bindweed root like an otter hunting crays; broken pottery of skulls a shingle beneath your feet, the thirty skins behind your teeth. And I saw Cú Chulainn, too, pinned to the stone in his own twines, a sick-cloth fluttering in wind, in current; saw the raven berry-picking hedges of his bursting sides. I will leave this Milesian pit, this festered wound in water; will slip beneath the tail of it, grow wings again and drown, before her.



Micheal Dooley

