

## Red Barn with Frozen Ground

The night wind throws the stars across a winter sky  
and the earth is hard and the horses  
are hungry, but beautiful.  
Their noses are soft. I am comfortable.  
My fingers like cold carrots  
as I soak sweet grain in warm water  
for the gelding kicking at his door.  
He will die a retired horse:  
I watch him eat.  
His old bones have carried so many children,  
his teeth are weak from years of chewing,  
He throws his body against the stall door,  
my shivering turns into sweating  
and the night into morning.  
My ungloved hands reach down his choking throat  
and feel darkness, his glands swell  
like night swallowing a city street,  
but I am alone, and the sedatives in another room.  
This animal moans but no sound resonates  
because I cry and the birds sing  
into the space between my lungs.  
I don't leave his stall  
until the barn cat crawls over my still body  
and her empty stomach echoes into me.