

# RUNNING HORSES

Lâle Davidson

In my land of running horses, it is always dark. Almost always but for a few hours a day. Hours too bright to behold in the summer, constricting the pupils painfully tight. In winter, pale and soft, the light calls unannounced washing the walls with listless yearning, all hues of white.

Horses are always running there, and no one knows their name. With lyrical speed and muscular beat, their blackness drums dully through the night, sounding on sod like fists beating on the cage of the heart. Just a breath behind my shoulder, accompanied by a long night cry. From the depths of a knotted chest, the voice releases, unfolding length after length, all the pain, the fear, the desire. And the breath, hollow and whole, as when my head lay on my mother's breast, respires through the vessels of my blood. I run -- and smears of smoke and blue, fold and bloom in the dusk. They carry the spirits of the dead.

Dreaming darkly of death, I used to wish the horses would stop for me. Death was a thing of perfection, a darkness com-

plete. A smooth wide curve, airtight and nonporous, powerful as a planet's edge. I wanted to grasp the thing of life tightly between my hands, still it forever so I could see and feel at last -- absolute experience. A will to live directly without reference or deferral. If those horses would only stop for me, I'd ride with them leaning low over their manes, my dry white hair whistling like straw behind me.

But I've seen death, small and petty, not on time -- a moth-eaten rag, used to clean up the mess of imperfection that is life and the imbalance that causes movement, vital movement. The desire to stop is the strongest will to life. But the horses run quickly and mutably as life itself. (And the darkness, given room, will swirl from the ghost of ash into all the colors and shapes of the living minute.)