

VERSE

HOUSES

I do not like houses.
In my father's house there was only one mansion,
an oblong of sunlight in the doorway,
never flowing through to the hall,
welcomes extended precisely
from a defunct antelope's horns,
red carpet rippling up the stairs
a digesting boa-constrictor
(one night as it slept we bumped
down its humps on our bottoms)
cigarettes in the drawing-room
expiring into fluffy grey worms—
the horns were polite as ever
to the undertaker.

My aunt's house held out pincushion arms,
frilly with chintzes, tinkling with charms....

So even now on winter afternoons
as we stomp a path
home through the snow
with the children excitedly planning
orgies of muffins and cocoa
before a log fire
my eyes cling and linger
on the grey horizon....
I do not like houses.

—Elizabeth Jones