

Bury Your Horses

Horses, horses, horses!
Catching sight of a cemetery
—bury your horses!
 the child
squeals in victory.

grade one students
stand in a row
holding out a trembling hand
half whimpering, half wondering.
 the teacher, a *nisei*,
walked down the line
and struck each offering
with the flat side of a ruler.
You can't speak Japanese any more!
childish crying
 a vow never to speak again.

Kissing plays
the Community Hall
on a cranking projector;
it captivates a six year old.
 The next day,
she reaches across the aisle
and kisses Freddy Kakuno
on the cheek.
He jumps and screams,
Ow, get me out of here!

The one room school
remained mute in ruin.

deer meat
felled by a single invisible
wire between trees:
 the carcass of twisted limbs,
soaking blood and dead eyes
 coyotes howl
with the smell of fresh kill

The echo from peak
 to rock face vibrates
in the shaking of hands,
 the night
of wild horses stampeding
down
the mountainside
 Stay in your cabins!
from beneath
 the table and chairs
the thunder of hooves
and the bloodied eyes
she began the years of night-mare.

She stood among the tumble weeds
and cactuses
 drying her lungs
with every breath.

in plain view of a cemetery
—bury your horses—
the woman
scattered her memories
like ashes and dust.

terry watada