

LOSING TRISTAN

On the road to Hanover, caught between spinning tires
puzzle weary and folded beside you
you press your nose to the car window
dark eyes sweeping the cold landscape for signs of life
your lashes a stutter of apostrophes.
In the front, we hum 'Love Me Do' to the radio's tin mouth.
Captured in the rearview mirror, your lips
move soundless against glass, small plea for air?
A black horse steers past
you crane after this period at the end of the white road.

Evening closes on the tiny farm
reluctant to leave the ponies, your palms and knees fixed
on the stable floor.
I carried you to bed—this father whose language you barely spoke,
a woman, not your mother. I woke to the sound of not breathing ,
bedclothes in your shape
black night a fist tightening on -- all the afternoons
fished from a small red boat,
flight to a land where everyone had your eyes,
the tunes hummed to you dozing in your crib.

Seconds spin from my hands like fishline
crossing the white divide—legs in icewater
move toward stable door.

In the dark expanse heavy with haysteam
you curl, a little heap by the old horse's nodding head
your mouth a small o
like a god breathless and abandoned to beauty
I wait for the wheeze from squeezed lungs
suspirado mas que...
the bandoneon of angels
marking time
metronome of breath
suspended before the steady tic
of the horse's whiskered lips.