

Emily H. Axelrod – Three Poems

Drought

Skies darken in late afternoon
when the air is pregnant
with rain that does not fall,
an occasional crack of lightening
a fiery exclamation point.
On the ground streams dwindle,
coating rocks with murky algae
that bloom in the diminished flow.
Well water tastes of minerals and mud
and we ration it like misers hoarding gold.
Only the valley oaks seemed unperturbed,
bending their sculpted trunks
to the brown grass,
and taking root once more,
tentacles burrowing into desiccated soil,
leaves shiny and sharp.

Derby

On Derby day the air is wet and thick
and the horses' coats shine
as they arch their necks,
lifting slender legs
of muscle taut and honed.
The jockey's silks glow
as they perch high on their horses' haunches
whispering to them in a lover's voice,
urgent and filled with promise.
At the start the horses leap in a single motion,
all stride, all extension.
Then one takes flight,
floating above the muddy turf,
the jockey clinging to his lathered neck
as he circles the track
passing the finish in a quick sprint,
barely slowing, as if he could run forever.

First Love

We stayed together in a cabin
that was once a chicken coop
with windows facing an open meadow
where our footsteps bent the damp grass.

On New Year's Eve we found a beach
where towering rock arches
broke the force of the waves
on silver-packed sand,
and in the dark chill of evening
we swam in the night tide.

I imagine you have stepped
into a world of your own creation,
with snapshots of grandchildren
and a house where you will prune the fruit trees
whose flesh is warm from the California sun.

Emily Axelrod lives in Cambridge, MA. She is the author of *Passerby* (Antrim House, 2015), and is the winner of the Goodreads Poetry Contest for March 2016. Her poems are concerned with the rich complexity of daily life, and with the joys and struggles of being alive in this world, at this moment. The poems draw upon a childhood in California, her life in Cambridge, MA and summers on a small island in Maine.