## Mother the Stranger

## by Rhonda Pettit

my heart is open country now low sky on a flat plain

a lone horse splits its hoof on a stone

hobbles off

\*

mountains holding down the horizon, blocking weather

all that comes down this side image of rain

we won't feel

\*

bloody light in the canyon the last fist unfurls

if no one remains to grasp, pull it up,

what good that prayer

\*

red valves pumping, urging to be no stranger

if I bear my heart as my nation how is love made without weapons

\*

not a machine, but machine-like not a lone horse

but who would trade that split hoof for bit, reins, the hand behind them \*

once I loved a rancher who left the ranch for the city

who left the city for war whose bones make soil for the desert

\*

us, them: a history without names

a storm without cease without rain in the heartland

\*

script on the stone that split the hoof: mother the stranger

noun or verb, I ask says a lone horse, both