

All the Pretty Little Horses /  
Chris MacCormick

In the field where I slept  
last night, the hushabye lamb was mewling.  
It didn't want to be dead, its black  
underlip moved up and down  
in the dew, wasp slow,  
and the breeze in the cotton said  
oh yes, yes.

All morning under honeysuckle  
bees picked over a beached carp  
and duckweed rolled  
slow as smoke.  
Hurry home.  
Bright bones know a place  
by blue water.

A wind fresh as mint will  
shine your shoes when you  
cakewalk to heaven.  
They will light your cigar,  
wrap you in a kimono and beat you  
supple as kidskin.  
Hurry home.

Chekhov Variation / John Morgan

Chekhov, here's a story you  
didn't write: on a banker's

estate, locked  
in one room without  
company, a man  
reads  
while outside  
the peasants grumble and debauch,  
the master gambles his fortune away,  
and so much blood is spilled  
the snow falls pink  
all over Eastern Europe.

For years  
this continues: he reads  
the systematic philosophers, popular  
novelists of other centuries,  
lyric poets. Now the man  
is reading about beautiful women.  
He undresses and strides naked  
about the room, and as we watch  
he seems to age. His neat goatee  
lengthens, grizzles, his broad chest  
narrows, his face wrinkles,  
and his eyes grow round and hollow.  
Is this the parable:  
a man alone in a cell  
reading, while outside  
history  
chalks up another debacle?

Fifteen years later  
bitter with what he's foreseen  
he renounces all claim  
and climbs out the window.  
Peasants are lined against the wall  
of the estate, and just as he hits the ground  
he notes a squad of soldiers aiming their guns.  
Crouching, he scrambles for cover.  
Now he staggers and falls, now  
he is crawling into the earth. I assume  
he had something else in mind.  
So many have died, are dying  
there are not enough stories to name them  
and those who are left could care less about such tales.