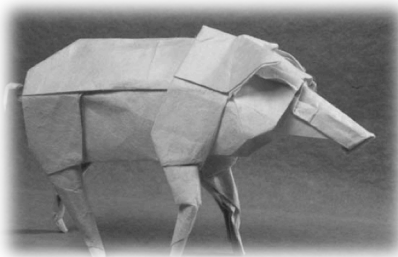


English 140-143: Poetry Writing

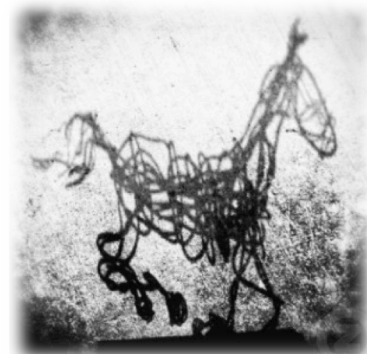
Assignment for Poem #3



In "The Horse" and "Animals are Passing from Our Lives," Philip Levine uses an animal as an extended metaphor—or conceit—a poetic device to compare/illuminate two things through a series of lines. In this type of poem, the author works to develop a concept or theme through the extension of the metaphor. About "Animals are Passing from Our Lives," Levine writes: "That poem celebrates the quality of digging in your heels. Even the little pig will not do things the way people expect him to [notice how the poet also doesn't use language we expect him to]. He's going to die his own way. There's a lot of abuse being heaped on the culture

that's taking him to his death. Even though he knows he's dying for an appalling society, he's not going to beg for his life. They're not going to make a pig out of him. They call him a pig, they treat him like a pig, they'll kill him like a pig, but he's going to act with more dignity than a human being." Levine follows up: "My poems mostly record my discovery of the people, places, and animals I am not, the ones who live at all cost and come back for more, and who if they bore tattoos—a gesture they don't need—would have them say, 'Don't tread on me' or 'Once more with feeling' or 'No pasaran' or 'Not this pig.'"

Levine's "The Horse," has something to communicate about the survivors of Hiroshima and more. In his essay, "Turning Away From the Blast: Forms of Nuclear Protest Poetry," Russell Brickey writes: "Possibly the most powerful atomic protest poem is Philip Levine's elegy "The Horse," written "for Ichiro Kawamoto, humanitarian, electrician, & survivor of Hiroshima." The visceral images of agonized, wounded animals and helpless, kindly people expressing their empathy in a vacuum of power (like "gills of a fish caught / above water") are juxtaposed to the unexpected assertion of fragile life (in which "Mountain flowers / burst from the red clay walls"). Rather than denunciation, these images lead to the anti-intuitive but nevertheless fulfilling denouement: "the rage had gone out of / their bones in one mad dance." To deny that there had ever been a horse is to deny that an atrocity had ever occurred, the reaction of a defeated and traumatized nation[....]The horse stands for the collective trauma of poets, readers, and 'unborn' generations—all potential victims to the same techno-enemy. The true impetus for "The Horse" is the inhuman nature of governments, particularly when the deadliest weapon in existence still waits on the wings; the poem's real motive is to interrupt what might happen in the future."



Using Levine's "The Horse" and "Animals are Passing from Our Lives" as models, you are challenged to construct an extended metaphor to represent a human quality (a trait you admire in human beings) or to communicate something about a specific person and/or historic event. Some additional guidelines (AKA RULES):

1. Write in quatrains (four line stanzas).
2. Write in syllabics, more specifically, use **SEVEN** syllables per line. Notice how "The Horse" and "Animals are Passing from Our Lives" are syllabic poems; each line is seven syllables, though in "The Horse" there is some interesting variation you might decide to try.
3. Write in complete sentences utilizing conventional capitalization, syntax, and grammar. Fragments should be intentional and should serve a powerful purpose: "...No. Not this pig."
4. Do not employ end-rhymes, though attention to sound is encouraged.
5. Develop a powerful central metaphor and evocative, gut-wrenching and/or heartbreaking, mind-blowing—you get it—imagery. Show. Show. Show. Consider what you want your poem to do to your reader.
6. Do not tell your reader what your extended metaphor is. Work to make your poem suggest and/or hammer it (the syllabics will help you with this).