

# The Horse

*For Lucy*

Real drawing is a constant question,  
is a clumsiness, which is a form  
of hospitality towards what  
is being drawn.

—John Berger

there is a landscape, veined, which only a child can see  
or the child's older self, a poet...

—Adrienne Rich, "Dreamwood"

She's at a loss, my daughter, in the drawing  
She makes, a girl and her horse, as a gift  
For me—a frontispiece she pens,  
Beside my name, which she inscribes  
As if it were her own, on the first page  
Of my new notebook:

Freckles and a quandary  
Upon her face; one foot in one camp,  
The other in another. Her face asks  
A question to which her body wants  
An answer.

And beside her, a horse,  
And it leans her way, the way she's drawn it,  
This pony, infinitely tender, waiting for her,  
The girl in the picture, to notice that she,  
The girl with the pen, already has  
What she always wanted, standing  
At her side.

When I lived with her, she rode  
Me sometimes; sometimes, though she's nine,  
And is beginning to forget, she rides me still.  
I have loved horses and ridden them, and  
Every birthday and Christmas, knowing  
Her hope was hopeless, she's asked for one,  
Which never came.

We've loved horses together,  
She and I, and her hope for horses was our  
Love for each other, and I drew them  
For her from The World of the Horse,  
And from storybooks I gave her because  
I couldn't give her a horse.

We loved each other  
Many ways, but how we both loved horses  
Was how we loved each other best.  
If I tell you,  
Then, we are the horse she's drawn, she and I,

Or that I am the horse and she is the girl,  
You'll know why, and you'll understand  
How her drawing cries my longing  
For her, the way it sings her longing  
For us.

Opening my journal, tonight, I see  
The two of us, hopeful and kind and confused,<sup>[1]</sup>Wondering how we stand now and what  
Will become of all we loved and what will  
Become of us.

Knowing, as children  
Know—and drawings that are real—much  
More than she knows, my girl has drawn  
A question to which I—to which we—are  
The answer in the horse's eye: Yes, I want  
To tell her; yes.

What you long for, my love,  
Stands beside you, a father beside his girl,  
All you ever wanted, a horse that will not  
Run, an answer more tender than time.

What you long  
For longs for you, and even when you  
Cannot see me, and you are not sure  
I know, I know.

I stand beside you, my girl,  
And I stood there all along, and I stand  
Beside you ready, all the days of your life.