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Horse in Motion

translated by Robin Myers

Where does a horse's gallop start:
inside the box of its motionless form,
on the trapeze of its kickoff,
or in the diamond of its hooves mid-air?

Leland Stanford would say the third:
a horse flies when it halts
suspended there above the track.

James Keene insisted on the opposite:
a hoof affixed,
an anchor on the ground.

To prove his point, Stanford asked Eadweard Muybridge
to photograph the motion of an equine
trotting at 22 miles per hour along the Sacramento racecourse.

In the space between the horse and the track,
the photographer saw the first tooth peeking
through the gums of his son Helios, the smile
of the girl in the cigarette ad.

He saw his mother fill a cup of tea
with a thread of still, crystalline water,
a portal creaking open toward the past.
He saw the body of his wife above his own,
forming a triangle of guts and blood
that hasn't learned to be anywhere at all.

The question isn't where a horse's gallop starts,
but where its flight begins,
where it might keep its invisible wings,
where its horizon is, the one where they surpass us
like gods that speak without a word,
which isn't the same as saying that they speak in silence.

There's more than one way to bet at the races.

Muybridge knew it by the angle of a ray of light
cutting through the dust kicked up by horses

without ever touching it.