

Izaak Walton and the Death of Donne

And the eyes of those two Indian ponies
still as surfaces where Izaak Walton wrote out
the death of John Donne, or angled
in darkwet spring waters, coldwet to his bones
and keeping still, still with joy,
fishing for salmon, for trout,
either of which could be God, as could the arc of his line,
the pushing water, or the eyes of Indian ponies
nowhere near England, or the vision
toward which Donne gazed—steady, starved, ecstatic—for days.
The ponies' eyes, four roundnesses of concern
and unconcern with human things
in shining equal measure. Thus variable (the light),
thus virtuous (their unbusy gaze), thus excellent (their
togetherness in spring), thus exemplary (their beautiful
skins twitching in nervousness as I reach out
my open, sensitive palm toward their open, sensitive muzzles,
hoping one, at least, will come toward me
not as a trout moves
toward the angler's gentle-calling fly
and death). As Walton says Donne searched
until he *saw* the hand he'd reached so dearly for.
What is it to be seen by
spring and ponies' coal-unburnt-yet-lit eyes?
What is it to be breathed upon by strangeness
come willingly to greet your palm,
to be reached for instead of reaching?

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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