

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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