

2018

How Not to Cull Wild Horses

Christopher T. Keaveney
Linfield College

Follow this and additional works at: https://digitalcommons.linfield.edu/glcsfac_pubs



Part of the [Poetry Commons](#)

DigitalCommons@Linfield Citation

Keaveney, Christopher T., "How Not to Cull Wild Horses" (2018). *Faculty Publications*. Published Version. Submission 3.

https://digitalcommons.linfield.edu/glcsfac_pubs/3

This Published Version is protected by copyright and/or related rights. It is brought to you for free via open access, courtesy of DigitalCommons@Linfield, with permission from the rights-holder(s). Your use of this Published Version must comply with the [Terms of Use](#) for material posted in DigitalCommons@Linfield, or with other stated terms (such as a Creative Commons license) indicated in the record and/or on the work itself. For more information, or if you have questions about permitted uses, please contact digitalcommons@linfield.edu.

Christopher T. Keaveney

HOW NOT TO CULL WILD HORSES

Wisdom dictates there is a right and wrong way
to do everything,
and if that is true of cracking a walnut,
accompanying a jig on a bodhran,
or getting out of the sand trap
then it is true
of culling wild horses,
in the public lands out West
where some suggest that mustangs have outlived
their charm
and become nuisances
like sourpussed former
Mousketeers
fallen on hard times,
staggering drunkenly around the county fairgrounds
picking fights with all comers.

In the best of all possible worlds the wind
that spins dust devils and rattles
the panes of loosely shut windows
would also fret the manes
of horses sprung from their makeshift pens
and carry the scent of the hunter
with his rifle trained from a comfortable distance
to the spooked herd.
In the best of all possible worlds
there would be a Plan C
and there would be room for compromise,
even as in late summer the sage grass
long and lush
that stretches out as far as the eye can see
bends beneath the whirl of the patrol chopper.

The clouds prove
to be anvil shaped
conundrums for the splaying
from where we gather on the capital steps

waiting on a late reprieve,
bluer skies to adjudicate
the final compromise that may be arrived at
only after fierce debate,
the fruit of smaller scrums fought
in the dust that rises along the fencelines
that hold nothing of value in
and keep nothing of value out,
where sentimentality huddles
in the darkness of the bitless, fetlocked nights
that begin in the canyons
where even the memory
of the echo of the thunder
of hooves is held dear.



Christopher T. Keaveney teaches Japanese language and East Asian culture at Linfield College in Oregon and is the author of three books about Sino-Japanese cultural relations. His poetry has appeared or is forthcoming in *Columbia Review*, *Spoon River Poetry Review*, *Borderlands: Texas Poetry Review*, *The Minetta Review*, *Stolen Island*, *Faultline*, *Wilderness House Literary Review*, and elsewhere, and he is the author of the collection *Your Eureka not Mined* (Broadstone Books, 2017).