

White Pony

SAMPLE

Also by Steve Ely

POETRY

Oswald's Book of Hours (Smokestack Books, 2013)

Englaland (Smokestack Books, 2015)

Werewolf (Calder Valley Poetry, 2016)

Incendium Amoris (Smokestack Books, 2017)

Bloody, Proud and Murderous Men, Adulterers and Enemies of God (High Window Press, 2018)

Jubilate Messi (Shearsman Books, 2018)

Zi-Zi Taah Taah Taah: the Song of the Willow Tit (Wild West Press, 2018)

I beheld Satan as lightning fall from heaven (New Walk Editions, 2019)

Lectio Violant (Shearsman Books, 2021)

The European Eel (Longbarrow Press, 2021)

Lives of British Shrews (Broken Sleep Books, 2023)

Eely (Longbarrow Press, 2024)

Orasaigh (Broken Sleep Books, 2024)

ANTHOLOGY

Apocalyptic Landscape (Valley Press, 2024)

NOVEL

Ratmen (Blackheath Books, 2012)

MONOGRAPH

Ted Hughes's South Yorkshire (Palgrave Macmillan, 2015)

White Pony

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SAMPLER

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Futurist Theatre

Freezing South Bay winter morning, fog pressing
against the shopfronts, condensing on the security shutters,
the yellow tile of Adventureland, hanging like Montecristo smoke
in the doorway of Ali Baba's Market, the Mermaid's plate-glass,
swing-door foyer. William Younger's Ales.

Straggle of queue
beginning to form, ten forty-five am: ferret-faced soak in sixties whistle
and pinched Park Drive, rosy nose stuck deep in the Racing Post;
lank ponytail in soiled ex-army jacket and sweatpants;
two lads in oilskins off the fish quay.

To the left of the bar,
a blank green door, like a Members Only social club
in Queens: 'Gypsy Boswell'. Narrow stairs to the lacy parlour,
horse brasses, porcelain Flamenco doll, publicity-still endorsements
from the stars: Marti Caine, Les Dennis, Paul Shane and
Savile, leaning across the mahogany table, crossing her palm
with purple notes and gazing into the obsidian mirror
with Mister Softee and the One-Armed Bandit—
dukker drab, tell us, where is the boy? She feels the shadow
and bends to his will, like the Magyar girl enslaved
by the High Armanen.

See No Evil, Hear No Evil. Wilder and Pryor,
hiding in plain sight on the Futurist marquee. Meanwhile
in Arcadia, the ostler's saddling donkeys for the chace:
Eohippus, Pliohippus, Neohipparion—camper, Roller, hearse.





The Chace

White mythology. Seething flour-mite
calcite darkness. Blizzard of cotton grass,
Geminid tracers.

Strobe-lit anvils crack
and flash the welkin—capuchin robed
in shining nylon spurs his milk-white steed.
Albinos spill from underhill like maggots,
morlocks, eloi, Johnny & Edgar Winter,
the spotless fleece and pilld white strakes
of Laban. The stolen virgin's marble pallor,
the mildewed arm of Naaman, clammy
as mushrooms, leprous as snow.

Fibrous peat
thrown up and drumbeat hooves. Insistent
whisper underneath the billowing cape
of fitch. Ripping snorts of equine breath,
shrouding and unshrouding. Spotless eyes
like discs of ice. *Don't look back.*

Lanthorn
in the distant cottage window—Village
of the Damned. I'm thinking of a white
brick wall, urnals and a line of traps,
Arctic eyes like a thermal lance, freezing will
and boring tompeep holes. *Save me, Father.*
Clutched under his cloak, the ripping fib
rillations of the dark and pounding heart.
Electrostatic discharge, revealing
those who flee: the cob, the man, the boy—
his son, over-exposed in the scouring Roentgens,
equus, homo, homo puer, skull brittle
as a pin-blown pigeon egg, flimsy ossature
nude and ghost as chalk.

Splintering blitzkrieg
rives the towering wall of night once more:

klieg-lit gorgon lunging tight to the shrieks
of the streaming tail—neohipparion, homo
habilis, a roughly cradled tarsier or dormouse—
picanthropus erectus, mounting eohippus,
biting the heads of haplorrhines like mangos.

Elverkonge

Gleam from the bottom of the bog pool:
a hoard of torcs, disarticulated vertebrae.
Inlaid fibulae, helmets, shields. Tipped cartloads
of spelt, spilled wheels of Maremma.
Ram fleece, plucked-out nanny goat opals.
The treasury of the King. The tinkets of the Queen.
The tears of the sisters of Phæthon.
Wobble in the onyx of the bog pool. Long blink
of a golden eye. Kid opened on the cotton grass,
tartrazine gutfat bright as dark anguilla.