

Two Poems

SUSAN BARBA

How Things Speak Then Pass

after Andrei Tarkovsky

Before the boy's heart he holds a milk bottle, white in the
twilight as a lantern,
larger than his hands, his head, his shadow larger
than his frame and dark, except for the milk in its mother of
pearl
body. Almost too heavy to hold, the bottle tips and
spills into his mouth. God it is good, this cold, this glass
lip against soft lip, slipping in and sinking
like fishing line from the tilt of hands down to the belly.

Not as a sound exists, waning unseen, but as the hourglass,
how the sand poured smooth, legions aligning to slip
escape to lower regions, leaving the upper bulb clear and clean
through which we saw Olya blooming against the opposite wall.
Time to go dancing, she'd say and in her belly the small
creature stirring
like her turning in her sleep toward the owl's questions the
night sends
him to ask, the white handiwork at the windows billowing—

*Look Out for Hope**after Robert Frank*

A cold bronze horse,
foreleg lifted
to paw at snow
or soda cans below
as wind and sun
sweep bare its form
that takes up space.

Round the horse
the seasons spin
to wither on the plinth
where students gather
and forget everything
the head can hold,
spilled by laughing
and a looseness
in their limbs.

But that boy leaning,
talking with
his hands and thin
under the wool,
his face like someone
you once knew—
he'd look away
if smiled at, too often
he forgets the fact
of arms and legs,
believing the mind
a whistling reed,
turned by a lathe
with intent.