

Old Snowmass

Light pours in through a hole
in a shelf of heavy clouds.
Mottled leaves flutter solo –
adding to the pile of rot.

Fences lean. No brooding dogs
or blundering flies – just us –
pacing away from home
on dusty mares with blankets.

Perhaps for perspective: for a wandering
high-prairie prayer to emerge
praising the unoccupied; for a tired
sun to slip from a rim of cloud

and amaze us with a field of steers
that seems unvaried after years.
Tails slap at the sun's sudden heat.
A black bull with white teeth

chews, lumbers toward the fence, lifts
his silver-rimmed eyes, scowls at our packs
and bur-flecked calves. An opening flashes;
our horses snort, idle for a moment, un-perplexed.

Heedless, we crest the worn hill
to see more, to reabsorb the pulse
of the land. In hipbones we remember
our grandmothers and mothers.

A span of ridges rises over our thighs.
To what end do we roam?
Just this, stored behind our eyes.

-- Jane Shaffer