

Cheryl Heineman

Love's Mantles

Under moon-tipped Aspens, when I was young & not quite ready,
a cowboy passed by, and I grabbed his mane. With my dress undone,
the mountains spilled us together like sarsaparilla and champagne.
Years— it was a gust-blooded ride on vaulted prairies, thundered mines,
but a slow-crawling drought brought a bored horsefly looking
for flesh, & thus tempted, I unhitched my marriage reins— it was urgent—
I was not ready to die. I was not ready to die in gasping quicksand.

Now, surrounded by unleafed trees, I see. I see the cowboy & the horsefly
were only tricksters. In bed at night, I count grey hairs, don't undo myself
and am beginning to hear God,
that old testament, with his whiskey-stained teeth, argue—
*You should have stayed married,
just been discrete.
Listen,
that lover/oarsman,
madly dressed for death,
is at the door—
are you ready?*

Cheryl Heineman graduated in 2017 with a Master of Fine Arts in Creative Writing from San Diego State University. She also has a master's degree in Jungian Psychology and has published four collections of poetry: *Just Getting Started, something to hold onto, It's Easy to Kiss a Stranger on a Moving Train* and *Future Comings*.