Lament

Laurie Lamon
LAMENT

She is afraid of the trader
who has come from the valley
three times already to admire her.
She has heard the climate is all wrong,
inescapable as the layers of cloth
worn day and night, the sun
warming even the glass put away
in the cupboard. She has heard
the streets are clamorous
and filled with rotting fruit,
streets narrow as the paths
of insects. At night, impossible
to sleep or write a letter.
She has heard too of a flower
whose touch fills the women's
arms with sickness. No,
she refuses to marry the trader
with his burned complexion
and those red bags of opium.
She could die in all that warmth.
Here on the steppes it is always
the cold season, a way of looking
at clouds, and the animals,
for their sakes this yearly walking
on ice. No, she refuses to leave
the village. It is too dangerous,
the long journey down the pass,
at dusk the possibility of border guards
or a horse suddenly lame.
Who would help with the shearing,
the feltmaking, who would bring her father
his evening dish of milk? No, she refuses to leave the village. Still, in moonlight, outside her parent's tent, those three white horses that circle and gleam like silver traveling the distance to her bed.