

1992

# French Horn

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## Recommended Citation

Behn, Robin. "French Horn." *The Iowa Review* 22.2 (1992): 41-43. Web.  
Available at: <https://doi.org/10.17077/0021-065X.4131>

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## Three Poems · *Robin Behn*

### FRENCH HORN

The name, you might think,  
if you're twelve, and you know,  
is like those kisses

someone will do to you  
if you're lucky and remember  
to let him. But how far down

your body will he go?  
There's something like entrails  
about all this gaggle of tubing

like a hospital i.v.  
or how someone in the textbook  
jailed up Cleopatra's hair.

And launching out of silence  
to hit just the right note  
is next to impossible, and so, in this, it is like

kisses, also. In public this thing  
should wear a dress over its guts  
like the girls who are good at it—one

especially, born  
with no right hand.  
But you have to put your hand *in*

to mute it, or let it  
moan . . . What our bodies  
were suited for was an

increasing mystery,  
which may be why we envied  
her efficient, perfect flipper,

which somehow worked best for this  
as if the same template of wind  
around whose body the brass tubes

had formed, had formed  
her body, so she belonged more  
to the horn than

the other way around.  
We could see it carrying her home from school,  
we could see its bell blooming

in her sweet broad face, and of course  
it made us jealous, how she retained  
1st chair, how the band leader doted

on her for whom the centuries of hounds  
must have bounded,  
after which had galloped

the lord's most velvet page  
with his second, keyless, exterior, piercing  
and definitely most heavenly curled brass throat.

What was he thinking, that one without the gun  
whom all the guns charged after?  
What was he saying in the back of his mouth

that narrowed and loosened  
at will around the source of breath and made  
the fall air need him? Was he that much like a woman

he needed one like her  
as if to know himself by the slight  
mammalian difference of his hand

stroking hers? We imagined  
her sleep, where we thought she must have worn it,  
(we worried, too, *If I die before I wake . . .*)

her right “hand” still lodged  
in that brass extravagance with which  
she’d be fit to shake heavenly hands;

and, on the pillow, like a receiver left dangling  
in case a wayward god needed someone to confess to,  
the trumpet-flower mouthpiece, open-ended

as the story in which a fox gets caught  
doubling back to speak his peace  
into her oiled body

which curves and flowers and over  
the centuries develops three keys, three  
left-handed means

that allow us to fast-forward in the one  
stunning rip from deformity to grace  
that opens, that is

the hunt.