The Square Dance

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THE SQUARE DANCE

What must they be thinking—
as the booteels stomp time
on the barn’s sawdust floor
& the rotting boards whine
up & down rusty nails
like a plucked thing of music,
not the fiddle, not the banjo,
not the Jew’s harp or the caller
in the polyester collar
who sells life insurance
& like hick electrons
we hoot, sweat & hoe down,
& locked at the elbow
we swing & do-si-do
while the light bounces off
galvanized washtubs
full of ice, beer & breasts
under gingham do tom-toms
& we all come together,
touching wrists in the middle
like a flower closing up
for the night, till we blossom,
reassume goofy orbits
while the dumb/dumb bass picks
& grins, Nate spits tobacco
as below us, bewildered
in stalls, watching steam rise
off manure minarets
& the windows of rain,
listening, listening
to the yahoos who dance
as they stand fingerless,
unable to hold
instruments
— the horses?