



# A DERBY IN SAPPHICS

the stands thrummed a spring pentameter, the crowd  
mint-juleped and almost. green ardor simmered  
in the long-shot. a blue fly buzzed on the track.  
garlands of smoke from

the fat men in suits, sweat, perfume, the musk  
of horses. gamblers whinnied in their seats. this is  
not a story about victory. we raced  
toward a finish line

behind the grandstand, your polka dot skirt pulled  
up. without watching we could see the drama  
unwind: gate thrust and stampede wild, a senseless  
bounding forward. all

eyes in orbit as the zealous filly pulled  
in front, nose and nose with the other racers  
but stumbled back. another horse won the race,  
and the filly broke

both ankles, had to be put down. an anxious  
Kentucky sun fated your face as we drove  
squinting toward the horizon, our mouths smudged red  
as if we'd eaten

each other's hearts. that's a terrible image  
to end on—so obvious and overwrought—  
but i like it better than what happened next:  
a year of nothing.