

## Phyrron's Lament

— No one sees who prepares the chariot.

I've always loved the way  
I touch light first, sparks from their mouths  
as I tighten the reins, their manes stinking  
of sulfur, the chariot a gaping furnace

I must sink my fingers into. Rubbing smoke  
from my eyes, my worn-out hands bear all the shades  
of hindsight, burnt flesh the smell  
of anger — its flavor in my mouth.

Image after image in the dark,  
it never ends. Through the cave mouth,  
I sense only the ancient stars. I curse  
my burnt foot, belly slashed, but nobody answers —  
only the night birds, eating insects.

What does the world they race over  
look like, burning down on ships that appear  
and disappear like dots through clouds?  
Storks with wingspans like tents, long-beaked hunger

that could strip a man from his skeleton  
and in a flash wheel around for my burnt eyes.  
Bare twigs that tremble, scattering ravens  
under their blazing hooves.

Sometimes while they are gone,  
over my blood-soaked retinas  
a small geometric figure my size passes,  
pausing to look at me, a ghost  
of angles and lines I imagine blazes with color,  
surface shining like the sun I prepare —

not my husk of a body bent to scrape ash  
from each corner of their stable, crouching  
in dark all day, my crooked elbows smearing soot  
across the roof of the world.