

THE MOVING PICTURE PRINCIPLE  
*For Eadweard Muybridge*

Lauren Wilcox

Your staggered lenses, trained on an empty track,  
recorded what straggled into view  
and out again, a dustcloud and a leaning pack  
of horses. Silver decomposed to black

inside your boxes. You followed light—  
you weren't confused by motion—how an arc  
could splinter, how something dropped  
could fall in small and helpless stages, break,

and rise again, reassembling in air.  
You watched your wife step from the bath  
and knew that this, too, was a brief scene  
repeating, a strip of naked women

dealt like a deck of cards. In the muffled street,  
in winter, your plates darkened on a snow  
that stuttered down again in springtime,  
dim and slow, on a sheet hung in the garden.

Grey and halting faces approached  
and backed away; a woman withdrew  
through a shutting door:  
Time was a string of knots, a spiked wheel,

a seam that you could split and heal—  
As a boy, reclining on horsehair  
one morning on a train,  
you watched the countryside,

a single, light-filled frame  
in which lives flickered, drawn forward  
like a train along a track; you saw yourself,  
suspended in a fractured, endless motion,

going, never going back.