

**JOHN A. NIEVES**

**Labwork**

We can excuse the apprehension  
over places with names  
like Reactor Field, can push

back against tales of mutant  
neon squirrels, but a horse—  
a perfect horse—no, we fall

down here. One of the workers  
tells me it was buried in '72.  
Four decades in the ground

and it looks like it could trot  
over and lick my hand. Perhaps  
this has nothing to do with the radio-

activity used at this test facility.  
Perhaps this was merely a horse  
saint—some whinnying martyr.

That makes it a relic. That makes  
this holy ground. But more likely  
something smaller than the microbes

that eat the dead is eating the microbes  
that eat the dead. One decay in the way  
of another. I wonder if these suits

provide enough distance, or if we,  
too, are becoming permanent. Toy  
people to ride this toy steed.

The order is given to bury  
it again. Maybe this is taxidermy.  
Maybe we're already the museum.