Geese Leave Summit Lake

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The Geese Leave Summit Lake

*Howard Schaap*

The geese, too, are loath to leave this shore, now that the murky depths are unstuck from florid algae blooms, the air undraped with humidity, the nights unhung with drooping moon face. Now the distant shoreline sharpens again, the slight hook of silver moon slides up the lake’s mercurial mirror, the horizon softens to a line of slim colors, whites and light oranges and no swollen summer reds. So they swim out at dusk, bend the pane, linger around reedy points, remember the thick weight of summer air that made earth and firmament all of a piece and blurred edges between warm moist sky and warm moist lake, between goose and gosling, between life and death. They feel the new old cold on their rubber stockings. The time has come.

They angle off south, low over water as if to languor over the lake, as if, should they gain altitude too quickly, it would shatter memory. They dissolve with few wing beats into winter, a wavering goodbye, leaving me to the unbroken lake, to the moon hook slipping down the sky, leaving me to watch the unity of earth, air, and water shiver into distinctions.