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Geese Leave Summit Lake

Howard Schaap
Dordt College, howard.schaap@dordt.edu

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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.