

Wilderness House Literary Review 13/3

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Thousands of Snow Geese Fall Dead From the Sky in Idaho

This may have something to do
with cloud structure warping
the refractive nature of man's
accumulated ills and rubbish.

Plastic bags billowing across
the plains could have been
mistaken for diaphanous flocks
of blood-thirsty raptors.

Or lightning bolts may have been
misthreaded into the unsuspecting
flock, causing high concentrations
of a rare feather-choking disorder.

It might have arisen from
human-made deposits
of sky-refuse pooling thickly
over ancient migration routes.

But it may be an example of mass
hysteria goose-bumps interfering
with the genetics and mysterious
blue magnetism of the population.

Or possibly an isolated case
of the down-home avian jitters
caused a heart-defect syndrome
to break onto the scene.

Wilderness House Literary Review 13/3

But it could well have been
the shock-effect of entering Idaho
when the birds had originally
planned to fly into De Moines.

The Boat He Remembers

The boat he remembers
untied from the wooden pier,
after their father's funeral,
floats in a reverie of scaled paint.

Long, green oars crisscross
over the stern like a father
would fold his arms over
his chest to wait in uneasy
anticipation for the return
of sons from across the lake.

Two boys rise and maneuver
through their private dawns.
Each piece of information,
fails to fit concentric patterns,
the rings of liquid outward.
Taut lines of vision scan
morning's ashen waters.

Mist clings to the lake
like memory, a dark shore,
pinned to the distance
by a silent stance of herons.
The man who taught them
to fish and swim, vanished
in echoes of metal against metal,
the screech of oars to locks.

Wilderness House Literary Review 13/3

The older boy puts his back into it,
pulling hard into the lake,
while the younger, from the bow,
shouts directions - left, right -
as the boat pierces deeper water,
moving toward the confusion
of lily pads along the far shore.