

Goose

maybe you were shot  
pushing south  
on the way to warmth  
or some deciduous lover,  
quivering to the wingtips  
in anticipation or in chill

with a disruption of that grand  
interlocking of angles,  
that wordless connection of  
wet feathers and hollow bones,  
cut through early breath  
from a hunter's empty eye

your frame  
floating to a marsh  
in a soft arc  
like a coin flipped  
carelessly over a shoulder  
carrying a half-dream  
to its wishing well

but in reality  
you grew up a ball of gray down  
on a California farm,  
warm then, warm now

no thoughtless hope of love  
lay on the other side of a new season

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you only slept with  
a gander who was too loud  
and whose feathers were falling out

and he could never hear  
the rebel waver of a yell  
burning your throat  
your yearning for sky  
like when mother's tears first slipped  
down your clipped wings

your death had no  
bloody indignity  
in the maw of a shotgun  
or a bluetick hound

so when time came,  
behind thick grey feathers  
and closed black eyelids  
you hid last hopes  
from the farmer's flat knife

diving down,  
wings spread,  
feeling how far  
the wishing well sinks