

# I Am Watching Four Canada Geese

*Susan Elizabeth Howe*

in a perfect diamond of flight  
slip between me and the sky, circle  
toward rest and cover for the night.  
The lake is a polished absurdity  
so they settle for the center  
of the ploughed field, spiral down,  
angling toward a breathless last glide.  
My brothers would shoot them, but birds  
whose wings have beat a thousand miles  
through immortal cold won't end here.  
Won't end up. They're too smart.  
Once down, they turn into the field,  
just more dirty snow, frozen lumps  
against black sod. Their safety is emptiness;  
out there they can see two hundred yards  
in all directions, whatever tries to stalk.  
No food, though. The earth's been folded  
in upon itself till every trace of  
last year's grain is buried.  
Things get lost under what goes round.  
They'll huddle through the night, wait  
to feed till morning, when wheat fields are hard  
and ice crystals glitter through the air:  
winters, they recover the value of light.  
Till then, they'll be fine. While skeletons  
of trees etch themselves into the stillness  
and the blue world sinks toward black,  
the geese watch, sleep, wait.  
Death is not a subject.  
But dawn is what will lift them  
back into the sky.

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