

Elevations

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Writing Concentration Senior Project

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Three Hunters with Swans, Bear River, Utah

They wait for dawn in the rimed cattails.
Each breath plumes like a nimbus,
words frozen beneath their tongues.

Scouring the sunrise for silhouettes,
rifles point like fingers at the flock
flowing across the new sky.

Bird-call, then three shots strung together.
Three swans tumble to the water,
winged by orange light.

Whoops from the men. Their plashing
foot-falls fire scaups and grebes out
from bushels of bulrush.

Spilled feathers turn
beside the fowl like canoes.
Ink-stained beaks. Beady eyes glazing over.

They hoist the swans from the water—
two of them by the neck, the third by the feet.
Triptych or trifecta, not trinity.

Twelve-gauges over their shoulders,
camouflage waders and trapper hats askew,
they never question who shot which swan.

Dripping water on the levee, returning
crunch of their boots on gravel—
the sound of breaking shells.

