

Geese

After she'd lived some years alone
in a house filled with the silence
of the woods beyond the fence,
my mother started to hear the geese.

If the red lines from a lost sun
were striping the sky
and the trees had stopped moving altogether
and the meal-for-one was eaten and washed up
and the first broken cry
rolled faint through the air
before swelling to a bombing raid
of unstoppable klaxons
honking louder and louder
bellowing down her chimney
shaking the double-glazing
heading – the intimacy of it! –
straight for *her* small house,
she would rush out
holding a quite inadequate camera
at arm's length,
see the heavy V of bodies
slumping through the air above,
press it to her eye, squint
and squeeze.

Weeks later I'd receive a print
of a grey sky
with a grey smudge
somewhere near the middle.

Now, at night, in a circle of people
sitting upright in silent
welcome and surrender
in a tall old barn
many miles, many years away,
as geese suddenly thunder
through our dark peace,
I can't let them go.
Eyes closed,
I reach for a camera.