

# So Aloft

by [William Doreski](#) (January 2025)



Canada Geese in Spring (N.C. Wyeth, 1941)

## So Aloft

Geese trouble themselves overhead,  
polishing the air to a sheen.  
Hunters will drop most of them  
before they reach the brimming South.

I want to warn them that distance  
resists their migratory zeal,  
but they already know that.  
Their formation sprawls at least

a hundred geese wide. They swerve  
and veer, loosely chained together.  
Their voices creak and clatter  
as they scold the earthbound world.

I've never eaten goose, tame or wild.  
But I taste the sky they 've conquered—  
a wisp of pearl, a tang of forest,  
carbon emissions tart on the tongue.

Every autumn the geese unfold  
their maps and charts to navigate  
by dead reckoning a landscape  
that's forever changing color

because its shadows won't stay still.  
I'm a shadow of a shadow  
and move with slow awkward gestures  
no wild creature could endorse.

The sky drapes over me in folds  
thick enough to make me wonder  
if I could climb to goose-height  
if I had the mettle to try.

## **So Much Leverage**

Hour after hour rumples past  
and sloughs into a distance  
we don't know how to navigate.  
As we stand in the driveway talking

with the propane delivery man  
leaf-fall flusters down. The wind  
argues in muttered phrases  
that curdle in tossing maples.

You look as stoic as marble  
while I want to run away and hide  
in a city with a view of the sea  
serving up enormous metaphors.

But my rusty old knees creak  
and my angle of attack's uncertain.  
I dip into the conversation  
but lack the gusto required

to recap last week's football scores.  
The hours stick to me like leeches,  
each drawing only a little blood  
but the aggregate slowly killing me.

You're as aware as me, but choose  
to bury your debts in leaf-piles  
piled on tarps you drag to the woods.  
I wish I were so conversant,

but at least you notice the distance  
and sometimes follow with your gaze  
the Canada geese rowing overhead  
enroute to the promised land.

### **Quantum Mechanics Applied**

Combing through the dark matter  
to determine where you've gone,  
I revel in the slough of particles  
tickling and teasing me all over.

Physicists disagree on the depth  
and fact of this tingling mass,  
its place and function in the cosmos.

But it feels like discarded lovers  
lurking in the blind spots between  
nebula throbbing in the space  
slotted between brain and skull.  
You entered it by rolling back

your eyes to look inside yourself.  
A swami, rabbi, or village priest  
encouraged you, rippling the pages  
of an unreadable holy text.

No one thought you'd disappear  
without leaving a trace of ash  
or a damp spot on the sidewalk.  
Dark matter, you'd explained,

accounts for most of the universe,  
and you wanted to emboss it  
with a brisk orgasmic expression  
the entire creation would feel.

I don't. know if you succeeded,  
but I feel a gasp of discovery  
and glimpse a place more absolute  
than the close of a coffin lid.

## **Lucent Trends**

Does night turn us inside-out  
so that we inhabit rooms  
that don't occur in daylight?

The windows are painted black.  
Lamplight is only an attitude  
thickened like buckets of mud.

The moon frequently employs you

to take notes on its latest thoughts  
and spike those pages on stars.

You never reveal its secrets,  
but someday you might surprise me  
by peeling away the shadows.

Around us the rural neighborhood  
goes mad over lucent trends.  
People with flashlights prowl for clues.

Stumbling around with nerves exposed,  
we resemble gelatin creatures  
from the bottom of the sea.

Coyotes howl after midnight.  
Their voices of pure spun glass  
rise to a pitch, then shatter.

We upholster ourselves in bedclothes,  
but the dismal hours penetrate  
and force us both to concede.

### **The Cry of an Embryo**

Is that rasping noise a chainsaw  
or the cry of an embryo  
faced with its appalling future?  
Sighing, the tough old sky leans  
into the sound as if licking  
a wound. My daily walk passes  
through this piercing racket, the source  
concealed by compacted forest

The November trees look strict  
and old-fashioned. The leaf-fall  
has abated, the mass of chloroplasts  
already decaying in place

like me in my feckless retirement.  
I presume that the embryo thinks  
in evolutionary terms. Its face  
is still faceless, its species unknown.

Why should it voice like a chainsaw?  
To warn or threaten the forest?  
A friendly dog arrives on its leash.  
Its owner asks if I understand  
that distant, distinct cacophony.  
Yes, I reply, it's a creature  
in its earliest development  
about to anoint all three of us  
as we stand here chill and chatting.

## [Table of Contents](#)

**William Doreski** lives in Peterborough, New Hampshire. He has taught at several colleges and universities. His most recent book of poetry is *Cloud Mountain* (2024). He has published three critical studies, including Robert Lowell's *Shifting Colors*. His essays, poetry, fiction, and reviews have appeared in various journals.

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