



Snow Geese

The young man with the shotgun
Walks into the newly cut grain field,
A field near several old meander loops
Of the Rio Grande in far south Texas,
The Laguna Madre just behind the brush line,
The morning crisp, even cold, for the Valley.

The cardboard decoys are set out,
Two dozen just purchased by my dad,
Purchased with money that was not abundant,
My father learning so he could teach me –
Instructing me to scrunch down into the black loam,
Teaching me to arrange the cover of grain stalks,
The geese noisy on the refuge a mile away,
Then rising, making a collective roar,
A roar that lives within the memory
Of the not-so-young man today.

The single snow goose came lumbering
Over the field, wings set, feet down,
Gliding into the decoys
To be met by Number 4 shot,
Crumpling and falling from the sky,
The young man running to his first goose -
Proud like only a ten-year old can be.

Today that snow goose lives within me,
My shotgun set aside decades ago,
The memory of that first snow
Like a thought I have heard
Ascribed to Native Americans,
A sentiment of respect for the animal

That offers its life to you,
A sentiment of interconnectedness,
A sentiment of responsibility,
A sentiment that comes with taking life.

Here began my journey to Earth Church,
A path with many forks, with many decisions,
A path with mistakes and then hope,
And today when I see the flock of snows
Flying above the prairie,
Moving to the new green shoots
In the next field over,
I wish them a safe journey
Just as I have had a safe journey
For we are brothers and sisters
In life.