

HOW GEESE FLY

*In the Yellowstone, in the winter,
right where the Lewis River meets
the head water of the Snake,
there is an oasis—a nut-brown island
surrounded by diamond white snow and
covered with the droppings of geese.*

*Warmed by hot springs, in the cold of winter,
this particular spot of ground
never gives to snow, the flakes harmless
where they land,
sucked into the soil like vapor.*

*Here is sanctuary, a full acre of warmth—
a full acre of geese.*

*If you should find yourself there—
run fast toward the confluence.
Your arms will want to rise at the shoulder
and rapidly fall to your sides.*

*You need not scream.
As you run, the geese (all thousand of them)
will begin (in a great slow rush)
to fly—a chaos without proportion.*

*You will see that they gain height,
painfully slow.
You may be struck hard by the sight
of those ridiculously outstretched necks
(the diameter of a child's wrist),
Vulnerable,
so far ahead of their beating source of power.*

*And as those necks appear to pull
that awkward body into the air,
you will note those wild eyes straining
black and backward—all panic, terror of
impossibility.*

*But you will also note that geese never
miss their takeoff. You will note that
they never crash.*

*You will see
(in the deafening sound of this great
honking and beating of air)
that all of this will work.*

You will know the unity of chaos.

*And this is the miracle
that you will witness
in the Yellowstone, in the winter,
on a simple island of geese droppings
where the Lewis meets the Snake.*

—Brad L. Roghaar