plunged like an arrow into the earth. The acorn itself was loose, but the root was fixed: I thought if I could lift the acorn and stand, I would heave the world. Beside the root erupted a greening shoot, and from the shoot spread two furred, serrated leaves, tiny leaves of chestnut oak, the size of two intricate grains of rice. That acorn was pressured, blown, driven down with force and up with furl, making at once a power dive to grit and *grand jeté en l'air.*

Since then the killing frost has struck. If I got lost now on the mountains or in the valley, and acted foolishly, I would be dead of hypothermia and my brain wiped smooth as a plate long before the water in my flesh elongated to crystal slivers that would pierce and shatter the walls of my cells. The harvest is in, the granaries full. The broadleaf trees of the world's forests have cast their various fruits: "Oak, a nut; Sycamore, achenes; California Laurel, a drupe; Maple, a samara; Locust, a legume; Pomegranate, a berry; Buckeye, a capsule; Apple, a pome." Now the twin leaves of the seedling chestnut oak on the Carvin's Cove path have dried, dropped, and blown; the acorn itself is shrunk and sere. But the sheath of the stem holds water and the white root still delicately sucks, porous and permeable, mute. The death of the self of which the great writers speak is no violent act. It is merely the joining of the great rock heart of the earth in its roll. It is merely the slow cessation of the will's sprints and the intellect's chatter: it is waiting like a hollow bell with stilled tongue. *Fuge, tace, quiesce.* The waiting itself is the thing.

Last year I saw three migrating Canada geese flying low over the frozen duck pond where I stood. I heard a heart-stopping blast of speed before I saw them; I felt the flayed air slap at my face. They thundered across the pond, and back, and back again: I swear I have never seen such speed, such single-mindedness, such flailing of wings. They froze the duck pond as they flew; they rang the

air; they disappeared. I think of this now, and my brain vibrates to the blurred bastinado of feathered bone. "Our God shall come," it says in a psalm for Advent, "and shall not keep silence; there shall go before him a consuming fire, and a mighty tempest shall be stirred up round about him." It is the shock I remember. Not only does something come if you wait, but it pours over you like a waterfall, like a tidal wave. You wait in all naturalness without expectation or hope, emptied, translucent, and that which comes rocks and topples you; it will shear, loose, launch, winnow, grind.

I have glutted on richness and welcome hyssop. This distant silver November sky, these sere branches of trees, shed and bearing their pure and secret colors—this is the real world, not the world gilded and pearled. I stand under wiped skies directly, naked, without intercessors. Frost winds have lofted my body's bones with all their restless sprints to an airborne raven's glide. I am buoyed by a calm and effortless longing, an angled pitch of the will, like the set of the wings of the monarch which climbed a hill by falling still.

There is the wave breast of thanksgiving—a catching God's eye with the easy motions of praise—and a time for it. In ancient Israel's rites for a voluntary offering of thanksgiving, the priest comes before the altar in clean linen, empty-handed. Into his hands is placed the breast of the slain unblemished ram of consecration: and he waves it as a wave offering before the Lord. The wind's knife has done its work. Thanks be to God.