

Shooting Geese,

I'll maintain, is a thing I did for love.

At fifteen, a girl will crouch in the blind
until her toes go numb, eager

to prove her aim. It's hard to know how far she'll go
over slick rocks at the shore's edge
lugging her body weight in decoys

for a boy. A boy who'll later trace with his finger
the white smudge growing inside her, nothing
more than a sonogram, & ask if it is

too late. Changing my mind at the right time
has never been my strength. I'd wait.

I'd hold my breath with the water

as my witness, my finger loose against the trigger,
taking direction not from that north wind
or whitecaps or silhouettes circling

plastic geese, so when that boy mouthed *now*
through clenched teeth it never occurred to me
that I might have been their first

warning, might have pointed toward the sun
rising & fired both rounds, as if to say no,
I won't bait them, won't

watch them glide toward those empty shells
so much like themselves, but I let them fall
one by one to the dark of that water.

By their necks, like bouquets, I held them up
as proof, then lay them in a row on shore.
There, on my knees, I gripped them

each in turn & spun their bodies counterclockwise
against the stillness of their heads,
just in case, just to be sure.