

Though I live in the land of 10,000  
lakes, I'm already planning how I'll thrive  
once Nestlé's bought us out. The trickle  
through my swamp side plot is full  
of beaver scat, but where they took  
the popple out, oaks dug in  
and kept the sun from sucking  
dry the scrub. We're not above  
eating the rodents here, but we know  
to let the beavers have their way.  
The real question is: who's  
going to have to learn to use the gun?  
The old guy down the road says  
he'll keep watch and isn't afraid  
to shoot, but he's sure to expire  
first, and what it means to be lucky  
changes by the hour. Most of us  
have never seen a bird like that  
said to guide sailors home, said  
to invite the most gratuitous acts,  
but the swamp will lodge whatever lasts  
long enough to come. Sooner or later  
everything will show up hungry,  
and the beavers are going  
to host. We approve the long  
gouges in the snow where they write  
their ancestral names. We go out now  
and sit on their mounds in awe, pray  
they'll add volume every year,

and hope the lake they're making  
is on its way to something vast.  
Don't laugh, you with stilted houses  
on the beach: We're here to remind you  
that catchy refrain is only a fragment  
of the plague song kids unwittingly  
sing. The rest is shot through with verbs  
you're going to want to recognize  
when the time comes.