

## New Moon and Astotin Lake

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# New Moon

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*Ralph D. Witten*

the wrench slipped and  
my thumb nail jammed  
against the metal frame,  
blood rose black.  
everyone said  
you're gonna lose that.  
it hurt like hell

weeks of watching  
chips from the bottom  
black blood fading, and  
like a pallid husk in fall  
loose and dangling  
it was ready to leave  
and rejoin earth

but growing underneath  
underneath it all  
a new moon rising

clever little nail  
how did you know  
to heal yourself,  
to remake yourself?

I should take notes

# Astotin Lake

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*Ralph D. Witten*

There was a time when smooth rocks  
broke the water's surface  
like the backs of small reptiles.  
We worried the lake would dry up.

We've watched cormorants  
wipe out spruce on an island.  
It took twelve years. Then watched  
aspen and birch come back.  
Watched the circle dive of pelicans  
feeding, and their synchronous flight  
mere metres above the water.  
Saw the constructions of beavers:  
two-storey lodges and dams  
that would make the Dutch envious.  
Heard the autumn bellow  
of elk (please! please!  
I'm waiting in the bare trees!)  
the staccato honking of geese  
descending to the lake,  
the sundown calls of coyotes  
asking where will you be tonight?

Saw blood and splintered bone

on the snowpack trail,  
tawny reeds held by black ice.  
Heard the intermittent chorus  
of wood frogs in the softgreen  
theatre of spring,  
the moon song of a loon, spirited  
from its patterned throat.

There was a time to move through this world slowly  
and learn rhythm.

now the lake rises against the odds  
now we see the unleashed energy  
behind the driving rain clouds  
beneath the pounding whitecaps  
we see the changes of our hands  
and the mutations of our thoughts

everywhere water's rising

