

1981

Maintaining the Indistinguishable

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Recommended Citation

Rogers, Pattiann. "Maintaining the Indistinguishable." *The Iowa Review* 12.1 (1981): 102-103. Web.
Available at: <https://doi.org/10.17077/0021-065X.2836>

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Maintaining the Indistinguishable · *Pattiann Rogers*

Sonia and Cecil are surprised to learn
That the large, snow-covered objects dotting
The beach across the lake are not stones
Or pieces of broken ice washed ashore,
But whooper swans, waiting through the storm, drawn-in
And pressed close to the earth, their heads out-of-sight
Beneath their wings, their bodies gradually
Becoming indistinguishable from the snow-drifts
Building on the beach.

Gordon, sitting by the fire inside, likes to imagine
The white snow slowly covering the white swans, snow so light
Its only recognizable touch is cold, and the invisible
Black spaces caught inside the crystals
Of each white flake. And he likes to imagine the thick
White feathers beneath the snow, feathers so soft
A blind man might miss their touch, and the dark
Spaces caught deep inside the down of each soft barb.
And beneath the feathers, he likes to imagine the swans
So real their most definite touch is the shudder
Of light caught inside their black eyes, light
Almost indistinguishable from the blind crystals caught
Against the window looking out on the white cavity of the storm.

Felicia is excited by this discovery
And has convinced Albert to join her in fashioning
Swans of snow all along the lakefront before the house.
Afterwards they will curl up on the shore,
Put their faces under their arms and wait in the falling snow
Until Sonia tells them they are indistinguishable
From the snow-swans they have created on the beach,
Which are indistinguishable from the swan-like drifts
Spanning the snowy shore, which are indistinguishable
From the whooper swans waiting across the dark lake,
Sleeping inside the falling black spaces caught
Inside the touch of white caught inside their eyes.

Felicia and Albert, curled inside the black cavity
Of sleep inside the swans they have invented inside themselves
Are also able to maintain such spaces.

Gordon is certain that all swan-like figures
Are completely indistinguishable from the white shudder
Of words caught in the act of creating
Their most peculiar distinctions.