**Departing from the Mouth of the Swan in the Eighth Month of a Pandemic**

David Axelrod

The Hungry Ghost moon sets

and bats flutter at my shoulder

in a dream—it’s already morning

and we’re paddling glassy water,

her out ahead of me in the bow,

our wake trailing molten and cold.

Grief’s full volume presses harder

each hour, intimate now as ovals

deer pressed along shore

and in the same frosted grass as we slept

below larches, mountains, exposures of sky,

that feeling coming through the skin

of the hull between us and lake water—

it’s a world so still,

its dust lies meters deep

burying boulders, half-submerged

boles of cottonwood, a green film

we glide across, solitary and small.