Recovery at Lake Tahoe

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RECOVERY AT LAKE TAHOE

The rocky beach shines in mid-August late afternoon sun between shadows of Ponderosa pines. Ripples stripe the water near shore. Across the lake blue deepens into troughs of indigo. Far out, I imagine, the wind swells. But here it is benign, the leaves of manzanita, at the periphery already beginning to yellow, barely move. A brownish blackbird, probably female, chirrups beneath a thicket of deerbrush, while a Chris-Craft throttles back its engines approaching the pier reggae blaring. The young man driving and his passenger shed their sky blue t-shirts as they pass, letting another kid jump on before roaring out again, spraying up a frothy wake. I try to stay in the present, disengaged from what seems to move too fast. Around me the world strives to maintain a good mood. Two girls in red swim suits, approaching adolescence, half-immersed, agitate in the mottled water. Everything seems to be calling out, too soon, too soon. A blackbird flashes its yellow eyes as it plunges its wing feathers into the glassy curl at the shoreline’s edge. *Euphagus cyanoccephalus*. The end of summer presses down through the alders with an urgent sweetness. We do what we can to deny what Keats with some reluctance was forced to accept—the exhaustion of the inexhaustible. So I must learn to look more closely, to count the number of pine needles in a cluster, to know things by their proper names. To smell wood smoke hovering over a metal picnic table set with a checkered cloth for a family. Five little girls in bright towels and hoodies scuffing the rocks. While a blackbird fluffs its feathers on a lakefront post beside an empty table, standing on one foot.