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## NAN BRYNE

### What the Swans Know

The human mind fails  
to make sense of human violence

improvises using the tools at hand.  
A hate crime becomes the consequence of  
immorality,

an ambush of the unworthy by the worthy.  
Historical art form; the silhouette

of one man blithely sitting atop the head of  
another.

Rape becomes an error in judgement,

a critical analysis of specific actions taken  
or not taken, a plotted trajectory of glances

and words down an invisible path.  
For example if a girl, let's call her Jennifer

sits in a car with a boy. Enters there *willingly*  
as a sister might sit with a brother

at a basketball game or a pie eating contest.  
Two children from the same tribe

attending some ritual, and the boy  
reaches up to seize her throat.

Then through some untraceable signal  
she has incited him to violence.

Unlike the swan who brain at one-eighth  
the size of the human brain knows

the shape of the predator informed only  
by the unalterable tendency of instinct.

The human mind resists the pull of  
predictability  
involves itself with reasons,

carries only the remnant of inheritance,  
the fingers on the throat.

*Nan Byrne's poetry appears earlier in this volume.*