

Woodchuck murmurs out of her sleeve of earth,
Grey hawk eyes me high in a dead tree.
The earth is all clue.
My own shape and surface are as green
And fluid as the Monocacy.
Dancing the animal movements,
Wolf-dog, deer, and badger,
I learn the community of beasts.
We are a confluence of ancient powers.

When I was young, the mist-wolves
Encircled me. Three times I saw them,
Prowling, silent. Huge they appeared
As I lay sleeping. What were they guarding?
Now they lead me to go
Deeper than Bethlehem in my native place,
To find my bonds to a soft-footed race
That did not slouch, to beasts
That do not bring apocalyptic terror.

How I want to repair the long denial of this place,
Immerse the image of this land in its own
Real history, not the European's only
But the spirits of wolf and badger,
The black bear who do not gather here now
But whose name the road wears I walk on.

Every day I gather myself more into this place.
And in the night, awake with darkness,
All my feeling lies with this green earth,
This moving water. I have found by fire
My pouch of remedies, pressed wild fox-grapes
To my simple tongue, recomposed the beaver
Bone by bone.

My intestines shine like crystal.
I bear the river's weight, dancing
Into wilder clarity.
The eyes of creatures bless me.

The waters tell me I am turning
Into the right direction, dancing down the wind.

I am drifting deep in a reverie of rivers.
My small mouth churns with songs.
All that is left of me streams
With the deep, eddying knowledge
Of how to go home.



Ralph Wanderer

NEW WORLDS

The hot sun palms Portland with surprise
startling stunted cactus with germinal memories
flattering green tomatoes
dignifying roses
stirring and turning the helix seed through me
that spins itself into the ground
knowing with genetic certainty
it will beat the odds
it will survive
hell, flourish
The helix seed in me
that moves out into summer
stretching shanks, uncurling
pumping out across land like
rhizome runners in blood hot soil
Yes, I think I will not work
or sleep
but traipse through backyard country
triumphant in towns I remember
new worlds rolling across my forehead like sweat