Jean Pearson

LEARNING TO FLOAT IN THE MONOCACY after reading Paul Shepard

Crouching beside the sunlit water,
Guided by the quiet stream,
I learn the way to go.
Knowing how it bends and goes on
Beyond autumn's leafy arc of reflection,
I bend to learn the *other* history of this place,
Releasing the creek's real name:
Monakessi. Stream that Bends.

Digging under the city of Bethlehem, Ignoring 300 years of imported history, I am calling back

The original people of this place.
I am calling the original people
To help me free a place for myself
Where I can guard whatever is left of wildness
And let it grow.

In awe of the stream, the trees, the tribes
Of the Lenape before Lord Delaware marked them
With his name, I dig and call:
Minsi, Unami, the well-grown, straight-looked
First people move and crouch here
200 years before my ancestors
Ever dream of leaving Sweden.

Turning back Bethlehem, I hear the Minsi Chanting, dancing the wolf, their totem.
Close to the Monocacy the wolf-clan hunted.
Images of animals ran through their language,
Shaped their self-knowledge. Music,
The mysteries of kinship have been with us
From all time. We have been bathed in voices
From before the light. A million secret tongues
Have entered the wilderness, risen in blades of grass,
Their visions passing.

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