

Bill Siverly

Wind Mountain

After climbing a mile of switchbacks and scree,
We come to rock pits built by Chinookan boys
Who waited for spirit powers to show themselves,
Reaching back to the animals we have always been.

The Columbia leads the eye in long and shining curves
Toward the western end of the gorge, Washougal
Vanishing in distant mist and darkness,
The way our vision cannot pass beyond death.

But here the mind turns to the absence of animals
In woods of starving second or third growth,
As if the world evolved only for humans,
A million more of us born every four days,
Crowding the others into oblivion.

A thousand feet below, Wind River passes under
Highway and railroad bridges to join the Columbia,
And Home Valley passes from farms to suburbia.
Trains and trucks pass through with horns blaring.

Our vision withdraws like the moon's eclipse
As elk, bear, and eagle wait patiently within
For each of us to be ready to receive them again,
For each of us to be ready to carry life forward on earth.