

Paulann Petersen

Carried from the Current

My house near the Willamette
is only blocks from that river,
yet the sound of its rise and fall, its steady
on-going to the Columbia, to the Pacific,
doesn't loft into air and carry this far.

Cars coming across the narrow
lamp-lit bridge arcing its surface—
they lay down a schussh I catch.
Geese that fly from its edges
to neighborhood ponds and parks
wrinkle the air with their calls.
Raccoons making dens on its near bank
rustle in my garden at night. With eyes lit up
for garter snakes, they thresh flowers,
then tidy up, washing their hands
at the birdbath's edge.

A river's roam, that big sounding,
makes an under-rumble quieter yet—
an ocean-bound heartbeat
I press my ear earthward to hear.