

Bill Siverly

Fish Creek

For Mike Wiley

The midsummer creek fans out through small boulders
Rounded and rolled by ancient migrations downstream.
Its waters enter the reticent Clackamas River
Through trickling rills, a hundred anonymous mouths.

The longer we sit by the water the voices of fathers
Whisper their sadness that catches in our ears,
Like remote echoes of guilt from things done and left undone,
So only alluvial feeling descends to the sons.

Or maybe our memories masquerade as water,
And we hear from our fathers the guilt that we alone bear,
For water, the alchemists say, is our refining fire,
And what remains is what we have done and left undone,
The distant cries of children whose needs we can never redeem.

We can't help but see our fathers in ourselves:
His hands, his walk and his gaze converge in us
Whenever we catch ourselves reflecting by the stream,
The way he stared into campfires on the rivers of our youth.

The Clackamas slides by in a slow, broad curve,
Deepening here to a blue-green pool so clear
We can see old tires and hovering trout below,
The silence absorbing the final murmurs of Fish Creek in its flow.