

Walk in the Park

Tuesday, first day of autumn,
I fire up the rusty Buick,
drive to Tumalo State park,
where the wind, high in the trees,
thinks it's wind's day.

Water, old as the earth,
young enough for joy,
travels this wide world over,
flows down Deschutes River,
laughs and sings
on its way to the sea
the beautiful, beautiful sea.

Black rocks, grey rocks
stand in the current,
thrust tops up
into dry sunlight,
ringed with white and grey
where dirt in the water
inhabited by millions
of very small lives
stayed
when moistened rock dried.

Is the life in those rings still alive?

I know something about poems
about writing
about life,
but I can't answer that question
with the assurance understanding brings.

Some black rocks, grey rocks
live their lives entirely underwater.
I would like to ask them
what they have seen,
what they have heard
from water
flowing over them,
what long, slow contemplation
reveals to them about the universe,
but I know
I won't be here
when they begin to answer,
a price I pay for flash existence,
burned like leaves of grass
while the earth abides.

A tribe of water skeeters
with their hydrofuge hairpiles,
retractable preapical claws,
and elongated legs and bodies,
skate on the water's surface,
about 40 of them,

hard to count,
they move with excitement
when the first falling leaf
comes to visit,
drifting down
to the water's surface
at the center of the tribe,
says
"I can't stay mes amis,
amigos,
mah true friends.
I have places to be
and promises to keep.
Adieu. Adieu."
turning and turning
in river current,
then coming round right,
sailing toward the ocean
the ocean
far down there.

A golden mantle ground squirrel,
shoulder deep in its hole
watches me.

After a busy summer
only one human?

I would explain
but I have places to be
things to do
walk up
fire up the Buick again
renewed by my brief visit
to this river,
to different lives
of the water
of different times
of different ways of seeing
hearing
thinking
living.