Missoula, September, 1996

Brenda Tao Lee Nesbitt
Even here in Missoula, 
I find my way to water, 
to the streams that run 
through dark, ribbed shadows 
of culverts, to a willow tree 
that bends, leans out 
over liquid space, indented 
with the dangling shadow 
of my own two feet. 

Fishes circle in the shallows. Ducks swim up stream. A gold leaf falls, drifts down in lazy circles, shivers through the thin, breathless air. 

In Missoula, 
I find my way to the rivers: the Clarkfork and Rattlesnake; find my footsteps weaving, pushing through the overgrown tangle of paths, crawling through the scratching arms of snowberries, asking for forgiveness from the Grandmothers, the Spiders, whose webs I unweave. 

And then 
I am there, with the water glinting off the smooth, round bodies of stones. The water rippling, pooling in the shallows, welcoming me with bright laughter,
like a daughter, like a sister,  
who has finally found  
her way home.

In memory of our friend, Brenda Tao Lee Nesbitt.  
We miss your singing and your dancing.  

1952-1996