Missoula, September, 1996

Brenda Tao Lee Nesbitt

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MISSOULA, SEPTEMBER, 1996

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