

AUDREY J. WHITSON

In the Tracks of Wild Animals

my eyes open as I enter the shade
at first I am shocked
looking down to find such company
the four-legged with whom
I share the path
absence of human signature

*having wandered far
from streambeds, ridges
onto concrete plains
groping along stretches
vaguely familiar
we remember the way to waters
traverse edges of glacial meltways*

how well my feet slip into form
navigate past first stands
of birch, aspen
the weight of journey
packed deep in snow

*sure again along natural routes
our bodies open us
into the low places
quench a thirst for meadow
browse on willow, berry.*

Teresa: Dreams from Tenochtitlan

Some dead ones, my forbearers, drew themselves 'round, squatting and sitting, seven men. They gave me the hoe of my *padres*, the hoe that parted the earth at spring planting in our plot each year. They gave it to me staring, their eyes into mine, "Guard this! Keep it safe...."

And each night they encircled me, saying nothing with their lips, only looking their eyes into mine: "Guard this! Keep it safe...." And each night came the dog, the black dog, huge and horrifying that attacked me but didn't take the victory, though it broke the stick, my parent's hoe in half. And each night the beast died there, its green eyes sad and longing.

The final night, the eldest one said to me, mind to mind, eye to eye, tool in hand, "Now is your turn to conquer! Now is your turn to vanquish!" The stick became whole and mine. And the wise ones returned no more.

Audrey J. Whitson is an Edmonton theologian, writer, and photographer. Her photographs, poems, and essays have appeared in Grail, Other Voices, Creation Spirituality Magazine, and Quest. In the '80s, Audrey worked with exiles, migrant workers, and refugees from Latin America. Fluent in Spanish, she later travelled to Mexico, Chile, Argentina, and Peru visiting repatriated friends and experiencing first-hand, grassroot movements for change, particularly among women.