

Lines Written to Susan While Listening to Badger Creek (And Reading Mary Oliver)

After kneeling,
before dew-dropped bluebells,
gathering camas,
and stooping for morels,

the old woman teeters home.

After sautéing the bulbs and mushrooms
she listens long to the red winged's song,
"Conk la REE." "Conk la REE,"

and until dark to honks and barks of geese
hoping to never hear
the lone goose drifting.

She takes a deep breath
smells the coming rain
and leaves the door and window open.

After all--
it's hardest
to get into bed alone,

so she takes the most time
until even the frogs go silent.

She does like reposing
with her toes dangling
(an inch or two beyond the daybed)
and wiggling them
until sunrise.

On Clamming at Netarts Bay

Better than any fountain show
the cockles spurt a rhythm
none can master.
Each clammer finds a note
here and there
while traipsing the bar
to the clam bed.

Then the dank bay slurps
gaper-chasing arms—
a melody of “Got one by the tongue” ensues.
Echoes of laughter
sound the harmony

until the band
pushes the tide as far away
as imaginable
and has to wade waist deep to shore
when Mother Nature churns the chant,
“You've stayed too long!”

The evening ends
as cleaning begins:
much harder than the catching
and less productive,
yet the troupe
jokes their guts out
and fries the remains.
some tasty tidbits--
and memory satisfies the appetite.

To Those Who Follow

Some man in the group
points to where I had lain
and says,
“A deer bedded here earlier today.”

Less wary and without doe eyes,
I made my mark
wanting to be more like a deer
than a man.

Oh and what I saw.

At ground level
millions of grass seed stems
waving above blade
waiting for a sunny day
and some wind.

Blue flax, bluebells, clematis.
Camas flourishing this rainy spring.

I waited for blue
and humming birds,
for squirrels and meadow larks.

And they waited on me
until I could lie no more
and became a man again.