



Directive

Paul Lindholdt

Mine's a line of people who talk
to animals. Who believe
animals can understand them.
Maybe your folks do likewise.
My people rally yelps, squawks
and hoots from elk and coyotes,
turkeys and owls. I do a decent
turkey gobble myself.
Flow on, you animal talkers,
you bird whisperers. Flow on.

You already speak to your pets
and nobody thinks you're crazy.
Nobody asks whether they can
hear you. We mammals grow bones
in our heads that transmit sound.
The hammer, the anvil, the stirrup.
Speaking to other species makes
healthy sense in the head.
Gobble on, you talkers and squawkers.
Ride your words downwind, downstream.

In the Spokane River's spirit, I urge you to
babble to the wildlife. Not only
can they hear you; they will talk
back if you learn their speech.

Whistle to the marmots
in the rocks beside the stream.
They might fear at first you're a fiend
that means to eat them.
They might dive for their lairs.
No matter. Let the air bear you, carry you.

Don't stop there. Open yourself like some
St. Francis to inanimate listeners too.
Address the trees, the stones, the water.
Loft your language to the wind.
Even if people on footbridges
above the river take you for a madman,
a madwoman. Even if you come
away drenched from the sheets of spray.
Use your words to channel strands
of water and divide the silver like a seam.