

Walking in September

Up a faint and dusty trail
to the ridge — almost an animal
track — past spiny sunflowers
in smoke-filled air, the pale light
bright as the glare off glass from cars
parked below.

Dry, scraping sounds
of balsam root leaves — is that
a rattle? Glance down to check i
t's not a snake — then up again
to the other side of the hollow,
where a coyote sprints flat out
across yellow grass into a bush,
out of which rushes a rabbit
that flees into a stand of gambrel oak
too far from me to hear any chase
and scuffle in the brush.

I stare
for a while and nothing seems to change.
But by standing still and not looking,
I'm able to eye a woodpecker
that lands to my side in a tree
and watch it scoot and spiral
up the trunk. I pass the wall outside
the Community Center pool
in echoes of girls laughing,
splashing under a chorus
of "Bittersweet Symphony"
by *the Verve*, the melody floats
above and shimmers like afternoon
sun moving south faster
now as I range from place to place,

my mental map has rearranged,
or enlarged, with more space to let
my thoughts untangle
or places to push them aside
to wait in another room
behind a door for later,
and by the time I fill my hands
with wild apples bigger
than plums, I've forgotten
what had worried and backed me
into a corner, lost
in taste of tart fruit, rosy pink
and the sense of some answer
near, just around a bend,
on the tip of my tongue...

~ Rachel White