

What We Love

Tell me what you love most in the world.

Is it the icy Klamath that rushed around your thighs
as you cast a looping line to land a fly
so tenderly it left no trace on the water,
as your father had taught you?

Is it the 30-million-year-old fossils
you scraped from the earth,
the story written in bones of an ancient world
when a great sea covered most of the land
on which you stood?

Is it the birds of your childhood,
the California quail,
the white-tailed kite,

the red-winged blackbird—
a humble shadow scrabbling in the brush,
then lifting to flight in a startling flash of red?

Is it the trees of California,
the fragrant bay laurel,
which you snap in two to remind yourself
of where you came from
and who you are,

or the grand live oak,
which you now call your spirit animal?

Is it the hillside below that home,
where you kept bees
and grew grapes and roses with your father,
who taught you to putter about the wild chaparral
learning the names of the trees
and the birds and the flowers?

Is it your girls,
who have learned from you
to love all the flora and fauna
of the living earth,
as your father did before you?

Is it all of that,
and all of us?

You are
what we love most in the world as well.

—Sharon V. Brown

