

## Old Language

We canyoned in early, on wheels,  
and now have little time, we think;  
but sandstone pulses red on all sides  
and the town, the business of the town,  
trails off like a lost thought.

Here is a place of memory.  
A small boat streams and arrows us  
in deep where sacred datura seeps  
on the shoulders of the water  
and a salamander like an icon  
bronzes in orange clay, orange light.

At last the boat hushes, slows  
and brushes cathedral walls  
of the Anasazi and the Fremont,  
one of which spirited seven figures  
here, imagined them large, draped  
them sparely, hammered or blooded  
them into life, floated or angled  
them in mystery.

We have a few hours here.  
Box elder trees tendrils the walls,  
hanging like unspoken words;  
an old wind breathes on the water.  
Light flares high on the paintings,  
the sun of another near-nighttime,  
another arrival back and inward  
on the river, in the slickrock,  
in the heart of all that is changed  
but must not change in this land  
that glides us through our deepest dreams.

—Dawn Baker Brimley