

# Night Work Near Escalante

*Dixie Partridge*

After dawn we hike through fine rain,  
but the light is good, only slight  
cellophane distortion as we look through  
at trees and stream, box canyon walls  
soft with shrubbery.

Except for footfall, water  
is the only sound—the *shhh*  
of droplets on leaves, Calf Creek  
where it narrows over rock,  
widens and silks out.

Stubs of tree trunks dot the shore,  
dark and old, then we notice fresh ones—  
still pale with the sap life of wood—  
move closer to the creek  
and find beaver stacks along the way:  
three pools below their dams  
before we reach the falls.

We see no animals,  
but their lodges and tunnels underwater  
are a presence  
in a splendid privacy.

A fresh-stripped tree lies across  
the trail, and the sound of its falling,  
the hidden waiting of beaver for a sense  
that all's clear, their gnawing,  
seem only to have occurred  
in slow-motion silence—  
long before our coming and while we were  
near, ongoing, veiled  
beyond night. . .the utterance of the current  
in some past/future tense  
we try to render our own.