

Night Canoe on Lake Sandoval

To float on the surface of Lake Sandoval at night
under constellations I do not recognise -
their reflections beneath and all around me -

is this what being dead is like? No bank,
no moonlit waterlilies opening their petals
like fragrant new planets.

The giant river otters sleep in their den.
If morning comes, I'll be a river wolf like them,
dive to the bottom of the lake

in the far crescent where people aren't allowed.
I will move in my element like an astronaut,
feed on catfish from the mud of the cosmos.

And if I re-surface, all harm will leave my throat
through those wavering screams the giant otters emit
to warn off predators. The oxbow lake will rejoin

its river and coil with other rainbow boas, writhe
in breeding-balls to replenish the land.
The stars will look down at me in my canoe

like the eyes of extinct species. Amazonia,
where the zodiacs are so low I can touch them -
I'll spend my second life calling the animals back down.