

Sylvia Ashby

Water Witching

for S. J.

A forked twig, usually hazel
though peach or willow will do,
even metal wires twisted into Y.
It's a question of holding the rod lightly
steering, as if plowing the air,
feeling the flow beneath the feet.
Then letting go, so the hazel branch answers
vibrating to a subterranean message.
No trance or eccentric theatrics--
the water witch treads deftly
palms up, elbows out
keen to the whim of the stick.

Suddenly the fork dips down--
quivers and squirms--
resonating with the hidden stream.
The water witch knows
where a current will surface,
where a bubbling spring will break;
can sense the deepest pockets, buried wells;
has a talent for tapping the source--
whatever the mystery--
hidden in the darkness below. . . .

Sylvia Ashby's background is in theatre, acting and writing--with 15 published plays for family audiences and thousands of productions. Last spring after her short memoir appeared in *Anderbo.com*, she was prompted to send out poetry: Some two dozen pieces have appeared or are forthcoming in various literary magazines. Sylvia grew up in Detroit, and now lives in W. Texas with her theatre historian/husband.