

Gardens

The path to the ecosystem preserve
slides between birch trees. Later
at twilight, a boy and a girl, arms
twined around one another, will sneak
between boughs, among ferns spread on
the edges of this trail, their evening strolls
turned to romps, moss squishing, then
flattening under their bodies.

Wood chips land in my shoes
with every footfall, every inch forward
an accumulation of sticks and verdure.
I tread upon bark mulch and leaves
the sound of my steps muted
by leaves. Rain drizzles overhead
soaking my sweater, then my skin.

My mind wanders to a meadow
finches sing and dive overhead.
Our hands clasped, you murmur
love to me. Cherry blossoms float
upon our faces. Our laughter rings
like church bells on the wind and I
am yours.

I blink, seventeen and alone. I trip
on a board. My eyes lift. Beyond me
beyond the sudden lake stretched
before me, birch trees flame yellow
orange, brown. I have loved too—
I was loved. I have love, only it
disappears when I open my eyes.