

AT CEDAR RIVER

Jennifer Atkinson

— after *Ono no Komachi*

My body floats below the surface like duckweed
severed at the roots green as though alive.
If there were a current to convince me
I would follow its logic down, I think, but now
no water asks no stream suggests
I come away. Once I was pure as blue
or wild iris in April. When I bathed
the water ran its hands along my sides;
it gently tugged my hair.

In October

a *flock* of mallards, a *grove* of ginkgo trees
—their fanned leaves let go and will-less fall
under the power and pull of the river—
a *cluster* of coriopsis flowers,
blackened and limp with the first light frost.
Such pretty words, like cold, will change
the sense and look of things.

My blue cotton

skirt clings to my wet thighs like
sorrow, its seems now. We'd have called it
something different then, if we'd bothered
with words at all. Nightfall and in the blue
dusk, the mallards find a place no currents
touch, and bob on the quiet dark
surface, waiting for still another morning.