

## AT CEDAR RIVER

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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.