Recommended Treatment
by Maggie Jones

Reflex neurovascular dystrophy,
amplified pain, short circuits in the spinal cord,
lactic acid, abnormal reflex: my bones hurt.
The pain is in my body, not my head,
so why do I need counseling? Intensive
physical therapy and psychological
evaluation. The goal: desensitization.
But to what? To the briars pulling
at my skin, the sting of the honeybee,
the splinter in my thigh from the dry log?
When I tripped over the oak's roots, the pain surged
through my knee into my thigh, my hip, my chest,
and I couldn't breathe. It pulsed through my body
for weeks, though the crescent moon scrape
on my knee healed in three days. That word—
desensitized—echoes in the invisible
cobwebs caught on my face, the milky
dew clinging to the fern, the singe
left by the stinging nettle, the cool relief
of the jewelweed. I want to feel the December wind
on the nape of my neck, the cottonwood seeds
that tease my nose, the itch left by the mosquito
on my bare leg, the beechnut that bounces
off of my shoulder on its way to the forest floor.
If I lose the pain, what else disappears with it?
Desensitized—the word echoes through the trees.