Nine

And how is it that I stand here looking for turtles
Until the sun goes down
and the blood retreats from the tips of my fingers to focus on more vital parts
Like the hypothalamus
I’ve never cared about turtles a day in my life

The creation of new life leaves traces of itself behind
I carried her for nine months until her small body emerged
Glistening
We drew oxygen together so we could both cry
She because of the cold and light,
me because of the Mystery

Nine summers later,
little bits of her still course through my blood
Once she heard tell of a turtle crossing a mile down the road
She jumped on her bike,
dirty bare feet pumping the pedals furiously,
back hunched,
sweat glistening on her hairline,
rosy cheeked jaw set in stone for the task ahead
Purple bike streamers flapping against her forearms, decorated with temporary tattoos of various ages and viability,
The streamers are powerless against her wishes
when she decides to war with the wind

This is not so much a decision of character
or a trait of determination.
She cannot help loving turtles
any more than
I can help loving her.
She could, and has, wept for turtles

And now whenever I walk by a pond, I stand
Captive
Praying I’ll see a turtle. And I hold my breath
when a small head
Emerges from the glassy surface of the water
Glistening
Its back hunched behind it
Saying hello to me from a world
I will never know