

## 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.