Velvet antlers erupt
from soil, an aggressive
invasive thicket

loose and suckering
from deep fibers
and shallow rhizomes.

Weedy,
indomitable,
yet prized
by some for shades
of pinnated crimson
and variegated gold,

with fruit that can quench
 parched throats of ancestors
even through frost.

Still, cousins can be poison
when travelers unaware
venture into the bogs
of their dwelling,
contact their noxious oil,

yet the milky sap
of grandmother’s
garden nourishes
our cells, restores
our roots, despite
the spade that cuts
and carries us away.