Trespass

They say you could tell the success of a place
by the condition of the fences,
white-limed paling spires
or aged grey longers, pocked
from the frost-sprung nails of each year’s repair.

They kept no one out; they kept names in your head;
it was a recitation said each time you climbed
a fence, or jumped a stile, or ran
meadow to meadow, the names a story
of Mr. Joe and Mr. Stephen and Mrs. Mary Agnes.

October: I walk these fields; the shadows
of old cabbage beds are hinted under frost
and I try to recite the names that go with holes
where fenceposts were. But there’s an erasure
going on, and I’m too young to care.

Later, I will mourn how my father’s fence was
knocked down
a month after he gave the house to the past and
summer visits;
I will think of marauding cars and vandals and hard
years
as another bit of the story of ourselves, who have
forgotten much
and remember more it’s better to forget.

_Carmelita McGrath_