

PAULA BOHINCE

Love

You don't know what that is, but you're thirteen,
and so you stare at the boy nearest you (dirty jeans, snuff-
stained teeth) and tell yourself a story. You're the star
and he's the dock for jumping off into a ruffled lake with necking
swans nestled in cattails and no boot prints in mud.
You spin in that enormity. You stare, invisible, at his outline,
drinking him in without shame. Every curl
over his ears is yours, precious, the muscles
of his shoulders shifting, yes, he could be a protector. You want him
as your husband. You don't want
to touch him. You don't want touched, not that way. Maybe
held. He can watch over you like the lake's willow.
You're part of the stardust, an ancient impulse. You're love,
the way you watch the buck from your bedroom, the shock of
otherness, eating undisturbed so near to you,
with its force and its grandeur.