The Sidewalk, the Air

The songbird sings for the sake of the air that language is. The wisp of a muscled thing with its air-filled bones has lit on a branch in the huge Brooklyn park on its long way home, has flown in and has lit in the air that takes the waves the orange breast and black throat send into it, that the trill comes to exist in and from and dissolves in.

The petal falls onto the sidewalk that is language, that twin Japanese cherry trees reach across, toward one another, year after year. In three days the petal and five million other dots of pink fleshy tissue separate from their stems and go lightly down, making a moist carpet the tenants, visitors and deliverers who enter and leave the building walk over and grind under their shoes until it disappears.

Carolyn Steinhoff’s poetry mimics the life of the body as the mind intuits it. The two are like lovers, in fact, both blessed and doomed to one another’s company. These are haunting, plangent poems that reverberate in one’s consciousness long after reading.

–JOHN ASHBERY,
Self-Portrait in a Convex Mirror