

**Stephen Robertson**

**Sharpness**

The latest growths are long and barbed,  
reaching out to colonise the heath,  
at war with the bracken.  
No fruit here—the thorns will catch  
at your sleeve, at the tails of your coat,  
and sometimes at the bare flesh of  
the back of your hand as you reach past to pilfer  
the clusters beyond, adding scratches  
to the stains already covering your fingers  
and your palms. Sometimes you must stop  
to disentangle a particularly tenacious tendril  
before you can back out to reconnoitre  
another part of the bush. Take care not to spill  
your precious hoard (I mean the ones you will deliver  
for tomorrow's blackberry-and-apple pie  
—the ones you ate straight off the bush are saved forever).

At the end of summer, and in the first mists  
or wild winds of autumn, on the wild Suffolk heath,  
the wild Suffolk blackberries  
of my childhood remain forever perfect,  
forever simultaneously sweet and tart,  
sharp on my mind's tongue. Why is it that  
this latter-day fruit so often disappoints?  
Did I just dream the taste?

But no. Once in a while  
a perfect burst still catches at my tastebuds  
and drags me back again.