

Stephen Robertson

Sharpness

'In nature there are few sharp lines.' —A.R. Ammons

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.