

Late Blackberries

Nobody picks the late-autumn glut
Inside the graveyard's kissing gate.

I missed the first sweetness that sheen
of plump lushness, drawing in obliging birds

And the second, each fruit a cluster of dormouse eyes –
the mighty dormouse, whose merest presence

can avert major roads in the planning! Being ill
tastes bitter. Third ripening now and I feel

for fruit not yet sucked dry by moths, false wasps,
not pregnant with maggots – my haul,

dear for being so soon to be gone, imperfect
but here, despite thorns that draw

long, blood-beaded scratches on legs, like autumn's needle
tattooing haws on the hedge, a self-portrait.

Gwyneth Lewis