

Barb-wired

On his May morning walk, he trespassed
Frost Farm. Maine sassafras leaves, fairer
than summer, tender, pulled and chewed.

His teeth were green with walking as he passed
the wild asparagus, smudged bear track in dust.
He stopped and touched a wispy hunk of skin

caught on barbed-wire rust. His life had been
quiet in its comforts, watching scenes
of war in air-conditioned theaters. Young men,
hanged on fence, had caught his breath.

Like old man Frost, the cattle – gone for years.
The skin was not a cow. He pulled
the light-haired patch from wire, let animals
pass through – as if they were alive.

The white-tailed deer that jumped and missed
the mark, the devoted dog that hunted
for his master – out in front. His own scrap
of younger flesh? – Lost, he'd forgotten how.

He thought it through and named the skin,
Dolores. Scalp of sorrows, ancestor, nape
of women calling for farm boys gone to war.