**A short Flora of the Galapagos**

It takes but a day’s walk

on old lava to forget

lilies and redwoods.

Here my northern friend

the common blackberry,

with its bent-over, almost

bluish canes, fills the islands’

temperate zone with nigh

impenetrable, machete-

ready thorny thickets.

Next *pega-pega,* which means

stick-stick. It has no thorns, but

absolutely every part – from

flowers to leaves to stalks

sticks to fabric. Or skin. Elsewhere

they’re called birdcatchertrees,

a fitting way to disperse seed.

And then, in a class of its own,

*Unicaria tomentosa, uña de gata*,

cat’s claw. They missed a letter

in naming my *tormentosa.*

It’s a liana, how gentle

that sounds, but once one

has a piece of you, a signal

goes out to leaves and branches

to come and embrace you

in a pointy sharp hug, through

layers that a wasp sting couldn’t.

The reward for that suffering:

a glimpse of a large bee

on the *maracuyá’*s blue

and yellow flowers – stylish

showpieces of evolution

melding form and function

in the world of passion fruit,

bees, bats and hummingbirds.

Only the bloom could top the fruit.

Then our stately *opuntia*,

a cactus for all seasons,

where the nopalitos so hard

to find at home come from,

its pads a grazing range

for cochineal beetles.

All our selfish wants and pain

evanesce in the inborn rush of three

iguanas for one dropped flower.