

Robin Chapman

Baneheia Park, Kristiansland

Logged in the 1800s, ugly, bald,
the heath stood stump and stubby growth,
rock and root-ribbed paths twisting
under the unrelenting summer sun,
slash of old branches and dying limbs—
the town looked at what they had done
and made a plan, conscripted soldiers
to replant trees, ten thousand a year
through the rest of the century—
so that today we walk under their shade,
among the ferns and mossy hillocks,
the blueberry bushes, anemones,
and buttercups, praising paths
through the wilderness, the tannin
lakes with water lily pads, the warblers
and wagtails and swans, reading history
only at trail's end, what we owe today
to dreamers of an earlier time.