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## Neo-Pastoral

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## Neo-Pastoral

Between the cleaves and folds in these hills,  
Lupine unrolls its lilac teeth farther  
than the eye can see, feathering into obscurity.

And like a sundrunk child, cheatgrass lolls  
in the shade of some unnameable tree,  
which an arborist could no doubt name,

and though we brought our beloved sheepdog  
on the morning's hike, there's little green  
in the frame and, decidedly, no sheep.

I'd figured on a rattlesnake or two, come lowly  
from their holes to find the good light,  
or a lone magpie who'd plunge at some spark

in the lake of waist-high hay. But it's not snakes  
or birds we've found at the flaxen peak,  
but smoke, whitewashing the timberline,

and down in the valley, fire. Because it grew  
on fallow slopes—and therefore must ravage  
the soil past hope, a wolf among the fold—

the Romans named it Lupine. Wild, it blooms  
every shade of purple, but in hothouse rooms  
where panes magnify natural light

and things and things' selves are forever being  
tamed past sense, you can buy it in crimson.  
How human, to turn what we touch to flame.