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Elegiac Variations

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Thus the acrid aftertaste on my tongue
after so few words

The cedar's charred wand
The nettlebed's sloughed ash
The salt light flint-gray on the marsh

It is hard to extinguish desire

All evening the starlings taunt
From the conflagration of the firethorn

What it burns it fuels with the soul

3. To Go Home is to Take Back a Name

The moon
its mouth sealed shut with wax
Maintains its vow of silence

Across the rain-washed range
Across the stripped vineyard
Across the blade of a pruning hook

Left to rust in a furrow
the moon drags its habit

How can one not mistake
Intensity for purity
Paradise for these ill-lit shambles

By now the dark fields are wild with rose
By now the thistle is worn to a crown

the footpath winds
Where the marble's worn water pools

If the god had not made pale honey
I should have said this rain was far sweeter

6. Confronting the Oracle in Fiesole

Only the lizard to show the way
Little green flame through the ruins
A wordless scrawl and scuttle on the Etruscan wall

Only the lizard to find a foothold
of shade

If from the earth we come
If to the earth we return
Then there is in the end
no digression
The one way home is the one way home

Green and quicksilver in the sepia shadows
Green and quicksilver
the lizard holds still for now

For now still it holds its tongue