

MATTHEW BURNS

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Lupines

Is it “*lupine*,” like the tree—  
the spruce and fir; Scots,  
mountain, and eastern white:  
green spires that run into the winter  
night and hold; or is it “*lupeen*”:  
like a hammer of flower,  
not pounding but steady tapping:  
a rhythm, some rounding out  
of the steel that ends up  
poured across every day  
spent somewhere  
that does not care about these things?

I still don’t know.

On the Bear Canyon trail  
in dry eastern Washington—  
an hour west out of Yakima,  
where no one goes—  
there is a ridge that lifts itself  
over the valley like a rapture  
of calming hands, like manna  
for the sad and aching.  
I do not know what to call them,  
but you can find those flowers there.

I remember: I ached and was drawn  
away, into that wild. There were  
high pines and flowers, the leg  
of an elk some vulture left  
dangling in a tree.

There was that lost hammer of life  
beating out a rhythm to carry me—

a tool, some machine. It rang out  
(believe me) in peals like petals  
rising to meet the day.



## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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Matthew Burns lives in upstate New York and teaches literature and writing. His poems have also appeared in *North American Review*, *Posit*, *RHINO*, *ellipsis...*, and *Paterson Literary Review*.

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