
Lapsed Meadow

Wild has its skills.
The apple grew so close to the ground
it seemed the whole tree
was thicket, crab and root—

by fall it looked
like brush among burdock and hawkweed;
looked as if brush had been piled,
for burning, at the center.

At the edges, blurred,
like failed fence, the hawthorns, by
comparison, seemed planted.
Everywhere else there was broom

grass and timothy
and wood fern and sometimes a sapling,
sometimes a run of hazel. In Ohio,
some people call it

a farmer's field, all fireweed
and thistle, a waste of nature. And true,
you could lose yourself
in the mind of the thing,

especially summer, in the full
sun or later, after rain and the smell
of rain—you could lose
yourself, waist- or head-high,

branch by leaf by branch.
There could be color, the kind that opens
and the kind that closes up,
one for each part

of the light; there might
be fruit, green or grounded—it was always
skin-tight, small and hard.
There would be goldenrod

still young or yellowing
in season, and wind enough to seed a countryside
of plows and pasture.
But I call it crazy

the way that apple,
in the middle of a field, dug in, part of the year
bare-knuckled, part of the year
blossoming.

for James Wright