

Another Antipastoral

By Vievee Francis

I want to put down what the mountain has awakened.

My mouthful of grass.

My curious tale. I want to stand still but find myself moved patch by patch.

There's a bleat in my throat. Words fail me here. Can you understand? I sink to my knees tired or not. I now know the ragweed from the goldenrod, and the blinding beauty of green. Don't you see? I am shedding my skins. I am a paper hive, a wolf spider, the creeping ivy, the ache of a birch, a heifer, a doe. I have fallen from my dream of progress: the clear-cut glass, the potted and balconied tree, the lemon-waxed wood over a marbled pillar, into my own nocturne. The lullabies I had forgotten. How could I know what slept inside? What would rend my fantasies to cud and up from this belly's wet straw-strewn field—

these soundings.

Vievee Francis, "Another Antipastoral" from *Forest Primeval*. Copyright © 2016 by Vievee Francis. Reprinted by permission of TriQuarterly Books.
Source: *Forest Primeval* (TriQuarterly Books, 2016)