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REDACTION

Change the record
the music
is telling too many lies

Think of all
that has been left out
the name of his mother
the town in the desert
the well-water still on his lips

The way the wind
whistles too many names
of people we’ll never know

listening is the deepest grief
some keener love
Go back to the beginning
or just before it
the little snow
had not yet fallen

But you didn’t remember,
the wind is whining

Every orifice
is speaking

Be careful
there is no gender here
cloudless sky
bare cold light
the touch of metal

Sex without gender
it meant, the metal
the matter the metal.

24 November 2013
The chair sits me a little low.
This is a famous sentence about the world,
something everybody understands

how easy it is to sit and listen
even easier to speak.
No wonder there is such silence—
obody likes easy things to do.

24 November 2013
WILL

A man with a yew
tree near his morning window
and some wind afoot
has no need of music.

Women, though,
seem to know better,
ignore what just happens to happen—

they want the iron
wedge of will
to strike the hidden
gong in the heart of things.

24 November 2013
(in lieu of a graduate school recommendation)

It’s the will that matters. Some of the most untalented people I ever met turned out to be able to will themselves into artistry and power and grace. Don’t ask me for names. Look close at their works and you’ll know what I mean. And don’t give me boxes to check the percentiles of their qualities. No evaluation. All you need to know how the will is, how strong, edgy, hot. The will will win. Be there when it hits.

24 November 2013
ART HISTORY

Amy was hung up on the frescoes at Dura-Europus
I gathered the earliest representational painting
to adorn the walls of a synagogue thereby evidently
violating technically the second commandment
if I’m counting correctly but lord how she loved
those lions and flowers and whatever else they had,
I never saw it in pigment and truth, only pictures
that looked like other pictures, you had to see it
in the context of culture and time she explained
and she lost me in the dream that art makes me dream
that’s the real history of art, those blocks of stone
floating in the Netherlandish air that Michael
Maier made me see in his emblems, the naked virgin
Botticelli posed before the judges, the pale corner
of Matisse’s piano lesson (Pleyel inside out, remember),
the face of almighty Christ all that left of what Andrei
Rubilev painted, have I left anything out? the stuffed
animals in South Kensington, the view across the river
to Lambeth, where the sheep used to be landed, and Blake lived, drew women and sheep and angels, angels just like those daring sinful Jews had painted, the shapes were different but the flames are the same.

24 November 2013
Do you have any medicines left
and if so why and what kind and how many?
The Roman governor has a headache now
never mind his poor wife. When his
head hurts, we hurt too. Take poppyseed,
macerate in unresined wine, imbibe
a dram or two. Sometimes it helps to sleep.
The people in charge are always like him,
his wife always suffers, and we, the citizens,
are married to him too, we belong to the Over—
loyal and complaining and enduring his pain.

24 November 2013
Let me be a choirboy again I never was
and sing the words they taught me to believe
but I only believed the music and the candlelight,
the organ wolfing and the rain rattling down—

the words were doors that let the light in
and I believed in doors, a hundred thousand doors
and no walls to work them in, no *through*
in their silent being. I was an alto
among the boy sopranos, ashamed, an outcast
already, mute troubadour, an island with no sea.

25 November 2013
Once you build a house
everything else comes from that.
A small white house in the woods,
shallow woods, winter trees,
sunshine winter bright, smile
of an insurance man, wood,
metal, plastic, stone,
the whole world full of work
and transport and misery
so I can have a roof over my head.

So I will grow my fur out again
and go deeper into deeper woods,
no shield or shelter,
just sit beneath any given tree,
a quiet sapling’s strong enough for me.

25 November 2013
THIS KNOWS YOU

and it should.
There are papers
littering the lawn,
flags of a country
where I was born—
sylva, the material
world, cornfields
from sea to sea.
I was a mountain
man by the sea,
can’t swim, can’t
climb, the time
is all I can negotiate
and I have no time.
End of complaint.
Go out and plant
people like me
in the meager forest,
listen to us when
we come back
gibbering, palsied
with imagination,
pallor of the dream.
We will be your bears
wolves peacocks
wolverines your toads
too close for comfort,
language sputum
messing up your feet.
Reasoning this way
I talked myself out of a job
and into eternity.
Only the waitresses
in country diners will
listen to me now—
and these I will make
into goddesses of the
proximate before I sleep.

25 November 2013
THE ANTITAINER

What mineral wealth in lostness
bring a cracked geode to the eerie Mass
citizens quietly discussing their affairs
—discussion leads to diseases and foul weather—
the elements are kept in balance by our peace
in pace nostra curabitur mundus
he said and vanished in the gaunt grey mountains
all around Innsbruck snowy peaks
hidden cameras see us deep inside the rock
we think are emeralds and cobalt and gold
this diamond ring I brought from a low cloud
for thee alone! words on old radios keeping warm
the wax I model with is softer than your arm
that ringing noise can’t be the telephone ice
melting maybe did you say Sonny Rollins
or was it on the further side of Portugal
where the black sand sticks to white thighs?
I am the Antitainer, I subtract all your fun
and compact it in my own nucleus to peace
peace! until it rests secure a sapphire on your palm
among all these soft crystals music only O
Venus love made the world stiff enough to stand.

26 November 2013
The sovereign peace
lingers an hour
in the morning snow

the crystal
of time, the crystal
is the scope of mind
renewed, shapely,
thought
chilled from the vague
rumors called philosophy—

this
is definition,
hot heart, cold mind, true hand.

26 November 2013
THE DAY SKY

Going up
and down the stairs
is stars enough
for this astrology

the shift of knee the lift
in thigh
to dance against
gravity or with

each little step
a stile
up over into a pasture
you remember,
a cow ago
a field of dandelions
yellow phase
neutron stars

the size of anything
is just its dream
our fantasy

everything fits right here

God’s hand on the banister.

26 November 2013
WINTER SCENE

Snow on shed roofs
grass; asphalt
clear.

    Difference
in the properties.

    No wonder
children grow up dumb
taught not to wonder.
Watch out for grown
men playing flutes.
Watch out for kings.

Try to know
the nature of each thing
to forget yourself
into pure being
if anything is.

26 November 2013