

## FOR THE LOST ADOLESCENT

- Even before he left for good I heard things in the fire,  
heard fundamental moaning,  
wind like a shoulder splintering a door.  
I'd say, Come here, but he was lost to me.
- 5 I'd say, *Beloved, bring more wood up from the yard.*  
But he was lost to me,  
locked inside his name, the name itself  
too big a house, or simply wilderness I only glimpsed sometimes.  
And true, those days, looking out of my own eyes
- 10 I felt some former host behind me,  
some bedrock stare, antediluvian, unchanging.  
And he was horrified to see me watching  
something like birds in the fire,  
not their song but a scratching among rubble.
- 15 Something like rain then surely rain  
if I shut my eyes.  
Another year, another child,  
this might have been the subject—  
always penultimate,<sup>1</sup> some claim for the beautiful,
- 20 the conditions of the lie gone up with goodness, all the same,  
log after log, fire after fire, praise beyond pretense  
for so primitive a thing, that first warmth  
ransomed, a captive  
of our need amid the ruin of a modern city!
- 25 And if I never recognized his voice inside me,  
who could know?  
A mother learns a code of sounds not yet a voice  
and feels her way inside that heat  
and then there's the holding while the world heals
- 30 or does not heal.  
Life's long with and without him  
where children passing on their way to school  
no longer walk into his body.  
As for their laughter, it's like the laughter in a dream
- 35 to which the sleeper barely smiles.

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<sup>1</sup>penultimate—second from the last