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Sonata for Three Hands

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SONATA FOR THREE HANDS

1

The skim and slant of sunlight
on a white wall,
the spontaneous grass, the cloud ensemble
improvise
in our minor signature,
echoes and ricochets
from a shifting source, severe by turns
or tender,
by turns reckless and equivocal.
In this show, the props
are evasive, the script illegible,
the orchestra
blindly scraping
its incidental music.
Mother Tongue, it's time
to sing of the world
in a major key,
the world in a major key.

2

In swivelling terms
we inflict ourselves
on the shrewd lynx, the cold
spoiled lakes
and the five chambers of the columbine;
and cannot advance
the grammar of elation, though we hunker—
clerical, obscure—
on the brink of a brute admission.
We stop, by the slack rose we stop,
and the cables slung
like latitudes—the flesh humble,
the heart in repose, a clutch of spines
sliding on a slippery pivot.
But nothing displaces
these nervous illustrations:
the slow pig
under a cancelling knife, silence
rebuking the chirrup
of a flexible bird, contempt
uncoiling in the hollow of a hand;
however the seeds swell, wherever
the gutters escape with their inventory,
whatever the mirrors blurt—
these dark flickers make us flinch.

3

Can we survive
the night, its tail in its mouth,
rolling soundlessly into morning
where the luminous clocks
drag us bitchy from our blue dreams,
where the dearest dead
hang back and malingering, and we hear
the glass tones of a flute
splinter in the first light?
We will rise
from a bend in the temperament
to the ruthless total of things, loud and inexhaustible,
to an air instinct with love
that labors from basement to rooftop,
brims through the slats and doors and windows
into the world, the world
in a major key,
and back—
and we sing as the air glides
through a resonant house
in the harmonies of our Mother Tongue.