

North

This is the north, cloud tatters trailing their joints across the
ground
And snagging themselves
In the soaked boughs of the evergreens.
Even the heart could lift itself higher than they do,
The soaked and bough-spattered heart,
But doesn't because this is the north,
Where everything dark, desire and its extra inch, holds back
And drags itself, sullen and misty-mouthed, through the trees.
An apparitionless afternoon,
One part water, two parts whatever the light won't give us up.

The north is not the memory of the north but its repeat
And cadences, St. Augustine in blackface, and hand to mouth:
The north is where we go when there's no place left to go.
It's where our altered selves are,
Resplendent and unrepentant and wholly unrecognizable.
We've been here for years,
Fog-rags and rain and sun spurts,
Beforeworlds behind us, slow light spots like Jimmy Durante's
fade-out
Hopscotching across the meadow grass.
This is our landscape and our landing zone, this is our dark glass.

(For Justin d'Aldoce, again, who knew Bliss by another name;
in memory, in gratitude, and appreciation of days gone by.)

—Charles Wright