Christmas day we played the savior. 
O vernight ice swallowed anything 
close to green, and then the north wind 
set in to freeze. From the high barn window,

we saw the cattle in the bottomground 
standing church-pew still, dumb, fat, 
stupid, but mostly stunned with what 
must’ve seemed a horrid pale apocalypse.

We loaded bales on a flatbed wagon, 
shot a tractor’s nose full of ether, 
and skidded down the lane to the pasture. 
We thawed the chain with language and a hatchet.

Those Angus steers stood quiet as the damned. 
Even when we slit the orange twine 
and kicked out sheaves, they stood like stones, 
too cold to believe in the grace of hay.