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How many miles of roads.
Be simple of it.
Power lines how far how frail
this power is
that runs our business.
Wind and snow and ice and shake
make failure of it.
Weather has us in its hands
no wonder
we imagine it has hands.

1 November 2011
The formal is the futile.
By shape already
it confesses failure
of confidence in its matter.

Matter adores us! The flower
we can’t name
regales us with color, scent,
bee commotion, soft complexity

but the cup in my hands
can break the way
its clay never could.
Believe the clay.

1 November 2011
A gleam of silver in the trees.
No grail. Chrome
grill. Silver
is for the lost apostles,
their shadows for a blessing,
wedding of the living and the dead.

1 November 2011
I have never been here before
it is my forest in your mist
conversely trees
is all I mean and fog we
become as Blake said
what we behold hold
the image of some trees
hardwood leafless
November sun in them
misit thinning. There
that is who I am.

2.
again I mean you
like a flower you mean
me like a tree
there is evidence
everywhere the clues
to some event
that never happened
breathless gaps
gasps wicked
things people say
shadows in the trees.
3.

one has no right
to see such things
permission occasional
provisional to
see but not cherish
mind but don’t
remember.

2 November 2011
STEPS

1. Will fares the down energumen of actual speech infer men:
to chisel section guide the other kind to altars everywhere kinfolk with cobs
don’t believe what the woods say Thou art!

2. Close upon hawk in an oak was thought a species of god arms around soft memory
say all their names
slowly slideshow

furious mental
metabolisms
recurve (unbend)
the strip (ship)

of time
and there Mother
is at last
nude of her need

and all giving
the arms she gave
you are the arms
you hug her with.

3.
When the preacher comes to call
not be home

greeting card philosophy
but this religion plays

two tongues in one mouth
Olympics of the kiss.
All suicides suddenly undone.

4. In wagon hunger in divorce
the car and everything and was gone

blessed sacrament of split
the Emperor free again

for new mistakes! tree drift
sparrow spasm and love

comes thrusting self anew
this robot heart this thirst.

5. Let welter what wants
no story to tell
waits the fuller word
to spill seed its seed

it is the heart of pale sky
the missing augment
blank check rose tree
arboreal posture
we are descended
from the left eye of god
feather-hefty
markworthy moral

workfit but saw
we a faery and fled
or became one so
hurried home

embraced the marble
maidservant wrote
our will left
the windows to the door.

6.
Cold of eye
snug the battery
into the retaining
O-ring rubber
turn a dark light
on the doings

selfsame stranger
bitter gourd
the all-creating
measure only
count the long side
the need to trust

shoehorn sympathy
into the shabby
obvious of wanting
as tops of tulip trees
our loftiest twilight
here keep sun.

7.
But where is it
the actual man
chewing gum
leaning up against
the machine it came from

like the girl
he wants it to be
the man who smells
of wintergreen
liniment smells of pain

not so much a question
as a shared mistake
kiss me for example
or a weekend in Québec
but where’s the blue

girl who stole all
color from the sky
and left her lovers
only night behind
the bare trees true

the girl they call Girl
sun on lawns
mist through fingers
trying the hold
the beautiful nothing left.

3 November 2011
Always back to try the old thing
new scatter pomelo “great shaddock
doctrine” the world is long
division of such fruit—free
math from numbers—a number
is just too holy to count with—
see David see Bible—but who
anyhow is listening? Behind
a purple veil embroidered with stars
gold blue as cornflowers in silence
sate th’ unspeaking Monarch—
palsied speculation is called religion—
Lenin’s stroked arm no more upraised—
fatum, ‘what is spoken,’ hence ‘fate’
we Irish always knew—any word
out of a man’s mouth condemns him—
late for lyric later for logic—
the flowers here are all kaput—
they got the story wrong (priests!
what would you expect) Babel
tower did get built, we climbed
(clomb) all the way up and found
language at the top. And this is heaven.

4 November 2011
PORTOLAN

1.
Somewhere out in the world
there is a man called me
*Just Don’t Know*
said another man—
so many names!
And none to speak!

2.
Gulls are strict carnivores.
They leave the celery and onions
while even grown men sometimes
eat the parsley on their plate.

3.
“reversals of fortune
in the tea trade” it said
and it was morning
shotguns went off down
in the Sawkill bays.
Ducks dead. Four more
shots. The drunks
in rubber pants are
having fun killing
again. Men!
4.
Death the unsurprising animal. Careful writers eschew exclamation points. Make the words themselves shout. Even a full stop is too short.

5.
Nothing. Worth hearing.

6.
A shell. Small thing from which the life is gone. Something worth knowing. Knowing where.

7.
There is just time for this and then again.

5 November 2011
STRETCH MARKS FROM A LONG POEM

Adam in tedium before the first bite
then Eve told our story,
Literature is the history of calamity.
Or as we said in Brownsville What else is new?
I’ll tell you. A quarter
every morning bought a pack of cigarettes,
the News to read on the subway with
a nickel left to feed the turnstile to.
City life made sense, had measure.
On the way home nickel subway again
evening paper (Telegram, PM).
a glass of beer, second quarter gone.
Symmetry. Shapeliness of a day.
And already ladies had abandoned
wearing silly hats and hair was beautiful.
Do you understand? We were getting there,
the War was over, Moscow far away,
the Commies in our midst were comical,
pinkos snug in colleges, the Dodgers
were still in town. It was all beginning
to make sense, all of it, from Levittown
to the far Jersey shore consciousness
awakening, everybody buying cars
clamshacks at the Hammels cherrystones
with horseradish helicopters stripèd bass.
There were still people called uncles and aunts. Nobody was named Sunshine, Subway platforms still had penny gum machines, cellars had fuses. It was almost working. So what happened? Nada. It just didn’t. We consumed. Things got expensive asymmetrically. Milk costs five times what it did then, coffee thirteen times, the subway fifty times more. That’s how nada works, the shapely fit of things is gone. And nobody whistles on the street any more. And nobody gives nothing away for free.

5 November 2011
New Yorkers don’t go to the Statue of Liberty.
It’s just a part of the sky.
We don’t even think of going there,
any more than we’d visit the sunset.
It’s just there. A part of us.

5 November 2011
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Cars go by
music comes out.
What kind of
dream is that?
The long aggression
of recorded sound
tuneful gunshots
we’re made to buy.
I want the birds back
I want a bus
to come and load and go.

5 November 2011
Thank you for the gangplank! I don’t know what charged metaphor in your mind you meant it to embody, but I have stowed it—and I love the red rope guiderails—safe in my living room.

6 November 2011

(An e-mail I dreamt I was composing as I woke.)