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Doctrine of Wind

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DOCTRINE OF WIND

Old with the huddled sparrow
on the iron bridge. Long view
from the dark water. The cold.
How difficult it becomes to believe
the things believed. Spike lightning
in the west: ice cracking from
the trees. In the mountains,
aftershock landslides, coffins still
in short supply.

Dead weight
of March snow on winter's tooth and bone.
The truss-caged bridge shaking.
Rumble of the wooden deck.
At the edge of the city
smoke, artillery fire.
Broken branches.

On the fresh
splinter a finger of sap:
spring will come, but not here.
This year no medicine again
for children in the highlands.
There's a bitterness in the barley.
You can smell it. New rye
flattened.

Another cold snap
in Gujarat. The Christians
keep burning down
their own houses for heat
in the police report.
How to reach tomorrow?
What's twenty-four hours when

the weather has had its way
since before the four aboriginal
rivers ran.
Half-past four,
already a quarter moon. The road
winding into night. Headlands
at the splintered woods mined.
The whistle of a retreating figure
ahead could be God.
Or someone else, a spitting image
whistling in the dark.