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James McCorkle

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SOME DETAILS OF AUTUMN

James McCorkle

If you came this way, the fields would be bare,
Machinery idle in their shadows. What we learned
Needs explanation; it is a domain like the clouds
That accumulate in brilliance and weight

Over cities, all day adding to the scaffoldings
We find ourselves on, always the same,
But older, the heart split, its ghost in the fields

Near the route you took, among the comings-and-goings
Of hours, filling the days like knots
Of people at evening around a radio, listening
To reports issued for their region, counting

The hours, watching the wind's direction. All around
Us the days chart straight lines, and write in a hand
We can't follow, mistaking one sign for another.
You watch the birds circling over the river

And say this could be another sign, we'll never know
But make a guess about their cursives of flight.
How they wheel above us in the clear light,

Scatter through the dead pear trees, high over the fields
Crisscrossed by ditches and hedges, narrowing the
distances
Between themselves and the horizon. Nothing intervenes.
The wreckage piles up day by day, where

The birds sang in the orchards in their rejoicings
Of solitude, where badgers and squirrels scrambled
In the torn browns of autumn. The hours in concert

With our dreams hammer the wreckage in the foothills
And in the cities, the air grown sodden with blows.
And you—

 because you are always the last one we speak
 to, barely remembering your name—
Vanish, the air colder, windless. Then

Among the broken chairs and glasses we shout
At Iambê to keep dancing, for the air to warm again,
To become a symbol from where all the stories begin.