

Poetry Series

Don Tiedemann
- poems -

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Don Tiedemann(2/23/1950)

Afternoon Song

Late afternoons lacks its own ambience,
so you dance with the mood who brought you.
The corners are listless, the streets are on break.
Forget anything that they taught you.

The widows at windows are in bed by dark.
Cruise ships sail out of the harbor.
A lone basketball thumps in the park.
Some days it's a little bit harder

to find to find your way to the evening,
to the comfort of lamplight and books,
and the aging day is given to preening,
afraid she is losing her looks.

Don Tiedemann

All The Pretty Things

Be good and see all the pretty things.
Little else matters, except for music, maybe.
On the way to work memorize the scenes.
State them out loud. That mother with a baby,

All the people at the bus stops; some are sitting,
Some standing at the curb so imperiously.
They think of the day ahead, they think of quitting
And then decide not to take it so seriously.

It's only time, the events that never quite make a story.
Hear the helicopter pass over head. That popping
Sound that never means anything good. Some sorry
Soul passed through a sign without stopping.

It's clouding up. Delivery trucks make wide turns
Into the trash strewn alleys. Umbrellas bloom.
The sidewalks darken. The sidewalks churn.
The work day begins. It's always too soon.

So, your effort is lacking. And things are not pretty.
Rain slaps the windshield with large, skimming drops.
Traffic stands still. It's just morning in the city
With skyscraper canyons and pot-bellied cops.

Don Tiedemann

Cold Coffee

I.

Fortunes smile fades without her knowing.
Her eyes flit around the room.
She looks guilty as you implore.
She sees the floor could use a broom.
It's attention to detail that you need.
Burden time to a slower pace.
Make it your own. Exercise greed.
Rewrite the story. At least erase
The parts that made you old
And afraid. Get up. Go wash your face.
It's mid- morning. Your coffee is cold.

II.

Suppose eternal recurrence is true.
Certain phenomena make a good case.
Those trees will turn yellow, green go to blue.
Those trees will turn red. Love will chase
It's tail. In hindsight only it all comes clear.
No story exists before it is told.
The telling informs you how much is mere
Folly. It's mid- morning and your coffee is cold.

Don Tiedemann

Cold Morning

In the morning when worry
shakes your shoulder

tell him you would sleep
a little more.

The jet streams dips, the world
is growing colder,

and any bear will tell you
sleeping is what winter's for

Don Tiedemann

Cosmology

On the corner there is one way
and that is Jesus Christ our lord.

In the bar there are chicken wings
called Satan's Revenge.

The church ladies park in the handicapped spot,
wearing feathered hats, eating their french fries
and counting their change so carefully.

The workers in bright orange coveralls
descend a ladder beneath the earth.
One performs the sign of the cross.

The rivers beneath us trickle through
the pipes. There are no alligators
but it is dark and to forget
is a danger.

Don Tiedemann

Dismissal

A child is not picked up after practice.
School is over. Nothing left but the
late afternoon, ungraded activities....
soccer, band, chess club. No more
expectations. Hangers-on have nothing to gain.
If you are not alone, its a fine time to talk.
Hallways are empty, dusty and echoing. A
locker around the corner bangs shut. A whistle
blows in the gym. The band butchers a door-muted
rendition of the Star Spangled Banner.
A young life is so many school days and they all
drain as slowly as a clogged sink.

Forty years ago Jay and I had both read
'A Catcher In The Rye'. I cant even remember
Jay's last name, but he told me I reminded him
of Holden Caulfield and I am still flattered.

Don Tiedemann

Hard Rain

Gusts of wind blast
the drops into a spray.
The waters rise.
This might be the day

that the streets
are all washed clean
and we know (though we have never asked)
what all the prophets mean.

But then, the air is warm and
there is promise in the rain,
the drooping branches,
the myopic window pane.

The flattened winter pansies
are paint daubed on the ground.
The rains stops abruptly.
For a moment no sound

but a siren in the distance .
The city catches fire.
The clouds have scudded south.
The smoke is rising higher.

Don Tiedemann

I Know

I know that nine oclock
after the traffic and
before the heat is
the best hour.

I know that twenty years
of fatherhood will leave you
as stripped of certainty
as any tree at years end.

Speaking of trees, I know
that one can shadow another
and when the shadower trembles
the shadowed trembles with it.

I know that even motionless
clouds will reach the horizon
and that Canada geese
do not pass quietly.

I know that Satan is not
out to get me. He would
have succeeded by now.

I know that distance is fickle.
Ahead of you it smiles
invitingly. Behind
it disappears.

I know my true love hears
everything I say and
diligently alerts me
to any repetition.

I know that nothing has
nowhere to go... and waits
for me so patiently.

In This Wind

Rooted as they are, the trees
do not lack for entertainment.

They flap their limbs
in a pretense of flight.

The women walk past them
shoulders to cheeks

In the distance the high-rises
seem to sway. They loom
like fathers, protective, stern.

Pink clouds lead the sun
down beyond the cypress trees.

All night long the wind wahoos,
the furnace strains. By morning
ice brightens the storm drains.

Don Tiedemann

Instruction

I.

Three martinis south of sober
Professor Regret says it is time
to call off the hunt for a four-leaf clover,
to go to jail or pay the fine.

It is time to wash all the cracked dishes,
to lose at cards with the guys,
to blow on the candles without making wishes,
to fish all the ponds where nothing survives.

II.

So, last night the good life showed up at my door
and said he had nothing to buy or sell.
He said he just wanted to see me before
I burned down my life again. He could tell

I knew his name but not his face.
He said there were answers I had to provide.
There is a limit to all this running in place.
He asked what could drive me to suicide.

Do I suffer more sleeping or waking?
Are there ten or more people I love?
When I hold out my hand is it visibly shaking?
Just how sufficient is a blue sky above?

I ask him does it show, can he tell
I am hurting, and too much ashamed.
When anyone asks should I say I am well?
Deny I have ever been caught in the rain?

His answers were neither direct nor complete.
He suggested some things I might do:
grow tomatoes for the deer to eat,
write my personal myth, seek to

tell my love, maintain a house full of cats,
swim every morning, drink until dizzy,
get married and sire a legion of brats,
basically, keep myself busy.

Don Tiedemann

Intercalary

No snow this year. The weather fears it's losing
its touch. In the pauses between the boozing
the conundrum of hangovers... hair of the dog?
The streets and ourselves in a permanent fog.

The scarecrows on steam grates know only extremes:
Cold or hot, dry or raining, sweet drunken dreams
Or tear stained rage. Each dawn they awake
To the city, a snow globe that nobody shakes.

The tables are strewn with holiday letters.
It is clear your friends' lives are much better
Than yours. Junior's a doctor, Sis is a star,
Last July a vacation on the beaches of Mars.

The year is stuck in an endless goodbye,
the door held open, cold rushing in. Why
did we festoon from the ground to the eaves?
If the all the lights fell we could rake them like leaves.

Wind-harried avenues, balls coming down.
The action is falling, just look around.
We have all tried so hard, given our best.
Let all the sweet angels sing to it's rest.

New Years day, winter proper begins.
It is too cold for trouble. Let's atone for our sins.
We awake with a splitter still seeing double,
Stepping with care through another year's rubble.

Don Tiedemann

Jeff And Sue

With displeasure
the moon regards
the empty house
of Jeff and Sue,
gone to Florida
while the cancer sleeps.
Twenty more good years
(maybe) Sue says.
The moon peers peevishly
through windows
with no curtains,
makes pale rectangles
on buffed floors.
Gone down is Jeff's
megaphone laugh
and his yapping pugs.
Gone down is Sue's
smile that runs
like a rabbit
across her face.
There is clover here
and high summer
but they went down.
The moon frowns.
Leaving here
tall children
and green trees
and dandelions
they went down,
and the mood
of the moon
has turned,
and the equinox
has passed.

Don Tiedemann

June And Shadows

The magnolia sifts the sun's glare.
Light settles like an amber mist
on the lawn.

Puzzled by the morning chill
and the west-leaning shadows,
a cricket chirps solo.

Don Tiedemann

Late Light

I.

And so at dusk you stand perplexed
By the hushed and waving pines.
Or, sit by the window vexed
By the sinuous designs

Raindrops make in gliding down
A pane of glass, or stride
Into a room and look around,
Bewildered, wondering why.

The forecast says the sky will fall.
It brightens and then disappoints.
The spring peepers resume their call.
A conclusion of sorts? All evidence points

That way. A life as likely as any
Other. An improvised piece played
On an untuned piano. All the
Options you never even weighed.

II.

You carry the weight of the song you hum.
You walk a glacial pace with creaking knees.
The lighting is right for the mood. Come
See. The moon watches coyly from the trees.

You head east toward the first flickering stars
On a street that ends in a neighborhood park.
You hear the voices in passing cars.
There is no need to be home by dark.

Don Tiedemann

Migration

The honking geese
are flying low.
They winter near
here on the lake
and marshes. Out back
their sound recedes.
It falters to
a silence, like
an orchestra
tuning, or
a gaggle of
children boarding
a bus.

Don Tiedemann

My Brother's First Girlfriend

Her father owned a row home
on Sollers Point road
just like all the other
row homes owned
by the hourly working men
in the steel-making town
of Dundalk. A Summer evening
and she and my big brother, as
always, are there in the front room,
silent in the lamplight and still shy
in each others presence.

As it darkens, boys from
the county ball fields cycle
past. Next door the man laid off
by the shipyard watches the light
fall and strokes his dog. He has
no qualms living on the dues
he paid for thirty five years.

Late season fireflies rise
at their leisure from grass
grown shaggy in a week
of rain. The wind brings a faint hum
and a clanging from the mills
at Sparrows Point. Otherwise
it is quiet when the southeast
sky explodes from hot slag dumped
in Bear Creek. Dishes rattle
and the sky glows perdition
red. Noone even looks up.

At home life plays out on
the screen porch surrounded by
forsythia and lit
by the blue-gray light of
the TV. My father opens
his third pack of the day.
My mother is next to him.

She hates the smoke but does
not yet hate her second marriage.
My younger brother is inside practicing
Good Night Ladies on the trumpet.
He does not yet hate his life.

I am headed home riding on
the downhill part of Sollers Point
Road, easy in Summer that
asks for so little. As the silhouettes
of my brother and the girl
are easy in the window and
their quiet proximity. As
all Dundalk is easy in the flow
of molten steel and union money.

Memory can contain paradise
but not the loss of it.
The shipyards are rusting monuments.
The steel mills have crossed the sea.
None of us can say just when
the story turned, when our lives
began to burn, when time hit
the ditch, but that Summer in
Dundalk came before. It was
the Garden. We were still there.
All of us. In the beginning.

Don Tiedemann

Night Life

The streetlights hum dark syllables,
as do the trees and the kitchen windows.
Even the moon in it's way
makes words, relying on the cat
to sound them. The park takes a deep
breath. Stars rise like sparks from a fire
below the horizon.

Don Tiedemann

Notes From An Amateur

Find the words to reconcile
the seen and unseen. Trick
the spirit out of the hayrick.

Late February is the scariest
week of the year: twisted things
rising out of the thatch, October's
ghost haunting the trees.

Getting to the point is over-bought.
Attend the windows respectfully.
They bring light and air into the room.

By June summer has won. The winds
have slowed, the rain abated. The sky
stops asking stupid questions.

Don Tiedemann

Nothing Much

Sometimes at night I hear the sea.
It's a bridge over the bay and four counties east.
It's a mystery how I came to be
Six decades to the wind. At least
I have learned patience waiting for
Nothing much and nothing more.

No one answer is good enough.
So be a rake. Play the field.
The choicest words are off the cuff.
You can't explain what is not revealed.
When a passer by asks what's the score
Tell him nothing much and nothing more

An empty sky is my meditation.
I hear what those walking blues have to say.
I have made my choice, a destination
Where time and weather hold no sway.
I wave good-bye to the rocky shore
Of nothing much and nothing more.

Don Tiedemann

Pause

The pace of dust accumulating.
A dogwood leaf unfurling.
A sky the color of watermelon.
The dew in tiny crystal globes
upon the pachrysandra.

Happiness is an empty thing.
The wind is what you can feel,
but never see.

Always a dull pulsing in your ears.
Your blood passing to and from your heart.

Don Tiedemann

Pm

We have snubbed the empty afternoons.
We have looked at them and assumed
they have nothing to say and now
they have turned on us. They
have us sit anxiously by a window.
They pass with the rush of a missed bus.

The air is never right at three o'clock.
The light is bad and too much day remains.
Downtown, management sneaks out for martinis
and oysters. Clerks lean hips on counters.
Pharmacists ignore the phone.
In the parking lot the gravel pops
as the first car departs.

Don Tiedemann

Quotidian

Speak, for a change, of old love,
where the weekdays arrive,
the charms of evening,
our hostess in deep blues
and diamonds.

Take for a topic that
which has memory of
the garden, that constant

like the waves that roll in
and roll in bringing always
a clear scent of morning.

Don Tiedemann

Rearview

Cicadas and solitary passing jets.
Jets passing and cars and summer passing.
Trees shake their heads, a mourning dove frets.

A boy waits alone for the summer
school bus. a failure in a failing
season. The swallowtails flutter

the purple coneflowers, contending
with the bees. Late afternoons you see
the burnt leaves descending,
the dry pollen descending,

in sunlight more gentle now, resigned
to cooler air and migrations,
the drawing up of Octobers designs.

Don Tiedemann

Returning

And now, it seems some lasting Spring
is here. That an egregiously
long Winter is ended. It is March.
Buds bat their eyes in the fruit trees.
A brigade of leaves charges across
the yard. The dew serves drinks to a
party of blackbirds. Remember this?
Waking to this?

It was an earlier life, a self
in season. Patriarch of all
the selves since then.

The white pines acknowledge
the southeast wind. Mourning doves
call expectantly. Breathe deeply.
Nothing hurts. Remember this?

Sunlight softens the window panes.
The wind holds it's breath. Noises
from the street collect in the room.
The distant traffic is a summons.
Remember opening eyes to this.

Walk today in a place where light
and shadows contend, where secrets are
kept, and roots are exposed. Accept
as fact the good intentions of
wooded paths. Remember all of this:
the way out and the returning.

Don Tiedemann

Saturday Morning

The week and the dark are ended.
An up tick look for and rest.
Nor caring how the truth is bended.
Fail to notice much. It's a test.

Pleasing things are a swarm of gnats
About your face, a product of the same sun
That can burn you. Like speechless tabby cats
We curl in dusty beams, all mousing done.

Don Tiedemann

Setting In

The cats eyes glaze as he waits
by the window scanning the white
and blue nothing outside.

Christmas' stragglers, delivery trucks
pass, trailed by cartoon puffs
of white smoke.

The sun is a good soldier.
He could have chosen sleep
among the green pines.

The cardinal is an oblivious red,
the color of revolution,
the singular quickness

in the unpainted canvas
of bitterest January,
foil to the powers of cold.

South is nostalgia.
Our being tends north.
Details freeze and break off.

The wind bares his teeth.

Don Tiedemann

Sluggo

the sun pulls a kilroy
over the trees in the east.
sluggo wakes a lonely boy
in his dumpster house

in need of a wash and pictures
his wirehaired nancy whose
aunt fritzi thinks that he
should entertain himself

which in the deep night he
does. nancy is his dream
night and day and he
shaves only under his hat.

sluggo has no school
and awakens when he will.
aunt fritzi says that work
is what must make his days

but only full beards can work
so sluggo schemes and the end
of each is comedy.

through windows sluggo sees
his wire-haired Nancy and
her tube legs and prairie-flat
chest. and the moon is always

crescent and homeward it
shines on his trash-filled yard.
and he lies supine upon
a mothy blanket one

knee up one leg is crossed.
the land is amused by those
with love and nothing else

those with no wheels no way

no beard and no endeavor.
that fail ever in the light
with fritzi watching and
claiming all foreknowledge.

sluggo has no social.
he eats chili from hubcaps
and drinks water tanging iron.
nor goes he calling shod

as he is with mud on feet
of cheese. a caliban
in love nor boy nor man
as free as a glass of water

empty as an egg shell
a party of none.

sluggo breathes in the black
dots of his nancys eyes.
his world is sidewalks and
bus stops - wherever nancys

are and fritzis not.
his sky is only blue.
winter lasts a single, coatless
day. in autumn one

leaf falls. the two of them
remain no taller than
a hydrant.

Don Tiedemann

Smart Guy Villanelle

I need to hang out with a smarter crowd.
So many words I have read but never
Had the pleasure of hearing spoken aloud.

The teachers all said I was off in a cloud.
They never expected anything clever.
I need to hang out with a smarter crowd.

It gets dark and windy in my cloud.
The daydreams I have could make you shiver.
There is so much I have never spoken aloud.

If all that has thinned could be magically nowed.
If my life in a flash could stand and deliver.
I might finally fit in with that smarter crowd.

I try to be humble. I am helplessly proud.
My day is not yet, its still somewhere upriver,
When I will stand in the pulpit and shout it aloud.

I need to hang out with a smarter crowd,
To understand something and share it aloud.
To take the stage in front of whomever
Could get what I say (so exceedingly clever) .

Don Tiedemann

Smokers

they are
the margin notes of city life
details optional to any story

they are
the dragon guardians of back porch beer kegs
fiercely discharging smoke thru pursed lips

they lean
in garage doorways
reading folded papers

they sit
on the office building stairs
next to melting snow

pulling unbuttoned sweaters tight
discussing whatever a lit match
might stimulate

they worry
and sometimes even talk
about their weight, children, sex life...

and then
dismiss it all in the brief cease-fire
life will honor with smoke-filled lungs

they are
luckless front porch anglers
fishing with no worms and no hopes

Don Tiedemann

Some Rhymes For Waking

Day rises like some luminous mountain in the east.
The moon is still up, much perplexed, brow creased.

A splash of early sunlight on the eaves,
politely avoiding the bedroom window.
The wind shuffles west across the yard.
It is dry. The trees are dropping leaves.

Summer reaches the first refrain.
In the fight for attention the crows
win by a knockout, the only
competition a distant train.

A solitary beam of day
lights the Kwaansa cherry tree.
The cat is perplexed by the birds
he hears but cannot see.

The pearl of dawn spreading west
gives a sense of enormous distance.
I have problems to solve: tapping valves,
leaking basement, the mystery of existence.

Don Tiedemann

Summer Journal (Take 2)

The fireflies rise like dust from a dirt road,
like hot ash from an untended fire.
June is contraband, ill-gotten time
to be squandered like prize money.

A springlike chill last night.
The breeze this morning flushes
mist to the woods edge where
it is banished by the eight o'clock sun.

-

In Kitty Hawk the beach homes roost
imperiously among the trees.
They think they own the place.
The wax myrtles that line the streets

provide no shade. The Joe Bell flowers
are hot: red and yellow and orange.
The days are cooler when the breeze
comes from the sea. Late afternoons

a train of clouds beyond the offing
hauls silently Northeast. It is
Summer riding the rails, stealing
away, getting out of Dodge.

The rain falls in dark pillars on
the mainland town across the sound.
It is worlds end in silent film.
At the sunset bar and deck we watch
and get ourselves another round.

-

No rain, no rain. The grass has stopped
growing. The bird song ends mid-morning
and the back yards are a blinding stillness.
Just the Black-eyed Susans tracking the clouds

in all their pomp and circumstance.
July it seems is half-way somewhere.
Summer is a closer. The
carotene is in the leaves, a
November snow in times gleaming eye.

-

Noone home on Paul Mill Road.
America is at the beach.
The sidewalks burn. The only sound
is cicadas singing each to each.

The grass is brown. the weeds are green.
The red crepe myrtles bare it all.
The mosquitoes lay low in the heat.
A cricket starts the song of Fall.

The gutters run with floating leaves.
The long awaited rain has come.
We bide our time beneath an awning.
The waiting now is for the sun.

Don Tiedemann

Sundown

Spare us the drama.
This just a departure,
not the real thing, not
a real ending. A sunset,
not an apocalypse.

Be quiet about aging.
It's merely passage,
without which there is
little of interest.

Homes are bought and sold.
Grass goes to seed. The
long awaited comet crosses
the sky. Close enough for a
fleeting sense of doom.

Darkness rises from the ground.
The moon discretely waits.

Evening is when time
is most visible, when
it breaks into all it's colors,
when it calls like a Siren
to the celibate stars.

Don Tiedemann

The Enemy

I.

For now, it does us no harm
at all (for which we could find
it culpable) . We walk
through it like ghosts through
a wall. Or divers high
stepping under water.

It takes on the colors of
the sky. It is translucent
like the surface of a child's ball.
Something rattles inside.

But the proximity
is too constant. It grows
to dislike us. Tricks us
into loss. Badgers us
to forget. We form
the habit of sleeping
without dreaming.

II.

The last seat on the bus
and you are trying to
recall some commitment you
should have written down.
You still lack the nerve,
let Sundays drift.
The dog eats your homework,
and then your children's.
Love is a thrashing fire hose.
Everybody runs. And then
it all trails off again,
hauled like a drunk through a
doorway, heels dragging.

The Old Man Is The Sea

The girls stand where the sand turns wet.
The surf gathers itself, surges
and strains to touch their brown and
slender ankles.

So curved and supple.
Clothing them could serve
no purpose.

Don Tiedemann

The Other Side

That which is, always will have been.
Time and place are all you need to know.
This afternoon, so troubled by the wind,
will not blow away. It has nowhere to go.

We are flesh, sensation, noise and passion.
East of eden it is said there is no soul.
Salvation is no more the word in fashion.
When we are nothing, then we will be whole.

Don Tiedemann

Three Sisters Or Come The Revolution

I.

In the harbor the white boats bob,
the whitecaps flash. On the shore
the blank trees rock heel toe, heel toe.
Now is the negligence of careless April;
the sloven stir of wind and wet
and hope and green and indifference.
Breathe in, breathe out. Shuffle the deck.
Drum your fingers. Hum Vivaldi

In the streets the long-haired girls
are weathervanes. The Winter that
led you here is as gone as the wake
behind the fishing boat.

II.

The flowers are all shameless
histrionics. Dogwoods
gesticulate. Day lilies bow.
Azaleas are blazing footlights
for posturing hardwoods.

You like the conviction in May;
the resolution in shrinking puddles,
clarity in mown fields. Summer
issues a call for rebellion.
White-tailed deer drum the paths.

III.

Green are the fields and green
the trees that shape them.
Coneflowers and daisies
Sit in their Sunday hats.

The rabble organizes in June.
Summer's manifesto is posted.
The birds make treetop speeches
demanding sunlight, long languid days
and clouds in silent procession
over cornfields.

Don Tiedemann

Trees

Our work is to grow tall;
not to speak, or think,
or get nostalgic in Fall.

When the wind blows, we sway.
We see all from above and have
been worshipped in our day.

Our rootedness is a kind of grace.
Each year is a ring of time and mood,
a cycle of seasons held in place.

Don Tiedemann

Turn

Cold and windy or very cold and still.
In late February life hangs in the balance.
Winter on the edge. Who will miss the ending?

Even in Spring you know re-appraisal is
of no value, but you dare not just surrender.
Because then what becomes of you?

How should you feel about the approaching
oblivion? It is maybe a place like any other,
with boundaries, days and nights, seasons.

The fields are smug as they do what you cannot.
They return to life. Twisted things rise from
the thatch. October's ghost departs the trees.

Don Tiedemann

Turnpike East

On the mountain's north side October
Is in brown and fragrant tatters.
Mid-morning finds frost in silver script
Beneath the ledges. Around the curve,
As suddenly as sunlight it
Changes. The Allegheny spreads
South as slowly as spilled coffee.
The mountains are a motley of
Peach-colored trees. Cows luxuriate
In sun polished, green fields high
Above the road.

Don Tiedemann

Unchosen

Here, it is as if the dead never were.
They are not eulogized nor even mentioned.
They are just gone. For the rest there is
slightly more for the evening meal.

The dead are a wasted afternoon,
the arrival of dusk, the sky going dim.
They are shadows losing shape
and becoming a single darkness.

It is hot here. Clouds pass above
in a wind nobody can feel.
Do the dead watch us helplessly?
That is no peace. Do the dead forgive?

The city is filled with dirty cafes.
The tables are all occupied
by faces you have seen somewhere.
None of them meet your glance.

Don Tiedemann

Variable Winds

The channel marker by Point Lookout
has no interest in the weather,
rocking and blinking alone
and utterly sufficient
among broad gray waters.

In western Pennsylvania
a row of ridgetop windmills
spin perfectly synchronized
in a breeze no one can feel.
They make the winds that cool
the valley or so the children
in the towns are told

In Missouri they tell the story
of a tornado lifting the walls
and roof from a house, leaving
behind the foundation and
a baby asleep in her crib

In the woods of Vermont the wind
rises and bright yellow leaves
fall with the silent grace
of snowflakes.

Don Tiedemann

Well Past Noon

I get to do this now.
The suitors are routed,
the Cyclops is blind,
the ten ships behind.

Where will I be
when I'm past seventy?
Don't tell me. Surprise me.

For now, just this:
the day seizing me.
Not telling, surprising.

Posterity is indulged.
Posterity is fat and lazy.
He can fend for himself now.

He can stick his head
in a microwave.

Where have I been
ever since I was ten?
Don't tell me. Surprise me.

Where am I now?
Can I finally howl
(at the moon) ?
Don't tell me. Surprise me.

Don Tiedemann

What Keeps Me Up

I.

The feckless habits of the world
outside the window. The wind
going, returning, going.

II.

The cherry trees in bloom are a
disguise, a fake mustache on
these streets of houses
and more houses.

III.

Memory holds the darkness
of water beneath trees,
the rooted strength
of granite cliffs.

IV.

The conclusions stand tall
and then evanesce.
The assumptions watch, embarrassed.

V.

Maybe the evening itself is animated,
making those distant noises: a dog
barking, children calling out
in some game.

VI.

A treat when the long familiar
surprises us, says something new
or hands us the past (all of it)
in a single object, a single gesture.

VII.

Spring has come home with arms full
of packages. Do the geese regret
having flown so far south?

VIII.

we are each our own weather system:
you a dark vortex, I a jagged line.
or each a circle, one H, one L.

We travel across a map with no features.
We are rain, snow, sunshine falling
on noone we know.

We are likelihoods, not certainties.

Don Tiedemann