

Tom Montag

Waiting for the Ferryman

Evening, a diffused place where light
and darkness gather. Long shadows,
a sweetness we can see. The river,

the swiftness of the water. Calmness
of a slow approach, against our fear
of distance, against the urgency.

What is behind us is behind us.
We know we must be going.
Who will take us to the other side?

The Girl With Red Socks

- FSA/OWI photo, 1941-1942

LC-USF 35-627

Photographer unknown

The girl with red socks against the red-brick building, standing among the other school children. Five boys, four girls, all told.

The boys have sticks and ropes, as if they mean to make something happen. It must be fall, or spring -- caps and coats in the low

sun, but not gloves. One girl sits on her bicycle. Another, against the wall, squints and shows her teeth. Next to her, the girl

with red socks, tallest of all, looks out at me. No, she looks past me, past you, past stars which have yet to show themselves.

She knows something. Her lips are pursed to say it, but can't. Instead, she touches the blonde head of the small girl in front

of her, as if to bless her. The way the light falls on them it is enough, her blessing, to mend this broken world.

Another Winter Morning

The old poet
lifts his coffee,

makes the leap
to the upper

reaches of the
Amazon.

A green bird
calls, its song

everywhere.
Slurried heat.

Slurried light.
Moisture in the air.

His old ways
fall away.

I do not know,
he says.

I never knew.

This Is Death

In this push against darkness,
most of life is just empty

space held together
by time and electro-

magnetism, gravity,
and the weak nuclear

force, and by whatever
it is that binds atoms

together and keeps them
moving. When we die, all

the motion ceases, our
momentum stalls, and the

us of us collapses.
We fall inward to that

place where star dust gathers
for one more go at

what comes next.

This Moment

Birds coming in
on the wind.

Light riding
silence.

Blue sky all the way
to the stars.

Everything is
as it appears.

I could stand here
a thousand years.

Tom Montag is most recently the author of *In This Place: Selected Poems 1982-2013*, as well as *Middle Ground*, *Curlew: Home*, *Kissing Poetry's Sister*, *The Idea of the Local*, and *The Big Book of Ben Zen*. Recent poems will be found at Architrave Press, *Atticus Review*, *The Broken City*, *The Chaffin Journal*, *Digital Papercut*, *Foliate Oak*, *Hamilton Stone Review*, *Hummingbird*, *The Magnolia Review*, *Mud Season Review*, *On the Rusk*, *Plainsong*, *Riding Light Review*, *Split Rock*, *Stoneboat*, and *Verse Virtual*. He blogs as **The Middlewesterner** and serves as Managing Editor of the Lorine Niedecker Monograph Series, *What Region?*