

In Summer

In summer there are days like these—
untended hours, fallow.
Like a bare patch of earth they clear space
for something—a volunteer tree, perhaps,
or crabgrass like we had in Florida.

That's the problem with time:
it seeks nothing, accepts anything,
lets events pile up like accidents.

And so we, who are addicted to order,
must impose it, be the curators
of the past, file our lives,
bind them tight into sheaves of days.

Looking at my bookshelves
I see this is my one, true profession—
to catalogue time, conserve the moments.
This is why I have tucked the CCC hat
behind the German field glasses
just above *The Outline of History*,

set the amber bottle of Tussonex,
its label typed by my father's hand,
next to the Darkie Toothpaste, its minstrel
icon beaming scandalously.

This is the secret reason
that the Hopi kachinas find a place
near Joseph Campbell, dance around
the actual skulls of small animals
who gave up their spirits in my woods
in a bid for immortality.

This is the hidden order in the shadowbox
made of a typesetter's tray hung on my wall,
my high school ring, my mother's glass dogs,
a robin's egg, a plaster Indian
safe in the slots.

All of these things huddle close to the books,
the type. They are trying to become words,
to make their way into sentences.
Mute nouns, I thread them with plots,
swaddle them with themes,
give them a place in this story world.

But at the end of a long summer's day
as I shift toward sleep,
I know that the covers of the books
will not swing wide like open doors
to these unpublished things
when I turn out the light.

Instead, night will begin
to reclaim this home,
silence these stories,

clear a space

that will lie fallow
until a new day comes.

Robert A. Neimeyer