

# tears, et cetera

*by* strannikov

the physical pain

tears testify to can be  
unreliable.

other pains take note  
and find deeper recesses  
for tears to travel.

one sequence of tears:  
memory itself conceives,  
is what tears express.

tears give substance to  
and make memories alive,  
joy and loss (as pain).

tears of self-reproach  
(never? sometimes? rarely?)  
threaten to drown us?

my tears must be cold:  
had I ever felt their heat,  
would I dare now burn?

regrets don't steer time  
nor do they postpone our graves:  
tears fall, as we do.

only do regrets  
precede our deaths, only when  
resolve intervenes.

no one's tears endure:  
all enemies are mortal,  
all families, too.

tears not seen, not heard  
in decades-long private rooms  
return to their hearts.

no days are retrieved,  
tears wash only as they fall,  
no year is restored.

my heart, struck with drought,  
pumps its powders into my  
desiccated eyes.

will tears find me yet?  
which absence dares to explain  
my drought-ravaged heart?

I'm as vanished on  
the threshold of this desert  
as any sands here.

a ghost is just this:  
a memory unable  
to obtain its tears.

ghosts are local plagues  
of unexpended grief—tears  
can't be bodiless.

the validity  
of tears: could that which we mourn  
return the favor?

who sheds tears because  
of the incapacity  
to weep and shed tears?

tears prefer the dark,  
they can't stand spotlights that would  
evaporate them.

tears fall in silence:  
they can be heard only when  
their liquid salt spills.

onions do not have  
the stamina to produce  
the tears we require.

tears do not console:  
the pools they form must be deep  
enough to sail in.

a fire I lit blows  
out, then its smoke rises up  
straight into my eyes.

