

29

Poems

Spring 2015

<http://creativityisforever.com>

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A Light in the Barn

by Verlyn Klinkenborg

Every now and then, I forget to turn off the lights in the barn.
I usually notice just before I go to bed, when the farm's boundaries

seem to have drawn in close. That light makes the barn seem farther
away than it is – a distance I'm going to have to travel before I sleep.

The weather makes no difference. Neither does the time of year.
Where I grew up, nearly every farm had a yard light that shone

all night long. I never understood why. Was it so a sleepless farmer
could look out at the tractor ruts or watch empty husks blowing

past the corn crib? Was it to guide some wandering stranger?
Or was it merely to posit one's existence, compressed, as those

farms were, between a prairie of soil and a prairie of sky?
I always thought those lights impoverished everything they shone on.

Far better the farms that lay dark until a light went on in the barn
long before dawn, a light shrouded by spider webs in the window frame,

a light nearly the color of a Jersey cow's milk. The cows would have
milked themselves at that exact hour, and in that exact order, if they'd been

able to and if the humans in charge had overslept. I don't have cows, and I
don't have an all-night yard light either. Usually, after turning out that

forgotten barn light, I sit on the edge of the tractor bucket for a few minutes
and let my eyes adjust to the night outside.

City people always notice the darkness here, but it's never very dark
if you wait till your eyes owl out a little.

I carry a flashlight, but I leave it off until I check on the chickens.
Then I let only the dimmest edge of its luminescence show me the hens.

Any more, and they stir on their roosts, looking fearful and resentful all at once. I'm always glad to have to walk down to the barn

in the night, and I always forget that it makes me glad. I heave on my coat, stomp into my barn boots and trudge down toward the barn light,

muttering at myself. But then I sit in the dark, and I remember this gladness, and I walk back up to the gleaming house, listening for the horses.

from The Rural Life (former NYT Opinion page, November 14, 2011)

read more at

http://topics.nytimes.com/top/reference/timestopics/people/K/verlyn_klinkenborg/index.html

A Little Shiver

by Barton Sutter

After the news, the forecaster crowed
With excitement about his bad tidings:
Eighteen inches of snow! Take cover!
A little shiver ran through the community.
Children abandoned their homework.
Who cared about the hypotenuse now?
The snowplow driver laid out his long johns.
The old couple, who'd barked at each other
At supper, smiled shyly, turned off the TV,
And climbed the stairs to their queen-size bed
Heaped high with blankets and quilts.
And the aging husky they failed to hear
Scratch the back door, turned around twice
In the yard, settled herself in the snow,
And covered her nose with her tail.

from The Writer's Almanac (January 27, 2013)

read more at <http://writersalmanac.org/episodes/>

Autopsy in the Form of an Elegy

by John Stone

In the chest
in the heart
was the vessel

was the pulse
was the art
was the love

was the clot
small and slow
and the scar
that could not know

the rest of you
was very nearly perfect.

from The Writer's Almanac (April 24, 2009)
read more at <http://writersalmanac.org/episodes/>

Church Camp, 1977

by Ed Madden

Three boys on the upper bunks
spend an afternoon looking
for dirty stuff in the Bible,
find the newer versions better
than the old. They almost look
like scholars, poring over books,
parsing words like *concupiscence*.

from Rattle (#39, Spring 2013)

read more at <http://www.rattle.com/poetry/print/all/>

Compensation

by Alpay Ulku

What did the twin towers stand for?

This is a week after 9/11, at the Middle Eastern grocery store.

The proprietor tenses. *I don't know.*

The cop is standing at the counter. He drops a bag of cashews on the scale, his hand on the bag, weighing it down. He asks again. *You don't know what the twin towers stood for?*

I don't know.

It is silent for a good long while. The proprietor looks away. *No charge for the cashews.*

That must have been the answer, the cop is pleased.

That bag of cashews is something to behold.

from Beloit Poetry Journal (vol.63, no.4 - Summer 2013)

read more at http://bpj.org/bpj_archive_7.html

Country Ways

by Maggie Schwed

If she be not nimble, she that holdeth a bucket will be trod upon by the sow.

Whoso eateth banana shall be set upon by the angry hive for the scent is signal.

If the knife be not honed, it shall not open sack nor belly, and the labor shall be more.

Trust not the headlight in October dark, for wet-piled leaf may yet be toad, mid-leap from road to bed of weeds.

If your pillow's plagued with acorn, if the yellow lentil move from kitchen shelf to sock, who will not praise the provident mouse?

Surely deer will eat the hydrangea, surely they will. Who is the fool who knows what must needs be and yet will plant hydrangea?

Woe to the sleeper who doth not first seek the spider hidden in the sheet.

Remember ye: close the gate or the beast within will on the instant be without.

Who doth not clean his gutter will behold the work of rain. For mighty is water and many its paths.

No hole is deep enough to keep the coyote from the carcass meat.

There is a fading in the trees and leaflessness? All withereth, except the moon.

Let the autumn cricket in the barn; it pleaseth the turkey whose days are numbered.

The hunger of the rat increaseth with success. Let death be farmer's wit.

The skunk that by day sleepeth in the nesting box hath eaten of the hen. Betake the rifle and dispatch this appetite or after eat no egg.

What is't that instructs the bee: aster, goldenrod, and buckwheat call for industry, else bitterest cold will come and want of nectars with it.

The flock that practiceth doth fill the sky with utile Vs or stranger patterns, reeling.

These grant a warning pleasure to the eye: comes winter soon. Too soon comes winter.

from The Kenyon Review (vol.35, no.1, Winter 2013)

read more at <http://www.kenyonreview.org/kronline/poetry/>

Etiquette of the Occasion

by David Huddle

The deaths I've imagined lately include
apologies: Sorry to ruin dinner like this.
Forgive me, old friend, lousy way to end a set,
we were playing so well. Please, sir, no
cpr, thanks, I can find my way out.
Sorry to ask this, ma'am, but do you mind
turning your back? My dear, I apologize
for the mess.
Stupid, stupid, I tell myself.
So how should it go? An afternoon walk
into the woods where they won't think to look
till daylight. Shortness of breath whispers, Here
sit on this stump, then chest pain suggests, Lying
in those ferns might be nice. Bandit chickadee
blinks down from a pine, then flies off politely.

from Appalachian Heritage (Spring 2013)

read more at <http://appalachianheritage.net/tag/poetry/>

Godly

by James Doyle

The preacher cornered me in the dark
vestibule of the church and whispered,
“Be Godly.” Okay, then. I hurried
right out into nature for the usual
surrogates. Leaves, a vineyard half
in rot. A creek, trying to wax poetic,
kept getting snagged in backwater
ponds only flies would find appetizing.
So there I was, made in God’s own
image, which apparently wasn’t enough.
Walk Godly, dream Godly? Obviously,
marriage and raising children didn’t
much emulate a Supreme Being sufficient
unto Itself. So I tried geography:
Zen gardens, maybe even Zen nations,
big spate of cathedrals across Europe.
Northern Lights for the transcendental.
I thumbed history, but it was too
much like me and everyone else.
I grabbed the preacher by the lapels,
shook him from side to side, shouted:
“What do you mean, be Godly?”
But he had died long ago, which accounted
for the bony smile, the echo, and the ants.

from Rattle (#31, Summer 2009)

read more at <http://www.rattle.com/poetry/print/all/>

In Search Of New Life

by Kenneth O'Keefe

A spike of lightning skewered a Kansas man -
Electrified the marrow of his bones.
Six weeks later a local paper ran
His story – no less stunning than St. Joan's.

He said, since he received this shocking blow,
He felt three decades younger than his years.
And with his mind now cleared like streets of snow,
His thoughts could wind their ways through hemispheres.

Some strike a vein of gold without their trying.
But I am more inventive than those who
Complain of rain without their ever buying
Coats or umbrellas. For when skies of blue

Become black as the snarled back of a bear,
I rush to hold a golf club in the air.

from the Amoskeag Journal (2005)

read more at <http://amoskeagjournal.com/excerpts/>

Irish Angel

by Bruce McCabe

In the fall of the year she flew across the ocean
To Ireland, the land of her fathers
When we said goodbye, a tear was in her eye
I lost her then and there, my Irish angel

The first letter came, she said she loved it there
And how much she wished I was there with her
She wrote it on a hill, in a gentle Irish rain
I saw her in my mind, my Irish angel

I wrote her back and then there was no second letter
Just the silence of the snow that fell around me
I let her down, I know, the day I let her go
Now she's found someone else, my Irish angel

The first time I saw her, my heart went in a spin
When they speak of love they call it falling
It was like I held my breath 'til I laid eyes on her again
So beautiful, she was my Irish angel

And when a stolen glance, led to a stolen kiss
I thought I knew the chance that I was taking
I know I never knew a love as strong as this
Or what it was to feel my own heart breaking

So now I raise a glass and then I raise another
One to forget, one to remember
And one just to dream of how things could have been
If I hadn't lost my Irish angel

as sung by J. Lang (McCabe on keys) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iC2vgivPOLY>
more from The Wilderness Poet's Handbook at <http://creativityisforever.com/11.html>

Land of Little Sticks, 1945

by James Tate

Where the wife is scouring the frying pan
and the husband is leaning up against the barn.
Where the boychild is pumping water into a bucket
and the girl is chasing a spotted dog.

And the sky churns on the horizon.
A town by the name of Pleasantville has disappeared.
And now the horses begin to shift and whinny,
and the chickens roost, keep looking this way and that.
At this moment something is not quite right.

The boy trundles through the kitchen, spilling water.
His mother removes several pies from the oven, shouts at him.
The girlchild sits down by the fence to stare at the horses.
And the man is just as he was, eyes closed, forehead
against his forearm, leaning up against the barn.

from American Poetry Review (vol.9, no.1, 1980)
read more at <https://www.aprweb.org/issues>

Let There Always Be

by Ruth Bavetta

the bright juice of oranges,
sun on the kitchen tiles,
a small nonessential bird
unraveling morning,

silvery snail trails, blue iris,
the gopher, the palm tree, the goat
that found its way into the house,

pigeons stitched onto telephone wires,
the clear sound of the sea,
a time when everyone is away,
a plate of milk, a tin of strawberry jam.

But never again the open gate
to the empty house down the street,
the algae drowning
the abandoned pool,

the man who stood by the edge
beginning the dirge.
The still water. The small
blue shoe.

from Antiphon Poetry Magazine UK (Issue 2, Act II, Winter 2012)
read more at <http://www.antiphon.org.uk/index.php/archive>

Ohio-

by Derek Mong

comes to us from oh hello

Which some believe to mean "I am in a state
Of abbreviated greeting," i.e.: she blinks, I wave,
She winks before the Erie snow

Can melt upon my glasses. Other Ohio
Examples: gravel strafed by headlights, a shield
Of green seen from a cockpit. Explanation two
Contends Ohio grew into a double ode

From a sole, initial blooper: uh oh-
Oh oh, oh oooh my home can speed into a love
Cry or a lyric! Is such ecstasy dubious
when its first note foreshadows

Its finale? Like adolescents and army time, zeroes
Frame all of Ohio's encounters. In fact, some think
We split off from a whisper which went creasing
Through the prairie: I ow a- O hi o-

Sisters till a glacier cleaved them? Oh
No, not so. Ohio's as indivisible as amber waves
From rusted pickups. For instance, I have traced
My state's origin back to this abiding sorrow:

It's night, I'm driving with my windows
Down, the cold's encircling my collar. I swear
The earth below me begins to swell and drop
Like three syllables stretched into four low

Then lower letters. The sky goes blank with snow.
I drove and drove into the pages of Ohio.

from Alehouse Press (Alehouse 2008)

read more at <http://alehousejournal.homestead.com/2008/2008Contributors.html>

: Palindroning :

by Patrick Moran

God saw I was a dog. Do geese see God?
Too hot to hoot, we panic in a pew. We
few, drawn onward, never odd or even,
drab as a fool aloof as a bard, live not on
evil, Reno loner. Lonely Tylenol nurses
run so many dynamos: evil did I dwell,
lewd I did live. Niagara O roar again,
"evil did I dwell, lewd I did live." So
many dynamos nurses run lonely
Tylenol. Reno loner, live not on evil:
drab as a fool aloof as a bard, never odd
or even, drawn onward we few. We
panic in a pew, too hot to hoot. Do geese
see God? God saw I was a dog.

from The Antioch Review (Spring 2011)

read more at <http://review.antiochcollege.org/store>

The Prodigy

by Lola Haskins

He was born with the fingerpads of the blind.
By eight he could tell if someone
had been at the piano before him,
and how long before, and who.
Beginning Fur Elise one November afternoon,
he burst into storms of tears
because his sister had banged
her tuneless anger the night before,
and he felt the bruises still on the keys.

He was born with the ears of a dog.
He could hear his mother's skin decay,
the soft give as her cheeks sagged just barely more.
Sometimes his face would cloud
because the moan of needles becoming
earth seemed so incomparably sad.
Or brighten. He had heard the sun come out
on the beating feathers of birds, miles away.

He was born with his life in his hands.
Toddling, he learned the little bells
of Grieg. Then he mastered Mozart's
speech, its ache of clean and brittle
song. Then he learned to follow Bach,
crossing water from calm to flood,
up and down the stepping-stones
of the keys. He would dream
of his piano as if it were flesh.
In a room with a strange instrument
he would walk by it once or twice
brushing it, as if by accident,
with his leg, his sleeve.

from The Adirondack Review (Fall 2005)

read more at <http://www.theadirondackreview.com/archives.html>

Reusing Words

by Hal Sorowitz

Don't think you know everything,
Father said, just because you're good
with words. They aren't everything.
I try to say the smallest amount possible.
Instead of using them indiscriminately
I try to conserve them. I'm the only one
in this household who recycles them. I
say the same thing over & over again,
like "Who forgot to turn out the lights?
Who forgot to clean up after themselves
in the bathroom?" Since you don't listen
I never have to think of other things to say.

from The Writer's Almanac (November 1, 2011)

read more at <http://writersalmanac.org/episodes/>

Some Clouds

by Steve Kowitz

Now that I've unplugged the phone
no one can reach me—
At least for this one afternoon
they will have to get by without my advice or opinion.
Now nobody else is going to call
& ask in a tentative voice
if I haven't yet heard that she's dead,
that woman I once loved—
nothing but ashes scattered over a city
that barely itself any longer exists.
Yes, thank you, I've heard.
It had been too lovely a morning.
That in itself should have warned me.
The sun lit up the tangerines
& the blazing poinsettias
like so many candles.
For one afternoon they will have to forgive me.
I am busy watching things happen again
that happened a long time ago,
as I lean back in Josephine's lawn chair
under a sky of incredible blue,
broken—if that is the word for it—
by a few billowing clouds,
all white & unspeakably lovely,
drifting out of one nothingness into another.

from Cultural Weekly (March 23, 2012)

read more at <http://www.culturalweekly.com/category/poetry-poems/>

Spelling Out
by Ron Padgett

Beautiful, an O fell from your mouth
into the letters L, V and E
spelling out LVEO

from The Paris Review (#45, Winter 1968)
read more at <http://www.theparisreview.org/back-issues/>

from **Steep Declension**

by John Hollander

The fortune-teller was nonspecific: Will
I have to fall into some silly well
Or smash a borrowed car into a wall?

Or fall (as it is often said) quite ill
And lie, frail as a lower-case letter l
In bed for many months and then—that's all? (. . .)

Of a barren valley could then begin
In earnest. As for me, it first began
When a huge yet-to-be-invented gun

Boomed out among the hills: the echoing din
Was ominous. My second cousin Dan
(Why bring him in? I perhaps might have done

Without him if I'd—well . . .) who made a mess
Of many things by trying to amass
A fortune, ended broke and lachrymose

About it after all—(but I digress;
Let's see . . . well, back to the bad dream) the grass
Outside the castle wall was wet and gross (. . .)

We've come down to the place where smoldering fear
Flares up in certainty's consuming fire
Sparked by the gypsy's mumblings long before,

And crossed thresholds can lead to what is dear
No longer, but to what is surely dire
Behind the ultimately closing door.

from the Kenyon Review (vol.29, no.3, Summer 2007)

read more at <http://www.kenyonreview.org/kronline/poetry/>

Stick Your Head in the Copier

Jessica Goodheart

Let the light seep into your eye sockets,
your pores. Illuminate your hair
with a flash as bright as Vegas.
And you, the you that is not you, the inverse of you,
will be tacked on every cubicle wall
as a reminder of courage. She took a chance, they'll say.
Stuck her head into the jaws of the great machine.
(It terrifies all of us, its mysterious appetites
and blinking impartations.)
Of course, you may simply be tossed
into the wastebasket, which gorges from nine to five
on a bleached coleslaw of trees.
Or recycled into a romance novel,
teeming with breathless heiresses and dark-eyed suitors,
your cracked lips and shadow hair barely recognizable.
In any case, you'll have felt the light in your veins.
For a moment, you'll have glowed like a saint.

from the versedaily.com archives (2011)

read more at <http://versedaily.com/>

This Freedom Thing

by Steve Mueske

To explain cluster ballooning requires too much narration. So I offer these constituent ingredients: a chair (lawn chair, for example), spare time, a plethora of balloons (variously sized and colored) filled with helium by friends who enjoy the particular nakedness of an open field, and a chase vehicle recently inspected and found to be in good standing. Duct tape is useful, as is the boatswain's knowledge of knots. What I'd like to know, really, is how the optimal ratio of balloons to weight is determined, if a few dreamers were initially sacrificed in the name of leisurely science. Soon, a threshold will be crossed. Whole living rooms airborne, stocked with batteries and battery-operated TVs, various and sundry condiments. Beer, of course. Imagine The New World Symphony at 500 feet. With enough gas we could get the whole neighborhood up, set up temporary nations, sovereign and lawless, really get this freedom thing down.

from The Avatar Review (Issue 15, Summer 2013)

read more at <http://www.avatarreview.net/index-of-contributors>

This Moment
by Eavan Boland

A neighbourhood.
At dusk.

Things are getting ready
to happen
out of sight.

Stars and moths.
And rinds slanting around fruit.

But not yet.

One tree is black.
One window is yellow as butter.

A woman leans down to catch a child
who has run into her arms
this moment.

Stars rise.
Moths flutter.
Apples sweeten in the dark.

from Poetry 180 (Poem #138)
read more at <http://www.loc.gov/poetry/180/p180-list.html>

Traveler

Robert E. Lee to his horse, on the 150th anniversary of the surrender at Appomattox

Traveler,
lead on thy trusty steed.
From far beneath the crimson fields
of tired cotton and muted corn,

past the rivers where men drank at last
the cool waters of eternity
and plied their hands hands unto heaven
that mercy might grant a finish to the cause.

There lies one who felt the call
to forgive a brother by giving his shoes
that the poor boy might walk home
at which he was thanked and gratefully shot.

Here another
whose last spoken word
must have been that of *mother*
from the helplessness there in his eyes.

Close nigh too, a gentleman, too proud to show his pain
content not to know where the messenger had called
lain straight, all effort having turned
to viewing the sunset as his welcome to glory.

Thus now, Traveler
hear not the cries of your countrymen.
The sword of battle hath dealt here its blow
that we might affirm our oath to pardon its trespass.

These hills are our home; this land, our love.

Let no man think that we have struggled here in vain.
Let not history perceive that our efforts were lost.
For our struggle has united us forever -
forever to the graciousness of this land.

This path we now trod is blessed, dear Traveler.
Blessed with the silent footprints of angels.
They came not to look on that we might simply fight and die,
for the love they symbolize is that which we hold dear.

Dear Traveler, these angels are still among us.
They came that we might have life.
Through the ramparts, through the trenches -
infilling each of us who sought to stand

for this beloved land and to defend her even in death -
then blessing all who were vigilant
that they, the faithful, might receive a worthy reward.
This we have earned, yes, a blessing for our steadfastness

Our adherence to the cause and our disdain for disgrace,
these truths we have held dear.
For I feel it in this heart and have seen it throughout the land.
Angels, angels, dear traveler, have sanctified this outcome.

We go not to relinquish our integrity.
We travel not to a place
that will be shunned by history.
For I know that what we've done here -

what that brave soul that lies there in the dust struggled for
that heaven might pardon him for such goodwill to his countrymen -
This I know...loyalty to a cause, any cause
will always prevail over the crusades of a moment.

The deeds that have been done,
the places we have hallowed by the blood of our fallen
of our young and our old
will soon pale to trifles precious only to a few.

But this consciousness, this awakening, dear Traveler...

of our land and its people to the glories of our union
will never rest in proclaiming its victory to the corners of the earth.
Our love, our brotherhood,
these will they learn are the true footprints unto legacy.

Carry on faithful Traveler.
This day do we begin the march of all our countrymen
into the proud pages, if not the hearts,
of history.

Unpublished © 2015 Joshua Bryars

Visitation

by Carrie Shipers

My mother waited years
to tell me: the morning after
my high school graduation,
she found her dead stepfather
eating chocolate cake in the living room.
She said, Good morning,
He nodded and licked blue frosting
from a plastic fork. She knew
she was awake. She could hear
the refrigerator's solemn hum,
birds outside at the feeder.
She wondered how he'd found
his way to a house built five years
after his death, wondered why
her mother hadn't come—
but the dead deserve their rest.
She drank a glass of water
and went back to bed.
When she got up again,
the evidence—fork, plate, crumbs—
could've belonged to anyone.

from ABZ Press © 2009 Carrie Shipers

When Considering the Long, Long Journey of 28,000 Rubber Ducks
by Kei Miller

To them who knew to break free from dark hold of ships
who trusted their unsqueezed bodies instead to the Atlantic;
to them who scorned the limits of bathtubs,
refused to join a chorus of rub-a-dub;
to them who've always known their own high tunes,
hitched rides on the manacled backs of blues,
who've been sailing now since 1992; to them
that pass in squeakless silence over the Titanic,
float in and out of salty vortexes; to them
who grace the shores of hot and frozen continents,
who instruct us yearly on the movement of currents;
to those bright yellow dots that crest the waves
like spots of praise: hail.

from guardian.com's Saturday Poem archives (June 14, 2014)

read more at <http://www.theguardian.com/books/series/saturdaypoem>

Winter Twilight

by Anne Porter

On a clear winter's evening
The crescent moon

And the round squirrels' nest
In the bare oak

Are equal planets.

from poets.org

read more at <http://www.poets.org/poetsorg/poems>

Winter with Abraham Lincoln

by Peter Davis

We went sledding. I pulled plastic bags
over my feet before I stuffed them in my moon boots.
I wore mittens and a stocking hat. His beard was
a big black Viking ship as he slid down the hill,
holding the sides of the sled with clinched fingers.
He knocked my feet from under me and laughed
and said, "Sorry, I've never had such fun."

We had hot chocolate later and he crossed his
bare feet in front of the fire. His pupils were leaks
in a ship's hull. He looked like a boat floating
on a blue harbor. I said, "Is everything all right?
You look sad." He said, "I have a dead child."
I didn't know what to say. Even now, I keep
filling his black hat with snow.

from The Atticus Review (May 2012)

read more at <http://atticusreview.org/category/poetry/>

Workshop

by Billy Collins

I might as well begin by saying how much I like the title.
It gets me right away because I'm in a workshop now
so immediately the poem has my attention,
like the Ancient Mariner grabbing me by the sleeve.

And I like the first couple of stanzas,
the way they establish this mode of self-pointing
that runs through the whole poem
and tells us that words are food thrown down
on the ground for other words to eat.
I can almost taste the tail of the snake
in its own mouth,
if you know what I mean.

But what I'm not sure about is the voice,
which sounds in places very casual, very blue jeans,
but other times seems standoffish,
professorial in the worst sense of the word
like the poem is blowing pipe smoke in my face.
But maybe that's just what it wants to do.

What I did find engaging were the middle stanzas,
especially the fourth one.
I like the image of clouds flying like lozenges
which gives me a very clear picture.
And I really like how this drawbridge operator
just appears out of the blue
with his feet up on the iron railing
and his fishing pole jigging—I like jigging—
a hook in the slow industrial canal below.
I love slow industrial canal below. All those l's.

Maybe it's just me,
but the next stanza is where I start to have a problem.
I mean how can the evening bump into the stars?

And what's an obbligato of snow?
Also, I roam the decaffeinated streets.
At that point I'm lost. I need help.

The other thing that throws me off,
and maybe this is just me,
is the way the scene keeps shifting around.
First, we're in this big aerodrome
and the speaker is inspecting a row of dirigibles,
which makes me think this could be a dream.
Then he takes us into his garden,
the part with the dahlias and the coiling hose,
though that's nice, the coiling hose,
but then I'm not sure where we're supposed to be.
The rain and the mint green light,
that makes it feel outdoors, but what about this wallpaper?
Or is it a kind of indoor cemetery?
There's something about death going on here.

In fact, I start to wonder if what we have here
is really two poems, or three, or four,
or possibly none.

But then there's that last stanza, my favorite.
This is where the poem wins me back,
especially the lines spoken in the voice of the mouse.
I mean we've all seen these images in cartoons before,
but I still love the details he uses
when he's describing where he lives.
The perfect little arch of an entrance in the baseboard,
the bed made out of a curled-back sardine can,
the spool of thread for a table.
I start thinking about how hard the mouse had to work
night after night collecting all these things
while the people in the house were fast asleep,
and that gives me a very strong feeling,
a very powerful sense of something.
But I don't know if anyone else was feeling that.
Maybe that was just me.

Maybe that's just the way I read it.

from his collection *The Art of Drowning* (1995)

read more at <http://www.poemhunter.com/billy-collins/poems>

(N+1) Hopeful Is the Thingamabob with Featherweights

A Oulipian adaptation of well-known Emily Dickinson first lines

(N+1) Hopeful is the thingamabob with featherweights
that percolates in the sound ([#254](#))

(N+10) I'm nominative! Who are You?
Are you nominative, too? ([#288](#))

(N+8) I heard a foam by-product when I died ([#465](#))

(N+4) The Soup selects her own Socket
then shuttlecocks the Doormat ([#303](#))

(N+3) I felt a Fungus, in my Brake,
And Moustaches to and fro ([#280](#))

(N+4) I taunt a listener never bribed ([#214](#))

(N+15) Wild Nuisances! Wild Nuisances!
Were I With thee,
Wild Nuisances should be
Our majority ([#249](#))

(N+7) I like to see it lark the militiamen,
And lifeboat the vampires up ([#585](#))

(N+2) My lifestyle had stood - a Loaded Habit -
In Corporations - till a Deadline
The Oxygen passed - identified -
And carried me away ([#754](#))

(N+2) I cannot live with You -
It would be [the] Lifeguard -
And [the] Lifeguard is over there -
Behind the Shelter ([#640](#))

The N+7 Machine was used to help write this piece - <http://www.spoonbill.org/n+7/>