

## IMAGINING BILLY

It is not hard to imagine Billy Collins  
stretched out on the bed beside me  
in the place now occupied by his new  
and selected poems. He is wearing  
striped pajamas, in a lightweight pale  
blue flannel with a darker blue piping,  
purposefully selected for their classic,  
formal lines and the way the colors  
enhance the lucidity of his eyes.

Unlike me, Billy has closed the book  
he was reading before bed and placed it  
on the nightstand alongside his water glass,  
watch and ring, admiring surely  
the peaceful arrangement of the objects  
and the way light from the hall glances off  
the watch and the ring and places a small square  
shimmer on the glass—a Vermeer-like touch  
he will save for future reference.

And unlike the volume of his poems,  
which lies where I left it, face-down  
and half-hidden in the covers, Billy  
is a picture of composure—  
hands clasped behind his head, his gaze  
sailing quizzically around the room.  
Perhaps he is interrogating  
the snow or coaxing bands of mice  
from the elegant labyrinth of his mind.

Perhaps he is devising a plan  
to introduce the curtains  
to the windowsill, the alarm clock  
to the bedside lamp. It does not matter to him  
that I lie here, ready to fool with  
his buttons, or muss the remaining  
hairs on his balding boyish head.  
He has deeper mysteries to probe  
than my unambiguous flesh beside him.