

Twelve River RIPPLES



Favourite Poem

Everything is Going to be All Right by Derek Mahon

How should I not be glad to contemplate
the clouds clearing beyond the dormer window
and a high tide reflected on the ceiling?
There will be dying, there will be dying,
but there is no need to go into that.
The poems flow from the hand unbidden
and the hidden source is the watchful heart.
The sun rises in spite of everything
and the far cities are beautiful and bright.
I lie here in a riot of sunlight
watching the day break and the clouds flying.
Everything is going to be all right.

This twelve-line poem, written in simple language, almost as if to a child, is a message of reassurance. The poem opens on a note of optimism even though it is evident that the writer is lying in bed, looking at the sky through a dormer window and watching the high tide reflected on the ceiling; from which we also learn that he is near the sea, so perhaps it is a convalescent home. In the fourth line he admits, there will be dying, and this is repeated for emphasis. He may be alluding to the Troubles, or to his own mortality, or a pandemic. But he steers away from this thought, instead finding solace in the knowledge that poems will *flow from the hand unbidden* and the sun will rise *in spite of everything*. He imagines seeing again the far cities, *beautiful and bright*. He may be ill, but he is lying *in a riot of sunlight*. The clouds, which in line two were *clearing*, are now *flying*. The last line is a repeat of the title, a simple message of reassurance, to himself and to the reader.

There are repetitions: clouds, dying, watchful and watching, sun and sunlight. There are no end rhymes, but one internal rhyme recurs: *high tide, dying, bright, rises, lie, riot, sunlight, flying, right*. This sound is an echo of Why? Also *hidden, unbidden*.

The ultimate solace offered here is the joy of creativity: he is able to draw on his own *watchful heart*, the source of his inspiration for poems, which *flow from the hand unbidden* – he has this precious gift and is grateful for it.

The poem resonates at this time of the Covid-19 pandemic, when people are looking within themselves for inspiration and ways to cope with the fear of the virus and the challenges of lockdown.

Anne Boileau