

ALFRED NICOL

## Mid-November House Guest

Because he never seems to move, I wonder  
how he got to where he's standing still.  
The slow, painstaking insect barely flinches  
when I touch his eyelash-like antenna.  
He started toward stopping hours ago:  
his life's a drawn-out pilgrimage of inches.  
No fretful vacillation of the will,  
no panic, no unthinking flight, no blunder  
out of the frying pan into Gehenna.  
He's acting on an instinct to be slow.

This afternoon he idles on The Globe,  
mingling with the newsprint. The headlines treat him  
like the frivolous calligraphy  
he seems. Two columns forge the long decline  
he's clawed to, elbowing his spindly serif,  
as if they mean to spell calamity.  
One day soon, his end will come to meet him.  
No exoskeletal thanatophobe,  
he stands his ground and calmly holds the line,  
as though supporting "Sullivan for Sheriff?"

But I presume to know my guest too well:  
anthropomorphism is impolite.  
He's not The Fly, or Gregor Samsa's cousin.  
He's not himself (though who am I to say?).  
He doesn't want to do annoying things

I would expect of him, like swarmin', buzzin',  
(dropping g's!). He stays inside at night,  
retreating ever deeper in his shell.  
He's shot. He's too far gone to fly away.  
He's got the winter weighing on his wings.

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