

Grandfather Clock

Our evenings had no obvious keepers
And few locked doors. An arm's length
From the brick-shod hearth, the talking sentry
With cedar skull and grainy forehead

Thrilled me as I wound deep into its valves.
I was a heart-delver, a clamper
On the springs which released notes
Sometimes piercingly as an alarm.

When I donned my schoolboy shoes at 8 a.m.
I knew a Londoner was taking horlicks at 11 p.m.
On my previous eve. Longitudes baffled me.
Not so my sentry, my cache of time.

On unclear days it was a foghorn
And I its presser looking out
Over the sound where time flowed
Around a captain's wheel.

My clock still goes, emitting
No cuckoo-pop, but syllables
Of grave, heavy thought
That would outwit a lyre.

J. K. Murphy