

## Goodwill, Tag Sales, etc.

Talk about the used objects found in such sales, or in some other way make second time around sales central to today's poem. You might also riff off some recycled objects seen at such a sale.

The following poem goes on for eight pages in Ted Kooser's book *Splitting an Order*. I have chosen a few of the separate sections that I especially like.

### Estate Sale

A windup wristwatch  
with a cracked leather band:  
throughout his life, a man  
may out of curiosity  
push his hand up to the wrist  
through a hole in the fence  
of time, and then, one day  
as he leans there enjoying  
the hours, someone comes up  
on the other side, takes hold,  
and pulls him through.

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An envelope of dime-store  
photo mounting corners—  
little black bats that seem always  
to wait at the edges.

~~~~~

A folded wooden clotheshorse,  
its creamy ribs like bone,  
like a beach umbrella blown inside out  
by the cold sea-wind of time,

and next to this, a galvanized tub  
in which a washboard leans  
like a staircase up into the present.

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A tire that was never used,  
still wrapped in paper swaddling—  
old road maps, maybe, soaked  
and smoothed around it like poultices  
to cool the lust for rolling.

~~~~~

And among these homely things,  
an antique gilded harp,  
its dusty strings like a curtain  
drawn over the silence,  
stroked by fingers of light.

Ted Kooser  
in *Splitting an Order*

### **Pretty Things**

In Chinatown in 1938  
a bowl-plate of cheap porcelain, “peasant ware,”  
they called it, painted by a swift sure hand  
with lively leaves and bright blob flowers, cost  
twenty-five cents. I still have six of them.

The girls in 1965, would help me steer  
the stroller to the Five and Ten, and each,  
after some intense pondering, would choose  
a single plastic flower. A dime apiece.  
I have it still, a bouquet long in gathering.

Getting and spending — yes, I know. But things,  
cheap little pretty things, bought with joy

and kept because of it, don't they contain  
an immaterial radiance, maybe finally  
the flicker of immortality called soul?

You see such things in bins at Goodwill,  
sad, grey bits of wreckage from a flood.  
Mine will just be stuff the kids  
have to dispose of. Or the Chinese plates  
might be quite valuable, in money. But that

was never what the flickering radiance was.

Ursula K. Le Guin  
in *Finding my Elegy*

## Garage Sale

After she had  
that last big  
garage sale  
she floated  
off into  
the sky

& I  
heard her  
say there was  
nothing keeping  
her here anymore

& I was much more  
cautious about the stuff  
I got rid of after that.

Brian Andreas  
anthologized in *what have you lost?* poems selected by  
Naomi Shihab Nye