

# Poetry Porch: Poetry

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## “O Baker Farm!”

By Shaune Bornholdt

*Having purchased and dismantled one family's shanty for boards to build his cabin, Henry David Thoreau, out fishing, happens upon another Irish family during a storm.*

*Thoreau:*

My cabin tight and clean, I took my rod  
to augment frugal fare, past Baker Farm,  
but rain and thund'rous flash found me unarmed  
against the drubbing some proud weather god  
would give poor fishermen. A path I'd trod  
years past led to a hut. The family, warm,  
untutored, welcomed me with Irish charm.  
Hard-working, yes, but shiftless. He turned sod  
for local farmers. Good will bade me speak  
of his bad bargain; how, if he'd refrain  
from costly boots and meat, he might be free,  
lay down his spade, catch fish in sunlight's creek,  
go berrying. I lit his bog-bound brain—  
his wife agape—with hope to live like me.\*

*The wife:*

Poor man out there! We took him in. Like me,  
caught in that shower, but himself soaked through,  
I but a sprinkle, laundering. My John knew  
it was no outdoors day. That young man—he  
must not know meat makes milk. I nurse. The tea  
I offered he refused. But berrying ... True:  
I miss my days with Kate. Could this be who  
tore down her house? It was necessity,  
but oh!—they've left. She's gone, and yet no word.  
I'd scarce *my* lying-in—she washed the rags—  
when I attended hers. How memory slips!  
—then floods. Our walks, our splashing feet, the birds.  
Fish tickling toes. Without her, my day drags.  
Her voice. Our plans. Our babies on our hips.

*Kate's Song:*

Lull la lall la, oh my wee one,  
wailing wan upon my breast.  
Eyelids lowered like petals folding,  
in your nest of holding, rest.

Where the river rinses grieving,  
violets' dark may bloom as bliss.  
Robin's bobs and bows are laughter,  
wind's a *whish* of after-kiss.

Hush my dearest, hush my darling,  
lie here held from harm's befall.  
Sleep in song of spirits moving,  
calling, soothing, lull la lall.

\*The first part of this poem retells an incident from the "Baker Farm" chapter in *Walden* and uses some of Thoreau's words and phrases.