

Design

Billy Collins, 1941

I pour a coating of salt on the table
and make a circle in it with my finger.

This is the cycle of life

I say to no one.

This is the wheel of fortune,
the Arctic Circle.

This is the ring of Kerry
and the white rose of Tralee

I say to the ghosts of my family,
the dead fathers,
the aunt who drowned,
my unborn brothers and sisters,
my unborn children.

This is the sun with its glittering spokes
and the bitter moon.

This is the absolute circle of geometry

I say to the crack in the wall,
to the birds who cross the window.

This is the wheel I just invented
to roll through the rest of my life

I say
touching my finger to my tongue.