

**Evensong**

There are rats that sneak  
in this New World city.  
They came from England  
on the ships of pirates.  
They get drunk at nights  
in the basements of schools.  
They burn Gideon's Bibles  
at sunrise by the river,  
in carriages they whisper to babies  
there is no God,  
they chew live worms and thorns  
and spit them at pigeons,  
and with cruel teeth  
they come at my feet  
when I stroll to church  
in the evenings.

So I've bought a pistol.  
I've filled it with bullets.  
If just one rat  
dares show his nose,  
his brains will take  
my hot lead prize.  
I'll lift his corpse  
by its sinful tail,  
and wrap it in newsprint  
and burn it by the river  
at sundown,  
when I am returned  
from Evensong.

—Andrew Bartlett