A Covered Bridge in Littleton, New Hampshire

By Stephanie Burt

I can remember when I wanted X
more than anything ever—for X fill in
from your own childhood

[balloon, pencil lead, trading card, shoelaces, a bow
or not to have to wear a bow]

and now I am moved to action, when I am moved,
principally by a memory of what to want.

The point is to be, in your own eyes, what you are,
or to keep your own tools, so that you can pretend.

And so it was no surprise,

[fortissimo]
to me at least, when Cooper, who is two,
collapsed in fits when he could not have
a $20, three-foot-long stuffed frog
in the image of Frog from Frog and Toad, since he is Toad.

That morning, needing a nap,

he had thrown, from the third-story balcony

of Miller’s Cafe and Bakery, into the whistling

rapids and shallows

of the Ammonoosuc River, with its arrowheads and caravans of stones,
his Red Sox cap. His hair was shining like

another planet’s second sun,
as he explained, looking up, “I threw my hat in the river.
I would like my hat back now.”