

## **Billy Collins Inspires**

To be an inspiring poet  
I expected a more exotic name,  
but like a first line whose intrigue  
reflects the subsequent journey,  
this guy keeps all his promises.

Transparency is his mystery.  
He does not try to be as clever as Peter Porter  
or as pretentious as Eliot,  
is not as eccentric as Marianne Moore  
or expresses beauty like Judith Wright  
and is not as culture bound as Les Murray,  
tho' on good days the ol' boy  
could run him a close second.

His invitations,  
'I remember late one night in Paris',  
'It occurred to me around dusk',  
'Would anyone care to join me'  
are so disarming  
that I can seldom tell he's from America.

If life would be a race uncluttered,  
without confusion by Latin or algebra,  
with few criteria for entry  
to the office of the high priests of anything,  
you'd need a guide whose words  
tumble like a generous stream  
in a story which is original  
yet sounds familiar.

So my reading of Billy –  
why wasn't he called Walter de la  
or something like that –  
is as comforting  
as a campfire conversation under a full moon,  
as satisfying as eggs and bacon  
fried in the frost of a hungry morning  
sprinkled with thoughts which mirror lives  
and would therefore find space on his pages.

*Tonsberg, Norway  
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