

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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