

## 4 Poems By Bill Berkowitz

### I'm Listening To Billy Collins In The Rain, February 2015

I'm listening to Billy Collins read some poems on NPR's Prairie Home Companion. It's Sunday morning and it's pouring.

Which is okay, because we in California so need the rain.

I'm searching for a joke here, because Billy Collins' poems have jokes in them.

Maybe they're not really jokes, but more like funny asides and comments.

I'm enjoying the "one and only Billy Collins," as the announcer characterizes him in his introduction.

The announcer is not Garrison Keiler.

I'm not sure where Keiler is.

Maybe Keiler was stranded somewhere in Minnesota because of the weather?

Perhaps he is skating in the U.S. Pond Hockey Championships being held in Minneapolis.

Thus may sound far-fetched, but Mr. Keiler has reported on stranger things.

That's assuming he actually lives in Minnesota.

After all these years, it's weird that I don't know where Keiler actually lives.

I'm pretty sure he's originally from Minnesota.

The thus far unnamed host reminds us that Collins has been named Poet Laureate of the United States twice.

I'm enjoying Collins reading his poems titled "Lucky Cat," "1960," and a very funny poem about his daughter.

Billy Collins poetry is accessible.

I'm sitting in my car parked in the Supermarket parking lot,

I'm thinking about poetry as I'm clutching my grocery list.

It's still raining.

Billy Collins has finished reading.

From the announcer, who is not Garrison Keiller,

we are now learning a lot about the healing powers of ketchup and the beauty of powder milk biscuits.

### Memory Of Loss, Loss Of Memory

(For Alton Berkowitz-Gosselin and Daniel & Jeremy Honig)

In a moment of clarity  
during the last years of his life,

Edwin Honig sat in his leather rocking chair looking out his window.  
One day he looked up and said, "I think I see memories in the leaves of the trees."  
So much depends on memory.  
Even if it distorts and deserts you in times of need.  
The words are fuzzy,  
The pictures hazy.  
Forgetting is not as hard as it might seem.  
Where do memories go?  
Do they disappear into some unknown place, some distinct space?  
I will tell my grandson stories while I can still remember them.  
Carrying him from station-to-station  
in a small downtown Northampton apartment and singing made-up songs.  
The apple slices story;  
peeling the skin and slicing the apple so he could wobble  
around the living room with a slice in each hand.  
Backboard...basket, backboard...basket;  
hoops dreams in the living room.  
Living with Alzheimer's,  
Edwin Honig, poet, essayist, translator, teacher,  
struggled to remember how to remember.  
He died with his memories locked inside.

## **I Walk The Hills In Solitude**

I walk the hills in solitude except for the radio blasting in my ears.  
I walk the hills in solitude except for the tree men cutting down the wayward  
eucalyptus.  
I walk the hills in solitude except for the PG & E workers climbing light poles.  
I walk the hills in solitude except for the nimble bus drivers snaking their way through  
all-to-narrow streets.  
I walk the hills in solitude except for hearing John who bellows out a greeting from  
his window.  
I walk the hills in solitude except for the dogs barking.  
I walk the hills in solitude except for the cars I dodge as they back out of their  
driveways.  
I walk the hills in solitude except for greeting neighbors walking their dogs.  
I walk the hills in solitude except for the voices of loved ones steering their way  
through my head.  
I walk the hills in solitude

## **Teresa Sits With Her Legs Crossed**

Teresa sits on the living room rug with her legs crossed.

She has a pencil in her hand and is prepared to take notes.

It is much too hot on this afternoon in Gilroy to even think about taking notes, but she is ready.

Next to her, a comrade looks like he's dozing off, but really he's overcome by allergies.

Teresa doesn't know it yet but she will be taking notes at hundreds more meetings in the future.

She also doesn't know that there will be difficulties laying ahead.

She will get through them.

It will not be easy.

Teresa sits on the living room rug with her legs crossed, pencil in her hand, staring down at a yellow legal pad.

This is a historic moment.

She wants to take notes but the pencil refuses to descend to the pad.

Garlic is in the air.

Allergies are in the air.

Stories are in the air.

Victory is in the air.

Olga is free.

There will be no notes today.

Olga is free.