



Aimless Love: New and Selected Poems

Billy Collins

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The first volume of New and Selected poetry in twelve years from the two-time Poet Laureate of the United States.

Aimless Love gives the reader an opportunity to assess the rich scope of Collins' gifts. Containing more than fifty new poems and a generous gathering from his collections of the past decade-Horoscopes for the Dead, Ballistics, The Trouble with Poetry, and Nine Horses-Aimless Love showcases the best of his poetic maneuvers: the everyday ends in the infinite, playfulness is paired with empathy, irony gives way to wonder. Possessed of a unique voice that is at once plain and melodic, Billy Collins has managed to enrich American poetry while greatly widening the circle of its audience.

Aimless Love: New and Selected Poems Details

Date : Published October 22nd 2013 by Random House

ISBN : 9780679644057

Author : Billy Collins

Format : Hardcover 288 pages

Genre : Poetry, Fiction, Audiobook

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From Reader Review *Aimless Love: New and Selected Poems* for online ebook

Sue says

I've read and heard about Billy Collins for some time but never actually read him until now. First, I did find myself chuckling frequently at clever phrasing and word juxtapositions, particularly in the first half to 2/3rds of the book. Collins can be very clever at creating wonderful images. Some of these images came together for me into equally effective poems but many did not...they just sat and seemed to wait for me to find more meaning in them. Or this might be an aspect of what I seek in poetry.

What did I enjoy or better, appreciate? "Country", "Absence", "Writing in the Afterlife", "No Time", "Christmas Sparrow", "Flock", "Building with Its Face Blown Off", "The First Night", and here is a section from "January in Paris" that I really enjoyed for its playfulness:

*And never mind the holding and the pressing
It is enough to know that I moved my pen
in such a way as to bring her to completion,*

*a simple, final stanza, which ended,
as this poem will, with the image
of a gorgeous orphan lying on a rumpled bed,
her large eyes closed,
a painting of cows in a valley over her head,*

*and off to the side, me in a window seat
blowing smoke from a cigarette at dawn.*

Another short but effective poem:

Divorce

*Once, two spoons in bed,
now tined forks.*

*across a granite table
and the knives they have hired.*

There are more but I will leave it at these. Suffice it to say there were not enough for me to rate this book more highly. I think for me the issue is one of having an edge or issue. Too often I didn't find one.

Rating 3 to 3.5

An ecopy of this book was provided by the publisher through NetGalley in return for an unbiased review.

Mary says

Touching, funny, and intricately observed poems. Enjoyable and moving. This collection inspires me to observe the world more carefully and with more forgiveness and with a happy degree of levity.

Diane S ? says

Review to follow.

Megan Baxter says

Reading this book was an object lesson how much of the experience is not only the words on the page, but all that the reader to them. How much can be changed when the reader has been changed, when experience puts things into new, starker relief.

Note: The rest of this review has been withheld due to the changes in Goodreads policy and enforcement. You can read why I came to this decision here.

In the meantime, you can read the entire review at [Smorgasbook](#)

Julie says

I read quite a bit of poetry, but I wasn't familiar with Billy Collins, who was our U.S. Poet Laureate for a couple of years, but clearly missed my radar.

He's good, and it looks like he's had some success selling poetry, which always makes me stand up and cheer. It isn't easy to be a poet, and I know it.

Collins is a strong imagist. This is a quick example from one of his rare short poems, *Divorce*:

Once, two spoons in bed,
now tined forks
across a granite table
and the knives they have hired.

He takes you there, quickly, and gives you a good sense of time and place. His poems, though, are a bit lengthy for my preference, and, even though they contain well-chosen words and poetic language, they often lack rhythmic sense and rhyme. I know many poets now have moved away from rhyme, but it can be powerful to throw in some tidbits within a poem from time to time. All free verse and feelings here, and his poems, especially the "romantic" ones often took me to the opposite place that I wanted to go. I honestly

couldn't secure a solid sense of his romantic life, but maybe that was the point? It's none of my business, but I kept wondering. . . does he love his partner, or want to kill her?

I'm a girl who was heavily influenced by both EE Cummings and TS Eliot and I just gush over romanticism, fatalism and drop-dead language in poetry that slams you right in the throat or the gut. None of that happens here for me, but I did love his poems "Genius," and "Aimless Love," which is both a poem and the title of this collection. "Aimless Love" is a celebration of the daily love of the ordinary things happening around us. Yes. I feel that way, too. Thank you for this one.

Aimless Love

This morning as I walked along the lakeshore,
I fell in love with a wren
and later in the day with a mouse
the cat had dropped under the dining room table.

In the shadows of an autumn evening,
I fell for a seamstress
still at her machine in the tailor's window,
and later for a bowl of broth,
steam rising like smoke from a naval battle.

This is the best kind of love, I thought,
without recompense, without gifts,
or unkind words, without suspicion,
or silence on the telephone.

The love of the chestnut,
the jazz cap and one hand on the wheel.

No lust, no slam of the door-
the love of the miniature orange tree,
the clean white shirt, the hot evening shower,
the highway that cuts across Florida.

No waiting, no huffiness, or rancor-
just a twinge every now and then

for the wren who had built her nest
on a low branch overhanging the water
and for the dead mouse,
still dressed in its light brown suit.

But my heart is always propped up
in a field on its tripod,
ready for the next arrow.

After I carried the mouse by the tail
to a pile of leaves in the woods,

I found myself standing at the bathroom sink
gazing down affectionately at the soap,

so patient and soluble,
so at home in its pale green soap dish.
I could feel myself falling again
as I felt its turning in my wet hands
and caught the scent of lavender and stone.

Teresa Proença says

Amor Universal foi um caso de paixão à primeira página...que foi crescendo até à última...
É uma poesia diferente; não se limita ao amor e à morte. Em tudo Billy Collins se inspira e cria Maravilha;
até num candeeiro de mesa, num jantar de peixe...não me surpreenderia ver um poema intitulado “Uma
casca de alho”...

Deixo aqui dois poemas, que constam desta colectânea; o primeiro para ler; o segundo para ouvir na bonita
voz do seu autor:

1. A ASSOMBRAÇÃO

*"Eu sou o cão que tu puseste a dormir,
como gostas de chamar à agulha do esquecimento,
e volto para te dizer esta coisa simples:
nunca gostei de ti - nem por um momento.*

*Quando lambia o teu rosto,
pensava em morder-te o nariz.
Quando via como te secavas com uma toalha,
apetecia-me saltar e castrar-te num instante.*

*Detestava a maneira como te movias,
a tua falta de graça animal,
a maneira como te sentavas numa cadeira para comer,
com um guardanapo no colo e a faca na mão.*

*Eu teria fugido,
mas era muito fraco, um truque que me ensinaste
quando estava a aprender a sentar e a deitar,
e - o maior dos insultos - a apertar a mão sem ter uma.*

*Admito que a visão da trela
me entusiasmava
mas apenas porque significava que estava prestes
a cheirar coisas que nunca tinhas tocado.*

Podes não querer acreditar nisso,

*mas não tenho nenhuma razão para mentir.
Odiava o carro, os brinquedos de borracha,
detestava os teus amigos e, pior, os teus familiares.*

*O tilintar da minha chapa levava-me à loucura.
Sempre me fizeste festas no sítio errado.
Tudo o que sempre quis de ti
foi comida e água fresca nas minhas tigelas de metal.*

*Enquanto dormias, ficava a ver-te respirar
à medida que a lua ia subindo no céu.
Foi precisa toda a minha força
para não levantar a cabeça e uivar.*

*Agora estou livre da coleira,
da gabardina amarela, da camisola com monograma,
do absurdo do teu relvado,
e isso é tudo que tu precisas de saber sobre este lugar*

*excepto o que já calculara antes
e te deixa feliz porque não aconteceu mais cedo -
que todos aqui conseguem ler e escrever
os cães em poesia, os gatos e os outros em prosa."*

2. THE COUNTRY

<https://m.youtube.com/watch?v=8xovLpi...>

Joseph says

Aimless Love: New and Selected Poems by Billy Collins is a selection of poetry ranging from 2002 through 2011. Billy Collins was poet laureate of the United States from 2001 through 2003. He also served as poet laureate of the state of New York from 2004 through 2006. He is a distinguished fellow at the Winter Park Institute of Rollins College. Collins is also the editor of *Poetry 180* and has published ten collections of poetry.

For me poetry collections are a bit like short story collections, because I know early on when I do not like one. They also are like short story collections in that I know an excellent collection very early on. In this collection by the third poem I knew that it would be an outstanding collection. I ran across this in the third poem "More Than A Woman":

... I peered in at the lobsters

lying on the bottom of an illuminated
tank which was filled to the brim
with their copious tears.

Then moved by the poem “Absence,” I turned to “Royal Aristocrat” a poem about Collin's old and noisy typewriter. That typewriter made so much noise he had to keep the doors shut and set the machine on top of a pile of newspaper to help deaden the sound. Times change, and he writes:

That was twenty years ago,
yet as I write with this soft lead pencil
I can still hear the distinctive sound,
like small arms fire across the border.

It's that ability to capture moments and memories that makes poetry great. “Today” is another poem that cries out to a moment or feeling we all have experienced. Simply amazing in the flow of the words and the capturing of the feeling.

The poetry is divided into three sections from 2002 *Nine Horses*, which I have quoted from so far. The second section is called *Ballistics* from 2005, and lastly *Horoscopes for the Dead* from 2011. The the last two sections, both of the title poems are amazing. There is a bit of humor in *Ballistics*, or what I took as being a bit humor. *Horoscopes for the Dead* is a bit haunting and anyone who has lost someone can easily relate to it.

Poetry collections are also like short story collections because you do not need to like every poem, but the ones that you do like hold you in through the entire collection. Collins makes reference to a poet maybe writing three perfect poems in a lifetime. I do not know what constitutes a perfect poem, but I do know what I like. There were many more than three times that after reading the poem I put down the book and thought, “Wow!” After a few minutes, I would pick it up and read through it again, and once more, highlight sections, highlight the poem in the contents, and read it again. It is easy to see after reading this selection how Collins was a Poet Laureate. An amazing collection and a must read for fans of contemporary poetry.

Lauren says

This was an absolute delight. Collins has such witty observations and a cool, nonchalant style. I already want to read this one again, and everything else by him too.

Donna Merritt says

AIMLESS LOVE is a delight. The first poem hooked me, with the reader getting a “print-fix for the day.” Of course, I've been a Billy Collins fan since I stumbled upon his SAILING ALONE AROUND THE ROOM (one of my all-time favorite books of poetry).

Collins has a way of connecting with people on a personal level. You're tempted to think of it as poetry about ordinary things in plain language, but when you reread a poem, you'll see that there are marvelous twists and ways of looking at things in an unusual way. There were some phrases that were poems all by themselves: “under the roof of a paragraph”; “the evening wedding of the knife and fork”; “the banging of

the water hammer that will frighten the cold out of the room”; “sentinel thorns, whose employment it is to guard the rose”; “as the sun helps itself down the sky”... I could fill this review with his unique word play alone.

And so many pieces spoke to my poet’s heart. Are poets able to ever just look around without feeling the need to write about what we see? Does someone else always have the next great topic in mind that he or she is sure we should turn into a poem? “Villanelle” (one of the NEW in NEW AND SELECTED here) made me laugh as that form (dating back to the late 1500s) seems to be hot again these days and I’ve been avoiding trying my hand at one.

If you thumb through my copy of AIMLESS, you’ll see it splattered with underlined words and whole stanzas bracketed and highlighted lines and inked hearts on the ones I can’t get out of my head.

From “The Trouble with Poetry” (originally from his book of the same title):
the trouble with poetry is
that it encourages the writing of more poetry

I hope it does, Mr. Collins. I’m already looking forward to the next book.

Nina says

In an NPR interview, Billy Collins states:

"I'm trying to write poems that involve beginning at a known place, and ending up at a slightly different place," he says. "I'm trying to take a little journey from one place to another, and it's usually from a realistic place, to a place in the imagination."

<http://www.npr.org/2011/04/06/1351815...>

Collins accomplishes this handily in his newest collection. The poems in Aimless Love are collected from 4 previous books, as well as a sizeable section of new work. The new poems are actually the largest section of the book. Collins is clearly the people’s poet, in the sense that his poetry is about everyday events, images, and people. There is a fairly predictable format; Collins starts out with detailed description, and the turn usually comes in the final stanza, where he opens the seemingly ordinary scene into something deeper. His tone is light, familiar, and conversational. Collins uses clear, descriptive language. He is a master at capturing minute details. His trademark, whimsical humor, often turned gently toward himself, is evident throughout this collection.

I received this ARC as part of Goodreads First Reads program, and with it came a request not to quote, as this is an uncorrected proof. One of my favorites is a new poem titled “To My Favorite 17-Year-Old High School Girl.”

For devoted Collins fans, and readers who don’t want a poet to change his style, this book won’t disappoint. It is also a good collection for somebody who wishes to “try out” Billy Collins.

Philippe says

Billy Collins does what all poets do: banging their heads against nothingness and celebrating the ephemeral pleasures of earthly existence. But unlike some of his bardic brethren Collins never loses his composure. Angst and euphoria are sublimated in an unerring feeling for balance and a droll sense of humor. His lyric disposition is suffused with childlike wonderment, ironic self-depreciation and an old-world brand of courtesy and compassion. Many will want their poetry shot to be more edgy but I find Collins to suit many moods. And I guess I won't be reading Rilke on my death-bed but I may ask someone to read me another Collins. This generous collection picks up where *Sailing Alone Around the Room* - the earlier volume of 'new and selected poems' (2002) - left off. Here's just one of my favorites of the 'new poems' section of the book: a *Sunday Walk* that unfolds as a sequence of discreet and endearing modulations and dissolves in a characteristic flourish of ambiguity.

Not only colorful beds of flowers
ruffled today by a breeze of the lake
but the ruffled surface of the lake itself,
and later a boathouse and an oak tree
so old its heavy limbs rested on the ground.

And I don't want to leave out
the uniformed campus guard I saw studying
a map of the campus without a single student in sight.

Closer to town, shops under awnings
and several churches,
one topped with a burnished cross,
another announcing a sermon:
"What You *Can* Take With You."

So many odd things to see
but mostly it's the sun at its apex
inscribing little circles,
little haloes at the top of the sky,
and the freshening breeze,
the nowhere it came from
and the nowhere it is headed,
every leaf wavering, each branch bowed,

and what can I do, I heard myself asking
with this evidence of something,
me without a candle, wafer or a rug,
not even a compass to tell me which way to face.

Philip says

Billy Collins Dining Alone
by Philip Habecker

If ever I were to come across
Billy Collins dining alone,
or perhaps drinking alone after contemplating Li Po,
the gold of the moment would turn me to living straw.
An open door's breeze dizzying me; unable to knock me over.

Were he to look up, he would find me contemplative, too.
Do I pull out Sailing
and ask for an autograph?
Aware that I may be ripping the conception of life
not just from his mind, but from the world.

"Here! Mr. Collins! -Billy!"
He sets down his chamomile.
Exasperation. Disgust? Perhaps just sadness.

We're old friends. Intimate, even.
Just a signature, and a line or two?
Something poetic?
Something about friendship and duty;
I'd love a casual observation on a random object.
Or death. Or time.

Look! I've done half the work for you!

No. Perhaps I could just ask for a picture.
The smile on my face darkened
by the shadow of the barista's tray.

*Caveat Emptor/Caveat Reader/...Caveat Listener, at least... If you get the audio-book, the cover states,
"Unabridged Selections." This is true. But it does not contain the full contents of the book.

It's worth it to hear the poems read in Collins' cadence. It's also worth it to then go back and get the book and
read what you've missed.

Antonia says

I'm always so conflicted about Collins. I often like individual poems, but when I consider his body of work
as a whole . . . I find it disappointing. Yes, some of his poems are amusing, or at least cute. A few even
clever. Many are too fanciful to be taken seriously. Too many just fall flat. And he's always writing (more or
less) the same poem over and over. The poems feel formulaic, "humorous without actually being funny"

(David Orr*) and too often self-congratulatory. As I wrote in my review of *Horoscopes for the Dead*, “Collins always seems to be caught up in a daydream, as if he has no particular work to do, place to go. He can idly muse about taking dead people (whose names he glimpses on headstones) for a ride on his copper-colored bicycle or make a sort of duck out of his hand and talk nonsense to it. There's no one listening, after all. Except we are. And sometimes I wish he actually had something more to say.”

See Orr's review of Collins (not this collection) in The New York Times, January 2006.
<http://www.nytimes.com/2006/01/08/boo...>

Ana Rînceanu says

Th imagery and the humor make this collection emotionally moving and endlessly re-readable.

Melanie says

In turns somber and humorous, reverent and rebellious, Billy Collins' delightful collection of poems illuminates little corners of everyday life with precision, attentiveness and wit. In short, it does what great poems do best: they make us *slow down* and look at everything with renewed urgency and a deeper understanding.

Whether describing the daily rituals of a poet or the gradations of emotions, whether looking at divorce through the lens of kitchen utensils or the different transition terms that are best avoided in a stanza, these clever poems constantly surprised me with their keen intelligence and particular take on people and objects.

In the last lines of the superb poem "The Names", dedicated to the victims of September 11th and their survivors, Billy Collins' ability to conjure a sense of permanence out of the void is fantastic:

*Names etched on the head of a pin.
One name spanning a bridge, another undergoing a tunnel.
A blue name needled into the skin.
Names of citizens, workers, mothers and fathers,
The bright-eyed daughter, the quick son.
Alphabet of names in green rows in a field.
Names in the small tracks of birds.
Names lifted from a hat
Or balanced on the tip of the tongue.
Names wheeled into the dim warehouse of memory.
So many names, there is barely room on the walls of the heart.*

A collection to savor. Slowly.

Betsy says

Aimless Love by Billy Collins

Collins' poems illuminate the many small mysteries, pleasures, and dilemmas of our ordinary lives, as well as our occasional magical thinking and the power with which we imbue everyday objects.

He's often at his best when describing those quotidian predicaments we find ourselves in and the silly stories we make up to help us move past those moments. One such example is the poem "Quandary" where Collins struggles over what to do with overripe apple that he really doesn't want to eat, but feels he should. Finally he decides to pitch it - "hoping to hit on the head of a murderer or one of the filthy rich out on a stroll."

Collins' poetic nature is nowhere more apparent than when he is writing about the pleasures of reading, writing, and the English language, as well as his own enjoyment and confidence in his ability to use words to describe his world. "I think that what I'm really saying is that language is better than reality" ("Bathtub Families"). In another poem, Collins laments that "the trouble with poetry is that it encourages the writing of more poetry." That he can't help himself is evident in "Returning the Pencil to the Tray," in which Collins talks about not ever writing another poem, even as he does.

While most of Collins poems are a page or more long, I also enjoyed his shorter pieces, including his haiku-like "Divorce" -

Once, two spoons in bed,
now tined forks

across a granite table
and the knives they have hired.

Collins' poetry is both earnest and honest, without the self-importance (and often indulgences) sometimes found in other poets' works. Several poems point out his own fallacies and prejudices. His self-critique is not mean spirited, however. Rather, in "Old Man Eating Alone in a Chinese Restaurant" Collins describes his feelings of relief and gratitude for his luck in resisting the temptation of a young poet to ascribe despair and loneliness to man eating alone, now knowing for himself the pleasures of a solitary meal accompanied by a good book.

Collins' work is deceptively light, almost transparent - appearing more like an angel food cake than a chocolate torte. There is a brevity of words in his poetry - as he straddles the line between telling too much and not enough. His poems are often funny - rarely does Collins take himself too seriously, and when he does, he makes fun of this, as well.

His analogies are simple. You won't need a pick or a shovel to understand these poems. They aren't profound. I don't think that profoundness is what Collins is going for here. Rather his work reflects a simple, but certain engagement with life and its many delights and perplexities.

This is a wonderful book for someone who has read little or none of Collin's work, as it includes poems from four previous works, as well as several new poems not previously published.

I received a free copy of "Aimless Love" from Library Things Early Reviewers Program. This is no way

affected my review.

Rob the Obscure says

Not much left to say about Collins. He's brilliant, the way he baits us with this charming, and seemingly harmless, humor, and then right at the end we realize we've been shown the light of deep reflection on important things.

The new poems are just great. I remember distinctly as an American kid, digging a hole in the back yard for some reason, and my dad telling me that if you dug a hole deep enough, you would dig all the way through to China. Maybe you have a similar memory? Here's how Collins riffs off that childhood experience:

Orient

You are turning me
like someone turning a globe in her hand,
and yes, I have another side
like a China no one,
not even me, has ever seen.

So describe to me what's there,
say what you are looking at
and I will close my eyes
so I can see it too,
the oxcarriage and all the lively flags.

I love the sound of your voice
like a little saxophone
telling me what I could never know
unless I dug a hole all the way down
through the core of myself.

*

Collins is never a waste of your time.

Kim says

I always enjoy some Billy Collins poetry, though I didn't love any in this book like those in *Picnic*, *Lightning*.

Favorite poems: *Velocity*, *No Time*, *The Lanyard*, *Tension (suddenly...)*, *To My Favorite 17 Year Old Girl*, *The Suggestion Box*, *Cheerios*

Favorite lines: (Royal Aristocrat) "Such deep silence on those nights-just the sound of my typing and a few stars singing a song their mother sang when they were mere babies in the sky."

Jenny (Reading Envy) says

I received a review copy of the audiobook version of this, and I'm so glad I got a chance to listen. Anyone who knows the work of Billy Collins knows that the words on the page are only half of it. Hearing or seeing him perform the poems completes the picture. I would describe his tone as half Deep Thoughts by Jack Handy, half a male version of Siri.

In a recent TED talk that Billy Collins did, he showed some of the films made of his poems, featuring his voice. One of my favorites from this book, *The Country*, is definitely worth seeing. I will never forget the triumphant fire-wielding mouse.

Other favorites include *Litany*, *Adage*, and *Aimless Love*. I have listened twice and think I'll keep going back.

Discussed on Episode 4 of the Reading Envy podcast!

Heather Fineisen says

The only thing better than reading Billy Collins is listening to Billy Collins. His witty word placement is a sophisticated SNL (Saturday Night Live) skit that can make you laugh out loud at first glance, but mourn at the irony of our own ridiculousness. *Litany* stands as one of my all time favorites, and Collins, with his Kevin Spacey voice, is the bread and the knife and the wine in my book.

book provided by publisher, audio bought with my husband's very hard earned money.
