

**"Man Listening to Disc" by Billy Collins**

This is not bad --  
ambling along 44th Street  
with Sonny Rollins for company,  
his music flowing through the soft calipers  
of these earphones,

as if he were right beside me  
on this clear day in March,  
the pavement sparkling with sunlight,  
pigeons fluttering off the curb,  
nodding over a profusion of bread crumbs.

In fact, I would say  
my delight at being suffused  
with phrases from his saxophone --  
some like honey, some like vinegar --  
is surpassed only by my gratitude

to Tommy Potter for taking the time  
to join us on this breezy afternoon  
with his most unwieldy bass  
and to the esteemed Arthur Taylor  
who is somehow managing to navigate

this crowd with his cumbersome drums.  
And I bow deeply to Thelonious Monk  
for figuring out a way  
to motorize -- or whatever -- his huge piano  
so he could be with us today.

This music is loud yet so confidential.  
I cannot help feeling even more  
like the center of the universe  
than usual as I walk along to a rapid  
little version of "The Way You Look Tonight,"

and all I can say to my fellow pedestrians,  
to the woman in the white sweater,  
the man in the tan raincoat and the heavy glasses,  
who mistake themselves for the center of the universe --  
all I can say is watch your step,

because the five of us, instruments and all,  
are about to angle over

to the south side of the street  
and then, in our own tightly knit way,  
turn the corner at Sixth Avenue.

And if any of you are curious  
about where this aggregation,  
this whole battery-powered crew,  
is headed, let us just say  
that the real center of the universe,

the only true point of view,  
is full of hope that he,  
the hub of the cosmos  
with his hair blown sideways,  
will eventually make it all the way downtown.