
Cultural Daily

Independent Voices, New Perspectives

Leslie Anne Mcilroy: Four Poems

Leslie Anne Mcilroy · Wednesday, April 16th, 2014

Leslie Anne Mcilroy won the 2001 Word Press Poetry Prize for her full-length collection *Rare Space* and the 1997 Slipstream Poetry Chapbook Prize for her chapbook *Gravel*. She also took first place in the 1997 Chicago Literary Awards Competition judged by Gerald Stern. Her second full-length book, *Liquid Like This*, was published by Word Press in 2008. Leslie's work appears in numerous publications including *Connotation Press*, *Dogwood*, *Jubilat*, *The Mississippi Review*, *New Ohio Review*, *Nimrod International Journal of Prose & Poetry*, *PANK* and *Pearl*.

How to Change a Flat

The weather left me raw—
freezing sleet and leaning
wind icing my enthusiasm
for waving someone down.
Someone with a CB or a cell
phone, a jack and solid
workboots; someone
with a hard on to do
something good,
to get on his knees
and apply his weight
till the lug nuts give
and let go the grip.

I could've faced the storm,
the winter bearing down
like an avalanche of wet
mean dreams; stood out there
with my arms spread wide,
my head bowed against the gusts,
or at least I could've read
the manual, found a flare,
jammed a white rag
in the door. But I'm thinking

it's got to let up soon and what's
the worst that can happen?

It's only 7:00 and I can catch
the news; I can flash my lights
from inside where it's warm,
where just now a shameless
version of Sweet Jane begins
to play, my hand drifting in response—
the slight resistance of the tangled
skirt peeled beneath my coat,

the heel of my palm pressed
flat against my stomach, the first
touch of fingers brushing bare thighs
warm and wet under the frosted
highway lights. And I have half a tank
of gas—enough to write a letter,
enough to imagine telling you
about sex alone in the front seat,
headlights passing smoothly
across the windshield, the frigid
breath of January melting
from the inside out. How
when the flurry's spent,
mechanics mean so little
and the drive
is only the half of it.

250 Rebel

In the dream I wanted badly
for my father to fix my motorcycle.
I kept handing him wrenches,
worried I would forget/have
forgotten how the gears work.

I would have forgiven him everything
to get it started, to feel the spread
of the leather between my legs,
to be able to leave like that, no
direction except away, except

he was elusive the way fathers are,
dreams. He shook his head
and was frail. I knew he was sick
because he always has/had been.

I knew he could fix it. I knew he wouldn't.

Double Kiss

What I know about pool is nothing,
but I know hip and swagger
and something about angle
and the way when you kiss one
person and they kiss another,
it falls hard in the pocket
and there is a score to total,
to settle, to wash down
with another shot. Or maybe
it's more like scratch, that white
ball going straight in the hole,
reminding me of boys and sticks,
balls tucked tight, ready to break —
that triangle, the other —
did you really think you could
fuck me like this, with your game,
your blue-tip poetry, your handicap?
I want nothing more than to walk
away from this table, the hat-
wearing and knuckle-cracking,
dirty smoke and Pabst pounders,
to slip out under the Pittsburgh neon,
eat eggs with toast and RedHot.
Somebody's winning everywhere,
and losing, somebody's got a
cue stick up someone's ass,
somebody is learning grace
at a table of old-school, where
the winner buys and the girls
don't play, and if they do, they
forfeit, go all chalk and luck.

Heart Time

For days now, I've been hearing my heart beat.
In my dreams, in the city wind, on the radio.

I've been counting up and down in the back of my brain,
adding and subtracting like an insistent abacus,

the balls clicking their restless, wooden bodies together
through the night and into the morning, stirring

coffee six times round, then seven, then eight.
It's come to me that I can measure beauty this way,

by counting my presence in this final world.
I can calculate how much it matters to appreciate

the sun, to walk home with a barrette from my daughter's
hair in my pocket, reminding me of time, soft skin,

the first kiss and its pulse; the throb of thunder
timed exactly before the lightning, the flash.

And with each beat, I draw further away from myself
and into the lovely dance of dying, knowing only

that when it stops, I will hear nothing but your voice,
telling me the silence is full, the water, quiet.

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