

# 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*.

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### 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.

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## 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.

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## 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.

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## 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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