

Laura Bayless

Trees

~ After a poem *Leaves* by Lloyd Schwartz

You've probably come all this way
for nothing you can name,
nothing you want to keep,
because you already have
too many harsh memories
on the shelves of your years,
in cupboards of your mistakes.

Still you've come all this way,
took strength from redwood sentinels
in emerald-green coastal cathedrals,
maybe rested under an oak
from long hours on your path,

You've come all this way
more than once,
not knowing what you came for,
wandered in a stand of sycamores
where your longing wove itself
among the suede-backed leaves,
still hoping for something
you can't name.

Elegy For Isabella

Her name in elegant silver script
graced the driver's side fender.
For spare parts we ordered
from J.C. Whitney in Chicago.

Bulbous shape, gun-metal gray,
she was no beauty until
the Yarnell children and I
plastered her with pink
and purple flower power decals.

Like grandma's feather bed,
she could hold four kids
and the big stuffed pig
I found at a thrift shop.
She never broke down.

Told she was a Mercedes
economy car from Germany,
I fell in love with her homely
shape and dowdy color,
insisted she had nobility,
a European pedigree.

My Borgward ran on cheap gas,
carted my groceries home
in her stout trunk,
distinguished my driveway
with her chunky majesty.

I never forgave my husband
when he sold Isabella
while I was laid up with the flu.
For years afterward
I mourned her ill-timed departure.

Apparitions

In a crowded third floor garret
adorned with flower power
San Francisco poetry posters,
aging Santa Cruz hippies
attend a gathering christened
Sparring With Beatnik Ghosts.

A bushy-bearded man wears
plaid shirt with suspenders,
droopy inside-out jeans,
tie-dyed bandana headband.
One woman shows off her curves
in a satin sausage-casing dress
while another comes braless,
in skinny capris, feather earrings.

Taking turns, *over the hill* poets
wax nostalgic, mix metaphors,
spout endless unconnected narratives.
Accompanied by saxophone player
demoted to a narrow hallway,
pony-tailed eccentrics deliver
long-winded monotonous verse,
make ambiguous references to sex.

The host of this event
offers beer & peanuts, passes the hat.
I can't follow themes, mad obtuse rants,
retreat to a bench behind a man
accompanied by his ratty dog,
scribble notes in my pocket calendar,
record this alleluia to nostalgia.

On Both Sides

... *the world flows past on both sides*

~ Nazim Hikmet

What have I missed
in my rush to arrive somewhere,
to be on time – perhaps
the exquisite auburn color
of two stallions in a pasture
along the road,

or a melody in the flow
of my breaths,
the inhaling exhaling tune
of living.

I might have caught
a trace of moisture
in the rainbow-colored sphere
that slipped behind the mountain,
traveled through sunset's brilliance.

Life requests my attention
to its earthly moments,
the quickly passing splendor
by the window into nevermore.

I stop to listen
to my heartbeat,
rhythmic drumming
that counts in 3/4 time,
measures the days
I have left.

Laura Bayless is the author of three collections of poetry, *The Edge of the Nest*, *White Streams and Touchstones*, and *Persistent Dreams*. Her poems have appeared in local and national publications, and anthologies, including *Dancing on the Brink of the World*, *Selected Poems of Point Lobos*, *Porter Gulch Review*, *The Homestead Review*, and *Blue Heron*. She is co-editor of an award-winning compilation of stories and poems about the Carmel River – *Passion for Place*. She participated in seven *Women's Voices* readings at the Carl Cherry Center in Carmel and multiple *Women and Food* art and poetry presentations on the Monterey Peninsula. "In the practice of writing poems I find what has been waiting for me, what sheds another layer of pretense. I am uplifted, enriched, reconciled, and reminded of all that I do not know. I cast my poems to itinerant winds, unquestioning of where they might reseed in the meadow of another heart."