

On the Occasion of a Street Being Named for a Bookstore

"The ache for home lives in all of us."

—Maya Angelou

If home is where the heart is,
how many of us would need to confess
a change of address to the one
below the purple awning
where a woman sprawls,
so absorbed in a book
even the racket of traffic
cannot distract her?
How many folks could tell you a story
of when their eyes first met
the perfect lines of shelf
after shelf of perfect spines
designed to seduce us,
to reduce us to consumers
of fact and invention?

Books call to those who love them—
from libraries, from the aisle over
from the Band-Aids and foot creams,
from bookstores, from shelves in our homes,
quiet as the whisper of a page turning
or a bookmark slipping into place.

But anyone can stock some shelves
with a book or ten.
It's not the books, then,
that keep us crossing the threshold,
running our fingers
over covers and spines,
losing hours, gaining friends.
It's not the scarred tables,
the sunlight streaming in,
the metal folding chairs
that make us feel at home.
It's the peopling of the place
with women who also love books,
who love writers, who love readers,
who love to tell you about this one
particularly excellent book,
who remember what you like,
what you've read, what you long for,
what you've said—who remember
you with so much warmth
you suspect that, somewhere near,
a fire is burning in a hearth,
soup may be cooking on a stove,
a key is hidden under a welcome mat.

By Yvonne Zipter