

Friendly Street
NEW POETS 15



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A Lesson in Being Mortal • Louise McKenna

A Pause in the Conversation • Lynette Arden

Natural Intervention • Sher'ee Furtak-Ellis



Friendly Street Poets

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Edited by
Thom Sullivan





A Lesson in Being Mortal

Louise McKenna

Louise McKenna was born in Rugby, England in 1969. She studied at the University of Leeds where she graduated in 1992 with a joint honours degree in English and French. In 1996 she qualified as a registered nurse before emigrating to New Zealand, then to Australia in 2003. She has had poems published in anthologies by Forward Press and was a finalist in the inaugural Cricket Poetry Award 2009.

Louise divides her time between her family and her occupation as a nurse. She is currently working on her first novel and a second collection of poetry.

Acknowledgements

Some of these poems, or earlier versions of them, have appeared in the Friendly Street Poets Newsletter and on the Cricket Poetry Award website.

Dedication

This book is for my family on either side of the equator.

Thanks

My husband Dave and my children for inspiring me;
friends near and far: Louise Hansen in Queensland;
Susan Arthure, Judy Garrard, Sue Mckone in South
Australia: Helen Cartner and Andrew Buddle in England;
Thom Sullivan whose editorial talents brought my poems
to life;
Maggie Emmett, Friendly Street Poets Convenor and skilled
poet, for her encouragement and support;
the brilliant poet Gillian Clarke who taught me how to
'kill my darlings';
and last, but by no means least, my grandparents, Peter and
Joyce Bloomfield, who first taught me the music of words.

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Bronze Whaler

Look closely. She will do no harm
now the ocean has delivered her.
This shadow you have feared,
this recidivist killer
is now chained in sea wrack.
Come closer.
Those soulless, unfathomable eyes
will not see you,
the countless lancets
of her teeth no longer threaten.
Look at her snout.
That freckling of black stars
were sensors intelligently wired
to the shocked rhythms of life,
the electric agonies of death.

Feel her fins, belly and tail,
the preternaturally thick skin
has been vandalised
with scars and excoriations.
Look now,
as they turn her on her side,
before the coming tide rinses her clean.
Her blood as red as ours
from the unhealed stigmata
of the fisherman's spear.

A Lesson in Being Mortal

We thought we could weather this one
or stare it out in the beachfront café.
As we talked and spooned froth off our lattes
the sea began to boil. The sky dehiscd its wound
and the suturing of horizon ruptured.
After a while, the ocean tested my nerves,
like the wall, each wave a seismic demolition of itself.
The path fast becoming water, a forensic pool of rage:
matted hairs of sea wrack, sponges scattered like
brain matter.

And the beach, where we walked our dogs
and played cricket, was all sea.
The punters were a solemn congregation,
but the kids were squealing with rapture.
And when the sea tried to come in,
someone mentioned the storm of '48,
when the humerus of the jetty snapped
and the bone was tossed to the deep.

But for a time, we were fascinated,
the storm seemed to wipe out recession,
to wash blood off the pavements of Afghanistan and Iraq.
And I think it showed on our faces
how, once in a while, we are reminded that our lives
are like the mollusc we crush unknowingly underfoot
or the fish we see floating at the surface.
So I willed it to go on.

On leaving you pointed out the cormorant on a rock,
a soul islanded among the elements,
wings spread, as if preaching or praying.

Today's Music

begins with polyphony
of Byrd-song. Then the *adagio*
of the kettle approaching the boil.
And the morning with *Classic FM*—
a suite from Telemann,
a rhapsody from Gershwin.
The finale of the morning
is the percussive clatter
of china in the sink
or the *staccato* of a text message
coming through. Then ringtones
on the bus, Midnight Oil, Men at Work,
remind you of how you used
to be cool. After school,
the familiar themes of *ABC Kids*
break that mid-afternoon slump,
before the quaint *entr'acte*
the washing machine plays
at the end of each cycle
recalls you to being a mum.

Later, on the way to the shop,
you hear the wind charging
the tuning fork of phone wires,
doves lilting in minor, a mellifluous sadness.
Then at the end, before sleep
you catch the brooding nocturne
of your heart pulsing in your ear,
perhaps the last music we ever hear.



A Pause in the Conversation

Lynette Arden

Lynette Arden was born in Sydney and brought up in country towns in North and Central Coast New South Wales. She completed Honours degrees in Geography (UNE) and Graphic Design (Liverpool Polytechnic) UK and has lived and worked in Australia, Papua New Guinea and the United Kingdom.

Living in Adelaide since 1979, Lynette now works as a volunteer for a number of organizations. From the 1990s she designed and painted murals for local libraries and Adelaide Zoo, where she works as a volunteer. She runs two workshop groups for the Adelaide University of the Third Age and designs and runs websites for a couple of community groups. She also designs and sets up small publications for several community groups.

Photograph courtesy of John Barnet

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Some of these poems, or earlier versions of them, have appeared in: *Treasury of OzPoet*, *The Mozzie*, *Valley Micropress* (NZ), *Eucalypt A Tanka Journal*, *paper wasp*, PoetWorks Press (USA) anthologies (*Just Bite Me satire*, *whimsy and other tasty treats*, *A Nickel's Worth of Dreams* and *When I was a Child*), Poets Union anthology *Ask the Rain*, poetry.about.com anthology *Poems for Peace*, *Writers on Parade*, *Taj Mahal Review (India)*, *Ribbons: Journal of the Tanka Society of America (USA)*, *FreeXpression* and the Adelaide Zoo website. One poem has been broadcast on *891 Evenings*.

Thanks

Members of the following groups have given me generous support and advice:

Kensington and Norwood Writers Group, Bindii (Japanese form poetry group), Friendly Street Poets, Society of Women Writers South Australia, Adelaide U3A Writers Group and the former Writing Right group.

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Sepia Memories

The shadow of my father
falls on a wilting patch of lawn,
his back to afternoon sunlight.
Aged two, I hold a peach,
frown into sun, serious,
small legs in firmly buckled sandals.

Sepia conserves those days.
The peach has long been eaten
or thrown away;
the sun has disappeared
below the horizon, risen and again set.
We have donned new clothes
many times over, held flowers,
smiled into lenses,
been snapped in different poses,
flattering, unflattering, alone, with friends,
or trapped at inadvertent moments
with smiles misplaced, hair blown by wind.

Of all those printed memories
to me most poignant,
in front of a small girl
in large sunbonnet,
the shadow of the photographer
caught in that moment.

Brief Encounter

She arrives
in a cheetah spotted coat
hair a blonde ruff
eyes as innocent
as kitten's fluff.

His face shines, eager.
Her eyes narrow
as if to brush
imaginary crumbs
from a furry cuff.

Later I see them leave.
His hand caresses her sleeve
and the car purrs
while she stores,
snapping the glove box,
a spare set of claws.

Departure

This is the departure lounge;
from here we go into the dining room.
Some of us think we are going home.
The weather along the corridors is fine.

From here we go into the dining room;
wheelchairs are stacked in an alcove.
The weather along the corridors is fine.
Through the windows we can see rain.

Wheelchairs are stacked in an alcove;
we sit in silence to eat our meal.
Through the windows we can see rain;
I'll have a nap straight after lunch.

We sit in silence to eat our meal;
the food is bland to pamper our digestion.
I'll have a nap straight after lunch.
The dining room is rather quiet.

The food is bland to pamper our digestion.
We only have a short walk from our rooms.
The dining room is rather quiet;
quite a few of us are losing our memories.

We only have a short walk from our rooms;
some of us think we are going home.
Quite a few of us are losing our memories.
This is the departure lounge . . .



Natural Intervention

Sher'ee Furtak-Ellis

Sher'ee was born in Elizabeth Vale, South Australia, in 1976 to a Polish-Australian refugee and a preacher's daughter from Port Pirie. Her first job was as a checkout chick. Since then she has had more jobs than roast dinners, so she has gathered a wide range of skills and met some amazing people along the road.

Sher'ee was educated at Elizabeth Downs Primary School, Craigmore High School, Marden Senior College, Comskill, the University of South Australia and learnt the most important lessons from the 'school of life'. She has earned a Bachelor of Arts (Honours) in Communication Studies, majoring in media production.

Acknowledgements

Some of these poems, or excerpts from them, have appeared online at www.bipolarpoetry.com and in *Mad Sad Words*, edited by Dr. Joseph Dunn (2006).

Dedication

I would like to dedicate this work to my aunty Nora Weaver, bravest of the brave.

Thanks

Thank you to Friendly Street for giving me the push-start!
I would like to sincerely thank my sweet husband, my family, my extended family, my metal mates, my soul brothers and sisters and everyone who has ever come into my life and made an impact.

RIP: Maria, Dorothy, Reg, Grandpa Bob, Des, Laurie, Dad, Lynda, Sam, Barry and Brenda. Gone but never forgotten.

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Seasons Inside

In autumn the tree branches twirl together
like two bodies in love
cuddling, holding their own among the dirty and
dying leaves.

In summer a dry wind blows through my damp hair
cooling skin as red as wine
the sun is generous and divine.

In spring the wonder lights up my heart
bringing colour to the most bland
like bright pink nails on a soft, pale hand.

In winter I layer our love in warm sheltered hugs
it's freezing and dark so we gather close
celebrating kindly the life we chose.

Balloons

Yesterday, I was a deflated balloon
cut open wide
beaten again
floating back down to the ground
crushed through the thin ice
blood everywhere
I don't care

I'll make it

Today, I'm a floating balloon
on a windy day
pushed and pulled
yanked from my favourite place
strangled by ribbon
blue in the face
I'm fucked

I'll make it

Tomorrow, I'll drift away
into a cloud
not that I'm allowed
but I'll fly
fly far away

I'll make it!

Tired

When I fall asleep in a crumpled heap
a weary paper bag
and I haven't even taken off my shoes
there's nothing left to do but sigh . . . and she does.

When I leave home for more than a comb
like a butterfly
and I can tell you aren't gonna be fun
maybe I should run . . . and I do.

When I speak of horror and it shocks you
like an electric chair
and you can't face the burns
let's see if we can work it out.

Take pride in psychotic perfection
your animals become your life's attention
was that too much to mention?

Life looks so rosy from there
let's just stay right here
we don't need anything else
zombies live in plastic peace.

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