

AFTER THE RACE: Friendly Street Poets 34

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AFTER THE RACE

Friendly Street Poets 34

Edited by

Janine Baker and A.M. Sladdin



Friendly Street Poets

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THANK YOU

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Friendly Street Poets acknowledges the Kaurna people as the original owners and custodians of the Adelaide Plains

PREFACE

Inaugurated in 1975, Friendly Street Poets is the longest running open reading poetry group in the southern hemisphere. Ongoing passion for poetic expression binds together this large group of people. The collective spirit and egalitarian ethos of our community has ensured that the nurturing, support and promotion of South Australian poetry persists and continues to develop and flourish, in the face of life's many challenges in the 21st century.

Poems for this year's Reader came from 11 city meetings, regional readings at Salisbury, Murray Bridge, Noarlunga, and two meetings at Port Adelaide. Also, throughout the year, a number of competitions were run by Friendly Street, with publication of the winning entries as part of the prizes.

Friendly Street has always aimed to foster new and emerging voices, as well as provide a respected and reliable platform for established poets. Representing regional poets, who cannot attend the city meetings on the first Tuesday of each month, is a newer and equally important aim of Friendly Street. With those goals in mind, more than 20% of the content of this year's Reader comes from new poets and regional poets.

Selection for the Reader is never an easy task, and many fine poems almost made the cut, alongside those which stood out as works deserving a permanent place in print. From the broad melting pot of entries, we distilled what we hope is a classic mix of country and city, love and despair, family and friends, frustration and delight, respect for the earth, and ever prevailing insight into the human condition.

Janine Baker and Alice Sladdin

1905

This photograph of a small town
has shown up here in front of me
through the snowflakes of 1905.
The only person to be seen is
somewhere in the middle distance:
a woman in a long dress who
could be walking along the road
but, as she moves towards me
has to be riding a bicycle.
She moves past me. Out of sight.
There might have been specks of
people in what the white whited
into the far white distance but
they're no longer there. Here.
There are no people in this town.
Chimneys are their headstones.

GRAHAM ROWLANDS

ON A MOONLESS NIGHT AT GRANGE

Tonight, the jetty has no end:
its wooden rails, bony arms outstretched,
vanish in darkness, sleepwalking west
across St Vincent Gulf.

I am here, at the city's edge, unmoored,
looking out to an invisible sea.
No distant flickering lights appear
on water or sky, no breeze touches skin,

no movement catches the eye.
The jetty is almost deserted:
only a lone fisherman dreams,
motionless beside his empty bucket.

I step out, feet sounding remote
on the boards, a narrow strip of bleached
wood unwinding. My body slows,
slips into the rhythm of the whoosh

and murmur of unseen waves.
I drift into sleep, walk sixty-five kilometres
along these weathered planks,
wake up on the shore of Yorke Peninsula.

DAVID ADÈS

RETURN FROM HOSPITAL

I have not crossed mountains to be here
but merely continued
to breathe

guided only by the stars
of a few machines
and the fact
of you

sometimes
I didn't know you

(a brick
where the praying-heart
should be)

but now in the quiet
we make each evening

I find I don't believe
in death

the psalm unfolds its rivers
and hills

I'm
delivered

unbroken

to sleep or love

AIDAN COLEMAN

SIDEWAYS

His brain functions superbly with shapes and numbers.
At four, in church during the sermon, he drew from memory
an Egyptian mummy, with miniature mummies inside her,
in perfect symmetry; and Darth Vader of menacing stance
bursting with technology – each phase intense,
lasting months, even years –
pirates, archaeology, police vans.

But he can't piece together the jigsaw of people;
at school he's taken to kissing other children on the lips –
videos show this is the way to give and get love.
Little girls are surprised, parents recoil with horror,
a hostile father accosts the boy's mother, who then
instructs him clearly
Don't touch anyone
Next day after school, stiffening, she says casually,
How did it go today?
Alright he said I didn't touch anyone
but it was hard with my bag in the corridor
going sideways.

ROS SCHULZ

Poem of the Month, August 2009

Mentored Poet 2009

THE REFUSAL

the refusal of domesticity, of mundanity,
TV, plasma, order and chaos,
letterbox drops and charge cards . . .

the refusal of Devonshire, lollipops,
foil wrapped, baked not fried,
sugar dusting, fuel, lies and other
gob-stopping, blocking acid treats;

fortunes and fate, failure, success and mediocrity,
nakidity and cloth, religion, day to day,
omnipresence, dizziness and apathy . . .

the refusal to split, and drive, keep inside the edges,
grow lawn, kill lawn, be forlorn or against,
of indecision and un-surity . . .

The refusal of acquisition and emptiness,
of day beds, and washing lines, traffic fines,
black and white, grey matter,
all matter, of time . . .

the refusal . . . keeps me alive.

the refusal . . . keeps me alive.

INDIGO

SALVATION ARMY HOSTEL

each morning
on the steps
of the Salvation Army hostel

a chemically troubled
woman sits

her street tan
is the colour of terracotta
and hair the texture of hessian

in the nerve-end
of her
stare

the dull pulse
of the peak hour traffic
unravels
itself

with a cigarette
behind each ear
and one in her hand

she waits as calmly
as a getaway car

JULES LEIGH KOCH

THE MATHEMATICS OF POVERTY

The poor keep moving
as if relocation
could reframe the algebra.

They cannot see that repetition
traces patterns
in their life.

New beginnings become as hopeless
as stale finales
of debt and desperation.

Wishful thinking makes for certainties
gambling against the odds
of possibilities.

Whispered prayers and incantations
leaves no space
for reason's compass to steady and settle.

If they stood still and mapped the moment
both sides of the equation
would simplify

and they might construct
a new geometry
of anger.

M.L. EMMETT

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