

Friendly Street  
NEW POETS 15





Friendly Street  
NEW POETS 15

*A Lesson in Being Mortal* • Louise McKenna

*A Pause in the Conversation* • Lynette Arden

*Natural Intervention* • Sher'ee Furtak-Ellis



Friendly Street Poets

Friendly Street Poets Inc.  
PO Box 3697  
Norwood SA 5067  
friendlystreetpoets.org.au

Wakefield Press  
1 The Parade West  
Kent Town  
South Australia 5067  
www.wakefieldpress.com.au

First published 2010

Copyright © Louise McKenna, Lynette Arden and Sher'ee Furtak-Ellis, 2010

All rights reserved. This book is copyright. Apart from fair dealing for the purposes of private study, research, criticism or review, as permitted under the Copyright Act, no part may be reproduced without written permission. Enquiries should be addressed to the publisher.

Cover photograph copyright © Thom Sullivan  
Cover design by Clinton Ellicott, Wakefield Press, and  
Thom Sullivan, Friendly Street Poets Inc.  
Typeset by Clinton Ellicott, Wakefield Press  
Edited by Thom Sullivan, Friendly Street Poets Inc.  
Printed in Australia by Griffin Digital, Adelaide

ISBN 978 1 86254 882 4



Government  
of South Australia

Arts SA

Friendly Street Poets Inc. is supported by  
the South Australian Government  
through Arts SA.



## Contents

A Lesson in Being Mortal  
Louise McKenna  
1

A Pause in the Conversation  
Lynette Arden  
31

Natural Intervention  
Sher'ee Furtak-Ellis  
61

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.



## Contents

The Queen's Pelican	4
Birds	5
Lemons	6
Feeding the Cassowaries	7
My Apology to You	8
Dragon Abreast	9
Visitation	10
The Knock	11
Bronze Whaler	12
8 Doomgate	13
Photo	14
Cone Shell	15
A Lesson in Being Mortal	16
Sonnet	17
Wicket	18
The Art of Absolution	19
Gallows Hill	20
Today's Music	21
Untenable	22
Encounter	23
A Drop of Water	24
Silence	25
The Ray	26
Journey	27
The Tracker	28
His Poetry Book	29

## 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 dehiscid 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*

## Acknowledgements

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.

I also thank members of several Internet Forums for their help. In particular: OzPoets (now archived), where I started to learn what poetry was about, AHA Poetry Forums and the mentors of the World Haiku Club workshop.

Thank you to Graham Rowlands, who gave valuable advice on structuring and editing my submission and also to Ann Timoney Jenkin for her advice and support.

Thanks to Ron Heard, editor of *The Mozzie*, who first encouraged me to submit work to publishers and to Beverley George, publisher of *Eucalypt A Tanka Journal* and previously *Yellow Moon*. Her advice and encouragement have been invaluable.

Numerous individuals have given me feedback on my poetry. Thank you to them and also to the world around me for inspiration.

## Contents

My Flesh	34
Glamour	35
Glossy	36
The Twenty-five Most Beautiful People in the World	37
Tanka and Haiku	38
Sepia Memories	39
Girl Child	40
Brief Encounter	41
Tigers	42
Tiger	43
Memory of Murano	44
A Good Age	45
Unvarnished	46
Departure	47
Tanka	48
Early Morning Images	49
Waving	50
Frieze	51
Her Garden	52
I Hang On	53
Haiku/Senryu	54
Haiku	55
Weightless Words	56
Fall	57
The Game	58
Whither	59

## 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](http://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.

## Contents

Drought	64
Seasons Inside	65
Lead to the Clinic	66
A Work in Progress	67
Distant Cousin	68
Say Goodbye	69
Firefighting	70
Eternity	71
Corpses	72
Rebel	73
Madeline	74
Paper Moon Town	75
Living the Life	76
Big Man	77
Old Songs	78
Balloons	79
Journey	80
Potential Section 269	81
Water	82
Empty	83
Glass Case Detachment	84
Heartnotes	85
Tired	86
Texas Bar Brawl	87
A Black Cloud Covered the Sky	88

## 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.



## Friendly Street New Poets Series

### Friendly Street New Poets 8 (2002)

The Windmill's Song • Elaine Barker

Kite Lady • Tess Driver

Fine Rain Straight Down • David Mortimer

### Friendly Street New Poets 9 (2003)

Peeling Onions • Jill Gloyne

Crescent Moon Caught Me • Judith Ahmed

Scoffing Gnocchi • Linda Uphill

### Friendly Street New Poets 10 (2004)

Stealing • Libby Angel

Deaf Elegies (from Virginia Woolf's Record Store) • Robert J. Bloomfield

Sparrow in an Airport • rob walker

### Friendly Street New Poets 11 (2005)

low background noise • Cameron Fuller

words free • Simone G. Matthews

jars of artefacts • Rachel Manning

### Friendly Street New Poets 12 (2006)

The Night is a Dying Dog • Steve Brock

Travelling • Margaret Fensom

Nectar and Light • Murray Alfredson

### Friendly Street New Poets 13 (2007)

Black Magic • Courtney Black

Circus Earth • Janine Baker

Hieroglyphs • Roger Higgins

### Friendly Street New Poets 14 (2008)

Snatching Time • M.L. Emmett

The Boy Full of Broken Promise • Rob Hardy

Airborne • Thom Sullivan

website: [friendlystreetpoets.org.au](http://friendlystreetpoets.org.au)

email: [poetry@friendlystreetpoets.org.au](mailto:poetry@friendlystreetpoets.org.au)

postal: PO Box 3697 Norwood SA 5067