

**Manic Depression II**

The big man in me must grow smaller

The small man in me must grow bigger

The big man and the small man

Must meet in the middle

My sadness must grow happier

My happiness has grown sadder

The outcome must be pleasant

The truth in me must win

The changes must remain

*David Christopher Marsh*

**Milk Crate People**

We are hoarders, hiders, helpers,  
 keepers of knowledge.  
 Experts in cheap meals, low fares/ no fares,  
 St Vinnies, Missionbeat, the Salvos.  
 Multitudes who parties ignore  
 Chained to Centrelink, psychiatrists, social services  
 held in boxes labelled  
 Bludgers, Disabled, The Unemployed  
 Moved on, pissed on, pushed out, derided.  
 Don't judge, criticise, moralise,  
 think you can't lose your job, house, family  
 all your belongings in the car,  
 knocking on charity's door.  
 We are writers, performers, ensemble artists.  
 Special, unique and ordinary.

*This text was written by Pauline Trenerry for Milk Crate Theatre in December 2016. Pauline has had an ongoing affiliation with Milk Crate Theatre and as Margot Politis the Associate Director attests, "her words are evocative of the community of people with whom we work". Pauline offered this poem as a Village Voices contribution in February 2017.*

**Welcome**

Restaurant sign says  
 heater on inside come on in  
 Doubt that means  
 homeless man with plastic bags  
 on opposite bench

I slept with Lance in a Surry Hills squat  
 So did Veronica.  
 Lance rarely changed his socks  
 his feet smelt surprisingly clean.  
 We warmed our feet in the stove  
 while we still had electricity.

Breath frosted air  
 Words locked in mind's pond  
 Clumsy hands mittened  
 Warm bed beckons  
 Numb limbs  
 Frigid sheets  
 Must get hot water bottle  
 Adversity's not poetic

Reasons to stay alive  
 Small painted lion beside foot in Circular Quay  
 friend turns we simultaneously smile  
 Chill night tulip glasses clink  
 Botanic Gardens bench  
 warm aromatic cider  
 Later view stars  
 Camouflaged man leads three dalmations down tunnel  
 Oh come on I think

*By Pauline Trenerry*

**False economy**

I come to see words and write. I come on a pilgrimage to Crown St to view The Artwork and write my Wayside poem. I picture myself sitting in a café with lunch, then a coffee, a quiet café, not a blaring-with-music and a-clatter-with-chatter café writing my poem. There is of course the library but I secretly see this as a last resort, this doesn't fit my image of myself as a writer: to be visible, intriguing- have observers wonder what I'm doing while simultaneously being innocuous-left to do what I need to without interruption.

I want to sit in a trendy coffee shop because I can, because I know that I won't be patronised, looked up and down demeaningly, as I once was (or at least not quite as much as before, it depends on the place.) Still I balk at paying \$16 for a bowl of roasted veg with a bit of grated parmesan.

I walk, walk till I find a reasonably priced sandwich shop where the music isn't quite as raucous as the other places. Sandwich eaten write a few words of poem but am distracted by the need for cake. Here a small square of caramel slice is \$5 outrageous! I walk, mentally simultaneously trying to convince myself that it would be better for my waistline and wallet not to have cake while peering inside cafes at cake selections.

Fearing I will hit the end of crown St cake-deprived I enter the Polish café. Do you have dessert? I ask the waitress thinking it a ridiculous question as I know the Polish, like the Germans, are big on those gi-normous cream-filled layer numbers like Black Forest cake, and she did indeed show me a display case of heart-attacks-on-a-plate. "Welcome, Welcome", the man behind the counter said effusively as I sat down, having ordered slice of tiramisu "Made the Polish way". Here we have the best cakes in Sydney. My wife makes them". There were no other customers apart from a couple sitting outside and an old lady in the corner with a stick. I worried, as the waitress rushed up with a carafe of water and filled my glass the minute my bum hit the seat- that this lack of customers would make the staff over-attentive to me. I could see why the place was so empty.

*By Pauline Trenergy*

**Art Therapy**

Art therapy  
 what is it for?  
 showing my mess  
 want it left there  
 others make pretty pictures  
 my house floats away  
 me talking talking  
 their heads bowed in silent judgement  
 I long to create cute animals  
 paste my joy onto paper  
 bright sweet empty uncaring.

Made an odd little plasticine cat  
 from cheap, thin, rainbow- coloured stuff  
 mixed orange, pink, white to make the patchy coat.  
 Its blunt nosed face  
 is ever tilted downward  
 despite several coats of glue,  
 half paddle-pop stick insertion.

Therapists were apologetic;  
the material was unsuited to this purpose.  
They were wrong.  
Persevered in my attempts to stop it  
blindly seeking sleep,  
was engrossed for many hours,  
usually racing mind  
emptied of the DSP, NDIS and absentee support workers.

*By Pauline Trenergy*