

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 Trenergy 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 Trenergy

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

Uncharted Territory

I saw a woman -
a mother, a wife,
a daughter, a friend,
resplendent in bright orange
salwar kameez.

Without thought of
language or familiarity
I approached her and said
"You are SO beautiful!"

She looked surprised.

Her family paused
then seemed delighted.

Joy spread like wildfire through uncharted territory.
True Beauty has no boundaries.

by Christine Goodman

Bus Lady

Bus lady, I see you again.

In the past you smoked, you walked and from behind thick glasses and quite a large limp, you chatted once with me.

In the summertime, with a walking stick and flamingo pink floral dress, you were quite flirtatious with the bus driver, in an individual kind of way.

With one hip in the air quite by accident, with smiles and flashing blue eyes, anyone would have thought you were oblivious to your disability

Moving back to the area recently, I wondered if I still might see you one day, and then there you were, in a wheelchair and a beanie, cigarette in hand.

I look at you and you looked at me, I walked on by as you waited for the bus again.

By Vinita Fonteyn

IF ONLY YOU REALLY KNEW
JUST HOW MUCH I LOVE YOU
YOU WOULD PROCEED
FROM THIS POINT FORWARD
WITH THE CONFIDENCE
OF A THOUSAND SUNS

By Oliver Lardner

A nameless force guides us
We display it in our daily pageantry
We conceal it in our private reveries
The god of the city surveys that
unwavering something that withstands
each generation of lustre and decay

By Damien Stone