

Classic Poetry Series

Lisa Bellear
- poems -

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Lisa Bellear(2 May 1961 - 5 July 2006)

Lisa (Marie) Bellear (born, Melbourne, Victoria, 2 May 1961 – died, Melbourne, 5 July 2006) was an Indigenous Australian poet, photographer, activist, spokeswoman, dramatist, comedian and broadcaster. She was a Goernpil woman of the Noonuccal people of Minjerribah (Stradbroke Island), Queensland. Her uncles were Bob Bellear, Australia's first Indigenous judge, and Sol Bellear who helped to found the Aboriginal Housing Corporation in Redfern in 1972.

Bellear was adopted into a white family as a baby and was told she had Polynesian heritage . As an adult she explored her Aboriginal roots.

Bellear died unexpectedly at her home in Melbourne. She was 45 years old.

Published works and photography

Bellear wrote *Dreaming In Urban Areas* (UQP, 1996), a book of poetry which explores the experience of Aboriginal people in contemporary society. She said in an interview with Roberta Sykes that her 'poetry was not about putting down white society. It's about self-discovery.'

Other poetry was published in journals and newspapers. She was awarded the Deadly prize in 2006 for making an outstanding contribution to literature with her play *The Dirty Mile: A History of Indigenous Fitzroy*, a suburb of Melbourne.

Bellear was a prolific photographer. Her work was exhibited at the 2004 Athens Olympic Games and at the Melbourne Museum as part of their millennium celebrations.

Community activities

Bellear was a broadcaster at the community radio station 3CR in Melbourne where she presented the show 'Not Another Koori Show' for over 20 years.

She was also a founding member of the Ilbijerri Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Theatre Co-op, the longest-running Aboriginal theatre troupe in Australia. Ilbijerri produced *The Dirty Mile* in March 2006 as a dramatised walking trail through the streets of Fitzroy, Melbourne.

Beautiful Yuroke Red River Gum

<i>For Northlands Secondary College Mobile Rebel School</i>

Sometimes the red river gums rustled
in the beginning of colonization when
Wurundjeri
Bunnerong
Wathauring
and other Kulin nations
sang and danced
 and
 laughed
 aloud

Not too long and there are
fewer red river gums, the
Yarra Yarra tribe's blood becomes
the river's rich red clay

There are maybe two red river gums
a scarred tree which overlooks the
Melbourne Cricket Ground the
survivors of genocide watch
and camp out, live, breathe in various
parks 'round Fitzroy and down
town
 cosmopolitan
 St Kilda

And some of us mob have graduated
from Koori Kollij, Preston TAFE,
the Melbin Yewni

Red river gums are replaced
by plane trees from England
and still
 the survivors
 watch.

Lisa Bellear

Conversations (Aka Unfinished Business)

Conversations through the phone
raises issues that still impact
on indigenous Australians. There
is also a message of hope!

Imagination, creativity, art, dance,
music, and inventive conversations.
Positive expressions of Indigenous
survival.

Mr Prime Minister, The Mayor,
young folk, warriors without
treaties, the wider community . . .

The message as always,
even though we smile.
Land Rights, sovereignty, no more
crap, ignorance and unabated racism.

Lisa Bellear

Dear Dja Baby Boori

<i>(Dedicated to all the Dja Dja Wrung people and their ancestors)</i>

Poor Dja Baby boori, disrespectfully
stolen, ninety nine years ago,
now returned to your ancestors
place or dreaming and your
home

Rest peacefully dear dja baby boori,
wrapped warmly in possum skins,
comforted, loved, respectfully
returned, to your place of dreaming,
your home

Traditional Dja Dja Wrung Way,
body spirit – spirit body
respectfully mourned
respectfully buried
respectfully remembered

Traditional Dja Dja Wrung Way
high in the boughs of the beautiful
gnarled bended gumtree, from
all those years ago

Surrounded in possum skins,
comforted and blessed,
Dja Baby Boori girl is
home

Lisa Belliar

Final Warning

Our Elders, Olders, respected warriors
have thought and fought for generations.
They have requested I inform this country
of an impending official war. Sadly I am
to convey, there seems to be no alternatives.

As of midnight December 31 2000 a state
of war will be declared in Australia.
An interim Council of War, is meeting
As we speak.

These are exciting times. Please continue
smiling. Two hundred and twelve
years seemed awhile to wait for recognised
treaty negotiations to commence
between First Nations Australians and
a Federal Commonwealth Australian
government.

You will be kept informed and
remain patient.

Lisa Belleair

Message Failed

INDIGENOUS: Our lands are here to welcome
PARLIAMENTARIAN: We do not come in peace
INDIGENOUS: As long, as long ago we offer welcome
PARLIAMENTARIAN: We do not come in peace
INDIGENOUS: An offering from within deep within
PARLIAMENTARIAN: We do not come in peace
INDIGENOUS: Who are your people?
PARLIAMENTARIAN: We do not come in peace
INDIGENOUS: Our custom, begins like this
PARLIAMENTARIAN: We do no come in peace
INDIGENOUS: From the tops of the gum trees, too
PARLIAMENTARIAN: We do not come in peace
INDIGENOUS: Beneath the earth our mother
PARLIAMENTARIAN: We do not come in peace
INDIGENOUS: If you share with our traditions
PARLIAMENTARIAN: We do not come in peace
We do not come in peace
Die just be gone

Lisa Belleair

Poor Pretty Polly

Brokern again like a bad bad feeling
that keeps repeating and when you
finaly relax BANG it's there again
SMACK wallop in your face, swirling
around in your day time night dreams

Trusted again once too much,
now she's making wishes
when the moon is full

Curse the mother she never knew
curse the whiteman who raped her
mother, the mother she never knew,
curse those responsible, especially
those who knew

Poor poor pretty Polly, lies silent
in an inner surburban gutter.
'What a sweety', 'such a shame',
'so pretty and now she's dead'.
Some say of a brokern heart, others
snigger 'she gave too much'. Some
say, some say, 'poor poor pretty Polly'
Rest in Peace

Lisa Bellear

Ruby Was Never Seen Again 25/9/03

Weep for this wounded desperate soul that never
seems to heal, alone, vocalising to any passer by.
Uncomfortable for some, they turn away, but that won't stop
her swaying, or mend her destructive pain

Pray for this tired old and embittered lady
who fought courageously against the colonisers
classified as 'tribal' whose love across the
racial lines meant government sanctioned
interference: the Bullyman, welfare, local
school teacher – informant, would not relent
till Ruby was removed

Three long years of hiding from the
tentacles of institutionalised racism,
till a moments lapse and then she's gone
Ruby's gone, like she never existed,
nor was ever loved. Rocking to and fro,
she still dreams of little Ruby
and of that fateful day and wonders
what their life could've been
like without this government
sanctioned cruelty

Lisa Bellear

They Named Me King Billy

Hated wearin' shoes, makes no sense and
all these other skins and a gentleman's
hat. For a king, for a king. Sometimes,
they laughed. I will focus above
the taunts, I am King Billy.

No point in being shamed, tattered trousers
and who needs buttons. My hands ache, but I will continue
to stand alone, dignified. Not many left,
that is what I hear. Sickness and cruel remarks,
how awful these Christians. I want to curse, but here
I am again, being photographed again.

A king's life must be recorded, measured, examined.
I am cooperative, I have limited choices. With experience,
confidence and a royal name, all I ask for is respectful
conversation and fresh food.

King Billy, a title for a King
King Billy, last of his people
King Billy, enjoy your life
King Billy enjoy your title.

King Billy will die
King Billy is dead
King Billy, came from, was related too
King Billy King Billy King Billy
Your life was worth more than a title.
The whiteman crowned away your memory
In time your spirit will come to
rest

Lisa Belleair

To No One: And Mary Did Time

Dear someone
out there who
may or may not
give a damn

'I'm not a liar
I'm not a thief'

But you don't give
a damn, don't
wanna get close,
worried it might
rub off, typical
welfare come
social worker wanna
beeze's

To whomever might
give me a passing
accidental glance,
to whomever might
have the guts to stop
and say hello

I didn't mean to
kill my baby daught
I wasn't right
I was sick

Dear anyone to anyone
who just might care
I didn't know
I just didn't know
I'm still not
sure

Lisa Bellear

Women's Liberation

Talk to me about the feminist movement,
the gubba middle class
hetero sexual revolution
way back in the seventies
when men wore tweed jackets with
leather elbows, and the women, well
I don't remember or maybe I just don't care
or can't relate.

Now what were those white women on about?
What type of neurosis was fashionable back then?
So maybe I was only a school kid; and kids, like women,
have got on thing that joins that schemata,
like we're not worth listening to,
and who wants to liberate women and children
what will happen in an egalitarian society
if the women and the kids start becoming complacent
in that they believe they should have rights
and economic independence,
and what would these middle class kids and white women do
with liberation, with freedom, with choices of
do I stay with my man, do I fall in love with other
white middle class women, and it wouldn't matter if
my new woman had kids or maybe even kids and dogs
Yes I'm for the women's movement
I want to be free and wear dunlop tennis shoes.
And indigenous women, well surely, the liberation
of white women includes all women regardless . . .
It doesn't, well that's not for me to deal with
I mean how could I, a white middle class woman,
who is deciding how can I budget when my man won't
pay the school fees and the diner's card club simply
won't extend credit.
I don't even know if I'm capable
of understanding
Aborigines, in Victoria?
Aboriginal women, here, I've never seen one,
and if I did, what would I say,
damned if I'm going to feel guilty, for wanting something
better for me, for women in general, not just white

middle class Volvo driving, part time women's studies
students
Maybe I didn't think, maybe I thought women in general
meant, Aboriginal women, the Koori women in Victoria
Should I apologise
should I feel guilty
Maybe the solution is to sponsor
a child through world vision.
Yes that's probably best,
I feel like I could cope with that,
Look, I'd like to do something for our Aborigines
but I haven't even met one,
and if I did I would say
all this business about land rights, maybe I'm a bit
scared, what's it mean, that some day I'll wake up
and there will be this flag, what is it, you know
red, black and that yellow circle, staked out front
and then what, Okay I'm sorry, I feel guilt
is that what I should be shouting
from the top of the rialto building
The women's movement saved me
maybe the 90s will be different.
I'm not sure what I mean, but I know that although
it's not just a women's liberation that will free us
it's a beginning

Lisa Bellear