

**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.

### <b>Published works and photography</b>

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.

### <b>Community activities</b>

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

&lt;i&gt;For Northlands Secondary College Mobile Rebel School&lt;/i&gt;

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

&lt;i&gt;(Dedicated to all the Dja Dja Wrung people and their ancestors)&lt;/i&gt;

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 Belleair

# 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 Bellear

# 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