

Homecoming

Strange, this disturbance ...
drawn to the window again ...
and there you are, framed
by the world, waking alone
along the street, coming home.

Andrew Lansdown

Homecoming

Fremantle Arts Centre Press (Fremantle), 1979

ISBN 0-909144-22-2

The Sun

The sun is a ball of gold
tied to a see-through string,
and an invisible man, who is very old,
says it belongs to him.

He pulls on the string all day long
until the sun is out of sight,
then he scuttles off, without a song,
to bury it for the night.

But he digs so fast
and he digs so deep
he goes through the earth and past!

Then he moans 'cause he's had no sleep
and groans 'cause it's such a way
as he hauls it back across the sky all day.

Andrew Lansdown (text)
Susan Lansdown (illustrations)
A Ball of Gold: Poems for Children
Artlook Books (Perth), 1980
ISBN 0-865445-000-1

Counterpoise

Light refracting on the reach of the river;
gulls and sails embracing the slight wind;
jellyfish clasping the calm water
or bunting the sand in the basking shallows;
posts of wood barnacled and rotten;
small waves lisp upon the shore:
here is an opulence I had forgotten.

And here and there, a scatter of children
scamper across the lawn like leaves
driven before the tempest of their happiness.
Parents and grandparents are at ease
in the shade of trees and in each other's company.
For these people, things I thought we had lost
have never been open to doubt.

As the sun departs, parties arrive for prawning:
light their lanterns and lay out their nets.
The world again seems young and lovely,
values certain and strong: young men
and old men, friends, fathers and sons
in pairs dissolve into the dark water
and toil together in the hope of harvest.

How ignorant I have been
through these last years of learning,
how weighted down on one side of the scale.
The large, deep things are all
in their own ways dark and hard.
Small things are a counterpoise
to lighten and soften the heart.

Andrew Lansdown

Counterpoise

Angus & Robertson Publishers (Sydney), 1982

ISBN 0-207-14664-0

Nightfall

Sporadically, windfall fruit
stop the deep silence
of nightfall

And then rhythmically—
three, four times—a mute
thud Look!

Between the rows of oranges
through the thighhigh paspalum
a kangaroo

A young doe
scenting out the sweet
lowlimbed pears—

Partripe pears
belling halfyellows
in the beckoning dark

Andrew Lansdown

Windfalls

Fremantle Arts Centre Press (Fremantle), 1984

ISBN 0-909144-85-0

Waking and Always

Naomi, six months

Where has she gone? I do not hold her
as she sleeps in my arms. The tides of air
lift and let go her chest
with a delicacy that reminds me of death.
So slender, each breath! She is hot
and the sweat glistens like ground glass
on her scalp. Her eyelids are almond petals,
white, exquisitely veined with pink.

Finer than her eyelashes are fine,
yet greater than the delta of the Nile,
are the rivulets of blood in the hoods
of her eyes. The mastery of her!
No human design can hide the design in her.
She holds me as I hold her while she is held
by sleep. Her eyelids flinch and flicker,
brushed by the bright blackness of dreams.

Darling, it seems they would have us believe
that, back beyond the generations, you
and I and they—we all—were spawned
spontaneously from an inorganic soup.
They say it is “scientific”. But I know
it is unproven and unprovable, believable
only by faith. And it is a faith that fails
the facts. The facts, say, of your eyelids.

Child, I do not believe your eyelids
or the dreams above which they flutter
are accidental—a mere coincidence
of chemicals and light, a serendipity
of time and matter. I cannot believe.
I lack the faith. Daughter, dream this
true dream: Your spirit is the wick of Yahweh,
your body, the wax of His make and moulding.

Dream this waking and always. And burn
little candle! Burn brightly in the coming night!

Andrew Lansdown

Waking and Always

Angus & Robertson Publishers (Sydney), 1987. ISBN 0-207-15530-5
Rpt, Picaro Press (Warners Bay), 2007. ISBN 978-1-920957-66-7

The Grasshopper Heart

That man with the cowboy hat and tan and tattoos
is holding his little white-skinned daughter
very gently in the shallow water. Now he is
zooming her along, but not too quickly
for fear of her fear. He tosses her up,
catches and hugs her, holds in check
the fierce tenderness that craves to crush her.
Her father. His wholly holy love. He is smiling
and I know his heart is like a grasshopper—
leaping and landing spring-loaded to leap again.

Andrew Lansdown

The Grasshopper Heart

Collins/Angus & Robertson Publishers (Sydney), 1991

ISBN – 0-207-17027-4

Between Glances

It is a liquidambar, the tree
I planted two months ago
beside my study. Green and
leafy then, it is almost bare

now. A little twiggy thing.
One red leaf flutters from it
like a child's hand. For a week
it has been waving to me,

wanting my attention, trying
to tell me something unknown
to eucalypts and evergreens.
Something European or Japanese.

Something sad and deciduous.
That brave beautiful leaf,
beckoning the eyes as a flame
beckons the palms. All day

it has warmed me. Exquisite,
that small wind-chafed hand,
its familiar flutter. I glance
down at my work then out

again, only to find it gone.
Gone between glances. If only
I had known that last wave
was a goodbye, a farewell,

I would not have looked away.

Andrew Lansdown

Between Glances

William Heinemann Australia (Port Melbourne), 1993

ISBN 0-85561-517-6

Opulence

Her milk has come in
but our son still sleeps.

I cup my palm. Oh,
such a hard opulence!

She lies awake, willing
his hot mouth to squall.

My heart aches with love
as a breast with milk.

Andrew Lansdown

Opulence: poems on parenting

Life Ministries (Nollamara), 2002

Communion

for Ian & Liz Parker

The garden is dry but the bird-bath
brims with black water from the bottom
of the dam. Beside the gravel path

two stumps beckon small birds from the bush,
invite with a voice they never had
when fused, infused with the sap's green push.

One, on its plane, bears sugar and grain.
The other, in a glazed clay dish, holds
the dark dregs of last winter's light rain.

A neat, white-naped honeyeater takes
a bath. A fantail alights to flirt.
On the flat grass nearby, like snow flakes,

a fall of rolled oats. Be still. Don't speak.
Share this communion: a blue wren is
breaking a white wafer with his beak.

Andrew Lansdown

Communion

Picaro Press (Warners Bay), 2003

ISSN 1444-8424

Fontanelle

Strange, this seeing
the heart in the head.

Look, a drumming
in the cranium,

a tom-tomming
against the membrane

where the bones are
yet to meet and knit.

May they never
knit entirely, son.

May head and heart
beat in unison

always, as now
in your fontanelle.

Andrew Lansdown

Fontanelle

Five Islands Press (University of Melbourne), 2004

ISBN 1-74128-074-5

Warrior-Monk

i

A warrior-monk,
the heron stands at the brink
of the floating world.

ii

Spear at the ready
the heron warrior-monk
meditates on death.

iii

Meditation, step
the heron warrior-monk
resignation, stab.

iv

The grey heron's koan:
the monk and the warrior,
how can they combine?

Andrew Lansdown

Warrior Monk: 22 haiku, senryu and minipoem sequences

Picaro Press (Warners Bay), 2005

ISBN 1-920957-15-4

Consolation

The re-hydration
of bees at the garden tap—
some consolation
for the water still dripping
from my procrastination.

Andrew Lansdown

Consolations: 48 tanka

Picaro Press (Warners Bay), 2009

ISBN 978-1-920957-84-1

Haiku matters—
little matters intimating
larger matters.

Andrew Lansdown

Little Matters: a gathering of 89 haiku & senryu

Picaro Press (Warners Bay), 2009

ISBN 978-1-920957-85-8

Birds in Mind

i

Sacred kingfisher—
into the world onto the branch
courtesy the King.

ii

Wren and the art
of bird-making—dear Lord, such
blue in the bush!

iii

Statuesque heron—
unmoved as humans debate
the Sculptor question.

iv

Goodness, that ibis
signals the presence of birds
in the mind of God!

Andrew Lansdown

Birds in Mind: Australian Nature Poems
Wombat Books (Capalaba, Qld), 2009
ISBN 978-1-921633-04-1