

Laura's poetry & prose



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November in my Soul
By Laura Henkel

*November gives Hope Road,
With its arched cathedral of jacarandas,
A stunning blue halo,
While a blue carpet forms,
Raining from the trees,
Of bell-shaped blossoms –
Everywhere.
The air is filled
With the explosive crackle
Of blossoms popped
By passing cars.*

*Here in my garden grow:
Tall, flaming red cannas,
Scorning the lowly common primrose;
A crush of orange marigolds,
Jostling each other for the sunlight;
Dainty yellow jasmine,
Tightrope-walking the fence;
Sweet peas, twined the honeysuckle,
Reaching for the sky
In a multicoloured cloud
Of heady fragrance;
A bomb-burst of roses;
Mulberries dripping from the trees,
And the burgeoning promise
Of apricots, peaches and plums.
The daisies grin at the pansies,
Who turn their faces to the sun,
While the morning glory winks
And rustles its secrets to the wind.
Even the armoured cactus,
Is brandishing an orange spear.*

*Yes, I have November in my soul,
But my November
Is not dank and drear.
Mine is full of hope.
Everything is growing,
And so am I.*

*My Robbing Rapist
By Laura Henkel*

*Before he came my way,
I'd meticulously planned
To leave this frightening land,
Find a wizard, oh so grand,
In the fabled land of Oz.*

*There I would recoup
All my former dreams of youth:
Go back upon the boards,
Find some grease paint, earn applause.
Then there's radio: my choice,
Film and TV need a voice,
Perhaps acting – oh what dreams
Impossible it seems.
What was that dreadful song?
Let's prove your critics wrong.*

*Then he came by
And because*

*He couldn't
Get*

*His
F***,*

*There is no other word,
Even "had sex with"
Implies some compliance.*

*He kicked my face in,
Made it and me*

F U B A R

*F******

Up

Beyond

All

Recognition

I couldn't face

Going out on the street,

How could I possibly face

Going on stage?

This has nothing to do with beauty,

Or vanity

This was my personality

Smashed

And unrecognisable.

There in the mirror

Was a person

I did not know.

*I lost every tooth in my upper jaw
And had to wear a plate
On a tiny reconstructed base –
“Best we can do in the circumstance”
Of what was left of my gums.
I could no longer
 Enunciate
My words correctly with that thing in my mouth.
And those years
 And years
 Spent
Learning to speak clearly
 Were as naught.
I would have to lower my standards,
Lower the class
 Of any future performance.
Did I have that many years left
To make such a
 Giant
 Recovery?
Not only was the stage
Receding into the distance
But now, radio was gone
And if I could not restore
 Some
 Self
 Respect
I would be all
 Gone
 Gone
 Gone.*

*My jaw they say,
Was splintered
Into tiny pieces
And lay scattered
On the floor*

*What they do not say or see
Is that the tools of my trade
Have been irretrievably smashed
Every dream I ever had
Lies strewn across the floor.*

That Shallow Question
By Laura Henkel

*Why don't you just
Put it behind you
And get on with your life?*

*They ask, as if it were
Some suitcase
You could put down and leave
Beside the road of life,
Disowning its contents
It's very existence.
And this life you have to "get on with",
What does it entail exactly?
Surely everything you do
Is "getting on with" your life?*

*But actually I did do
What was so glibly suggested:
I just picked myself up,
Dusted myself off,
And I found –
Oh, my God –
I've picked up another person.
I don't know this person at all.
She's so full of anger and rage,
Bitterness and hate, screaming for justice.
I'm not even sure I like her –
What has happened to my former self?*

The Flip of the Coin
By Laura Henkel

*When a woman says "No!"
It should be "No"
Only a man could say
That a woman means "Yes"
When she says "No"
Does he also say
That she means "No"
When she says "Yes".*

*For a man
Whatever a woman says
When he wants sex
It's Heads – I win
Tails – you lose"*

*Now if you scorn me
And call me a feminist
Oh what a dirty word –
Just remember
It's you
By your approach
That has truly
Made me so.*

Coming Back to Hope

By Laura Henkel

When a terrible injustice is perpetrated against you, particularly where there is no legal redress or the likelihood of one, there rises up within the individual, like a pipe that is starting to overflow, a sense of outrage (with the emphasis on the rage) against the social order. It is a sense of being an outcast or an outlaw, fighting not only the injustice itself, but also fighting the establishment. While you are smarting under this widened injustice and society is unsympathetic, blaming you or not believing you, you feel utterly and entirely alone and unvalued.

Many people have experienced this and their response is, like mine, to withdraw from society or have as little to do with it as possible.

Only when society itself takes up the cause, can there be a reversal of this feeling. For most people, this means a court case with its accompanying public exposure. I venture to suggest that, where public opinion goes against the complainant, irrespective of the outcome of the case, there is no sense of relief and the complainant still mistrusts society's standards.

Only a few are able to employ the power of books, plays or films and, in this respect, I feel privileged in being able to draw society into and onto the side of the victim and make society see not only the injustice done, but the damage it does without even knowing that it is doing any damage at all.

For example: my son who denied and didn't even know that he was blaming me, but who admitted he could be wrong. My neighbour who didn't realise how she damaged my self-esteem by not believing me, but who graciously conceded her prejudice. And everyone for not understanding that I needed to scream, as Glory does on occasion.

Now that, through this film, I feel that society is behind me in condemning the injustice done, not only to me, but to all women, I feel I can trust society again – trust its values – and I am able to want to play its games again.