

(Im)Proper Nouns

Donna Sparrowhawk
Book review by Helen Pizzey

Donna's poetry is a celebration of life; of its social and personal dealings with us and the ways in which it imparts a knowledge and experience of love (or its absence) through people, places and things.

It's also a reflection on how love is reason enough to delight in our various everyday circumstances when they're enhanced by gratuitous acts of give-and-take.

(Im)Proper Nouns is a collection of poems ordered in three sections. They portray real-life encounters deserving of capital letters but which come to us "lower case" because of the informal and intimate ways they're presented by Donna's relaxed and easy writing style. Her poems are tender and unapologetic in their expression of feeling and affection, but their clear-eyed, often very practical view and down-to-earth honesty frees them from an overt sentimentality which can sometimes undermine the artistic integrity of love poetry.

Among those poems listed under persons, a nervousness surrounding the first stirrings of romance is tackled head-on in *I had forgotten the dangers of loving*. Familial strands of genetic and social belonging are explored in *Legacy* while *Whispered Message* is a well-observed depiction of a devotion to nursing care that ends in a delightful twist. *Not Quite a Sonnet for Susan on Her Sixtieth Birthday* is an energetic romp which captures the spirit of its subject, and *loving you makes even...* is a spare stream of consciousness evocative of a deeply sensual kiss.

Powerful associations with place are portrayed in locations as diverse as a back garden, a diner at Houston airport and the cavern chapel of a former battlefield in France. Chocolate, moccasins and algebra are all shown to be things capable of conjuring both the pleasure and pain of knowing, feeling, loving.

These are poems written in a variety of contemporary and traditional styles, linked by the poet's candid look at the pervasive joys of and in life. It's a body of work in which she makes request of love to "...sing me alive / With your new songs". A request that's duly granted.



Dear John of a Different Sort

Would it be enough for you to know?
that in another place
I walk in gentle
strides with you
past rough hewn fence rails
on a path fragrant with
dust and hay and sunshine
one that meanders quietly, peacefully, softly through
the scented wood
and take from your hand
the tiny white
blossom
you have picked for me

For more information, please visit www.donnasparrowhawk.info or www.bardicmedia.co.uk

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Donna Sparrowhawk is a retired teacher of English and Psychology. Originally from Tampa, Florida, she now lives in Weymouth and works as a Family Systemic Therapist. This, her first collection of poetry, is published by Bardic Media in West Lulworth.