

## POET TREE Draft 21 – September 25 2011

Slide 3 : picture of a large over-flowing schooner of beer on the counter of The Friend in Hand  
Cathy walks down the aisle to stage and points to screen...

### 1. (not that) Liquid Amber\*

Not the brown cooling ale  
That flushes out the dust  
From your old man's throat.

#### sit down

Not the viscous-pulling  
Treacle-flowing drool  
Of insect-folding gum.

Not the swishing pony-tail  
Of your sister's swaying mane  
Unfurling bareback down her spine.

Not our marriage tree?  
Accused of breaking up the concrete  
Cornered by my parents' sandstone flagging.

Not the greatest summer leaves that blocked the western sun  
Reduced despite our next door neighbour's plea  
To an eight inch stump.

Slide 4 : picture of liquidambar leaves

No please, not that liquidambar.

\* I got married under that tree, by the way, in one of those Khalil Gibran 'two-cedars- together-but-separate' kind of ceremonies of the 1970s, in my parents' backyard at Collaroy. Eight years later, getting the house ready for sale, my dad decided that that Liquidambar was eventually going to uproot the concrete of Bob Packham's driveway next door and nothing that man could say to reassure him, could dissuade my father from getting it sorted. Slide 5 : picture of stump of the liquidambar I get scared now when blokes tell me they're going to lop a few branches and get things cleaned up next week-end – you never know where it's going to end.

Cathy (almost forgot) speaking quietly and confidentially...

Oh - at this point, I would ask all those who got them past security, (Slide 6 – woman with giant leafblower ) to turn off your leafblowers and switch power tools to silent. Thank you!

Slide 7 Cartoon – photo cartoon of Mr Curly the gardener, addressing his newly planted annuals

“I suppose” as Leunig’s Mr Curly said to his Annuals “you are wondering why I have gathered you all here today?”

I want to take you on my journey through the uncertain landscape of Australian poetry. We’ll look back at the loathsome pink azaleas of my childhood, **Slide 8: Suffolk Avenue azaleas** the undisciplined schlerophyll scrub and tadpole ponds of school holidays and the totemic gum trees of my adolescence **Slide 9 close up or red gum**; we’ll drop in on the English lanes and city backyards **Slide 10: back yard at Number 6** of my own transplanted creation; and try to get some feeling for the Scribbly Gums, Paper Barks and muddied mangrove swamps **Slide 11: Primrose Park mangrove swamp** of my imagination.

And as we get to the present day, we will look askance at the continued practice of clearfelling and the plantation poetry of government-sanctioned, competition defined, rule-driven, grant-given cultivars.

**Slide 12: Republics of Letters poster**

After attending *The Republics of Letters* conference this year, I started to wonder about my inability to enjoy vigorous criticism of other’s work which I rather immaturely confuse with bullying, ambiguously juxtaposed with my absolute pleasure in satire and chortling of all kinds.

There is a primary source for this confusion: my childhood as a motherless observer (mum having died when I was 6 months old) which made me a very, very good little girl who to this day has to battle to stop pleasing authority figures. Criticism simply wasn’t an option. I never had the experience of arguing with my mother, hating my mother, disagreeing or negotiating, with my mother.

**(Slide 13 : photo of me at my christening and or aged about 4 with dad and the boys**

*Just before my father married my step-mother, I was sent to stay with her at her house for one week. Meanwhile, my step-brother went (on exchange) to stay with my father and 4 brothers and our (very possessive) housekeeper Marnie Rogers, over at ‘my’ house.*

Here’s my poem **2. The blasted pale blue dressing gown** - brushed nylon with the fluffy bunny motif

**(Slide 14: sew-on embroidered bunny motif (dime a dozen to this day)**

‘Now this is a lovely colour isn’t it?  
When we were little  
I always wore pale blue

And Gracie pink.’  
Smiling at the memory  
Of their boring choreography.

She fingers the embroidered rabbits  
‘and here’s this little bunny....  
The one you chose yourself!’

I stand at 5 o'clock  
Looking straight through  
This seamless subterfuge.

One pale blue winter dressing gown  
In exchange for my father,  
Not liking the equation.

My red Narrabeen School uniform  
Holds more attraction for me  
Than this understated hell.

Out of the corner of our eyes  
We catch Marnie running through the front yard  
Coming to collect me

Like a war-bride  
Rushing to reclaim her lover  
'I've missed you darling', she cries.

I see my step-mother's rolling eyes  
And rise unexpectedly to the occasion  
To Marnie's vindication.

#### PAUSE

The first poem I ever read would have been around the age of 8 when I accessed the special book fumes of my parents' glass-fronted, black stained, oak bookcase and found Longfellow's "Hiawatha". I read the poem in its entirety over a series of Sunday morning lie-ins, with peanut butter and sultana sandwiches, particularly liking the sound of Old Wenonah despite being annoyed by the girl-pawn MineHaHa, who, unknown to me, had already been hijacked to Fantasy land by Walt Disney.

At primary school the only exposure to poetry I remember (apart from Dorothea Mackellar's *My Country* and some intermittent doses of Banjo Paterson), was a poetry competition for a place in a children's anthology, for which my work, like the majority's, was soundly rejected.

(Slide 15: NOT SEXY picture of plump girl in step-ins, circa 1959)

#### Here's my poem 3. About Poetry

I remember the step-ins  
Of repression.  
The rules, the strictures,  
The rhyme-without-a-reason  
Of all my childhood verse.

Squishing my fat down  
Inside the elastic walls,

The hooks and clips  
Dangling tantalizingly  
Around the edges.

Hauling our sonnets northward  
Pinching and pruning,  
Adjusting and arranging.  
Suspending animation  
To achieve the perfect form

For our delusion  
And their poetic vanity.

At high school, I had at least been introduced to the idea of an almost infinite number of ways of critiquing a work. I developed an absolute love of poetry because I 'got it' (as opposed to maths, algebra or any kind of numeracy). I don't remember feeling smug or elitist about this – just tremendously relieved that something that resonated so deeply in me, that I understood and could respond to, was met with approval and wonder or perhaps mystification, that I had thought that way.

Here's my poem 4. 'Accents' inspired by one of those **STAND front right to receive school report**  
"Easily-influenced, could-do-better" school reports, I got as a Year 9 Boarder in 1968... **PAUSE**

Slide 16 close up of dark red sea anemone in rock pool at Long Reef or Collaroy

Tendrils sucking round  
An outstretched finger  
Pink and raw.  
*Or was I an anemone  
Clasping a soft touch?*

Highly suggestible  
To foreign accents  
Which I imitate with ease  
*And then find out  
They won't wash off.*

Stained with invisible ink  
Which comes and goes  
In echoes.  
*Or white plumbago sap  
Which turns to blood stains*

Exposed to change  
I take on their colour,  
Indelible twang and lilt.

**PAUSE** move to left of chair - still standing

In the HSC Class of '71 there was never any discussion or debate between **ourselves** – the teacher simply pontificated and quoted and we regurgitated. Any act of originality was highly rewarded but extremely risky and with few opportunities for testing the water. Here's my poem about poets...**5. The Greats**

**Slide 17: the cover of John Donne (collected poems)**

**look back at photo of John Donne then back to audience ...**

*'If ever any beauty I did see  
Which I desir'd and got 'twas but a dream of thee...'* (this is from Donne's *The Good Morrow*)  
You blithely declared to be 'crap'  
A standard and a totem I had  
Been clinging to, since Miss Dunlop  
First held up the mirror  
To our souls in Year 12 English.  
'I hate John Donne', you said  
Confusing me with your viciousness  
And the sheer irrelevance  
Of your assessment.

**Slide 18: photo of young Ted Hughes**

**pause and walk back behind chair – and look at Ted Hughes**

*'Nor did I know I was being auditioned  
For the male lead in your drama  
Miming through the first easy movements  
As if with eyes closed, feeling for the role.'* (Ted Hughes's poem 'Visit' from *Birthday Letters*)  
The block gentility  
The carpenter's hands and horse's head  
Of Ted Hughes  
Enduring his own recovery  
Of Sylvia Plath.

... **PAUSE and SIT DOWN**

**(slide 19 : close up of a orange-barked Angophora with sap)**

There are certain totemic trees, shrubs and landscapes in my life... The first one I remember is the one large angophora, its orange bark dripping with the deepest ruby sap, which lent up against our house looking out over a sea of Anglophilia and blue couch, (my father's diversion from grief), mown to perfection without one blade of buffalo grass or bindii (bindy-eye).

Here's my poem launched from that Angophora of my childhood, and written for the RED ROOM COMPANY'S poetry competition *The Pigeon Race*, in which racing pigeons were to be banded with the winning poems and raced back to their roost near Wollongong. **(slide 20 : close up of a banded racing pigeon)**

I wrote this poem **6. 'The One That Got Away'** after I had procrastinated and predictably, completely missed the deadline.

I thought I had her banded  
Pecking over my calendar  
The deadline looming.

Silky grey zinc  
Crinkled claws  
And darting eyes  
Over dirty chicken wire  
And spattered seats.  
The tiniest down-feather  
Caught on fencing  
Ruffling in the breeze.

I thought I had it sorted.  
A childhood flying dream,  
Launched from the second floor

I balconied out  
Kiteing over the lawn.  
The air bubbled up beneath me  
Brandishing its human trophy,  
Balancing me left and right.  
Without any help,  
Or need, or hope,  
To land.

### **PAUSE - still sitting**

At the end of seven great, naïve years of teaching, I was diagnosed with nervous exhaustion and resigned. The psychiatrist told me I needed a complete rest and invited me to book myself into a private psychiatric unit in Mosman. After assuring him that with my agoraphobia, I couldn't even decide to brush my teeth let alone put myself into a hospital, he left me to ring his secretary. Two days later I caught a taxi over to Allanbrook and began a 30 year journey to stop running from the death of my mother.

Slide 21 photo – close up of huge bunch of November Lillies

### **VERY SLOW - still sitting**

## **7. November Lillies on Arrival**

When I arrived that day at Allanbrook  
and found a burial mound  
of November lilies  
in the hall,  
I hesitated. Was stopped  
dead in my tracks to see  
that pain could be so easily  
derailed and matched by beauty.

*Like a callow youth  
Missing an important pass,  
I lost my footing  
On completely level ground.*

I caught my breath and set about  
admitting myself and fitting in. I (and no one else)  
gave up the fight. Like a child who suddenly learns to float  
enjoying the right to save herself from drowning. **PAUSE**

### **PAUSE AND STAND - stage RIGHT and VERY CHATTY ABOUT LONDON**

In 1998 my husband got a job in London and after a brief stint in Mayfair, we moved with our 3 kids to Highgate, half way between Hampstead Heath and the oaks, hornbeam and holly of Highgate Wood

**Slide 22: interior of Highgate Wood (a la Sherwood Forest)**

(think Robin Hood riding through the glen to a cricket oval) and my first exposure to that very tiny but painful minority of English rule-makers and humiliators.

As unwitting colonials, we had invaded the homeland of Samuel Taylor Coleridge, Peter Sellers, Yehudi Menuhin, STING and Annie Lennox (these last two living in Highgate in Coleridge's old street 'The Grove'). Meanwhile my daughters were going to school in Mill Hill, one of them in the same class as Amy Winehouse.

Stephen Fry in *The Ode Less Travelled* (**Slide 23 cover of Stephen Fry's The Ode Less**) taught me how to write a Rubai – the form seemed to me quintessentially, excruciatingly and appropriately British.

Here's my attempt at the form... **STAND STILL – BUT OUT TO AUDIENCE**

### **8. Whubarb – a rubai for the English**

When first we came to Highgate Wood  
We felt an echo of our neighbourhood  
Past tewwaces aligned against the clock (**Slide 24 sketch of houses in Jackson's Lane**)  
At last outside number 35 we stood.

We'd learnt (first bwudding) from our Mayfair days  
Of the most perverse and punishing of English ways.  
*There are Wules, they said, and you should KNOW them,* **LOOK ICY**  
*If you do not* (they paused and fixed an icy gaze)

*You may need to be PUNISHED post haste  
And in a way that will not see US time waste!*  
**AUSTRALIAN ACCENT:** Oh how Australians love such prim correction  
That see us pushed face down and ego into paste.

But being ensconced in Jackson's Lane  
Where Yehudi Menuhin and others rose to fame.  
Their **But where do you LIVE**, was stopped dead in its tracks  
**LOOK TO SIDE – COMMISERATE WITH OTHER ENGLISH...**  
'Oh' they groaned 'these Orss-TWAYL-yerns are SUCH a PEYNE!'

## MOVE to OTHER SIDE OF STAGE - to deliver the pantoum lecture/poem

Back home from London in 2001, in a kind of aversion therapy, I took to concocting my OWN literary terror, by bringing some of those **BRITISH** WULES back with me to the otherwise benign atmosphere of Birchgrove Oval....in a pantoum this time.

### Slide 25 really close up of plumbago and gumnuts outside our fence

Here's my poem 9. **'Mean Streets of Birchgrove'**

Down the speckled path  
I veer left, away from open ground  
And stick close to the parameters offered.

***There are rules.***

I veer left, away from open ground  
And skulk along the fence line  
Confused by the open-door policy of number 12.

***You should know the rules.***

I skulk along the fence line  
The boundaries designed to demarcate  
disputes before they happen.

***And if you don't know the rules...***

The boundaries designed to demarcate  
Our rites of passage limited  
We're all corralled and stabled now.

***You only have yourself to blame.***

Our rites of passage limited  
I brave a sea of gumnuts  
A minefield paved for sliding ankles

***And you may need to be punished.***

I brave a sea of gumnuts  
Even the blue plumbago scratches  
Resentful to get some attention.

***Because rules are there for a reason.***

Even the blue plumbago scratches  
As my key turns in the lock  
The blessed bolt clunks thick behind me.

***And it's all for your own good.***

change tone MOVE TOWARDS CHAIR...



I run in, away from open ground.

### SIT DOWN

In a review of the anthology 'Poisoned Pens' (Slide 26: cover of the book 'Poisoned Pens') edited by Gary Dexter in the SMH of Jan 15, Bruce Elder said that as a young journalist and having witnessed buckets of vitriol being hurled between some of the city's leading arts critics, he had

*'wondered aloud as to which branch of the arts had cornered the market in personal venom. "Poets" came the instant reply from the arts editor of the time. "Poets say truly horrible things about each other."*

I started to wonder about this and thought that it was largely untrue or that the vitriol was unintended or subconscious. I often felt like a naïve schoolgirl discussing contraception, when snide remarks or straight out lashing put-downs of work, went on, on and off the field.

I took ages to get the hang of giving and getting feedback in poetry workshops. I still often find that I can't bear people picking over my poetry and making helpful suggestions. I take everything personally and I remain mystified by the grace and humility of people who can take criticism in these forums and whose work improves and benefits tremendously from the feedback. Here's my poem of gratitude to the poet Judith Beveridge (Slide 27: photo of Judith Beveridge) who helped me, despite my initial resistance, week after week through her series of poetry workshops. One night she suggested that when writing, I shouldn't let a good narrative poem get hamstrung by the facts...

### 10. Beveridge at the Poetry Workshop (from a Tuesday night regular) (apologies to Steve Martin and his 'Picasso at the Lapin Agile')

The kindest bartender in the world  
serves apéritifs to talent,  
h'ors d'ouvres to tempt the weakest appetite.

Each week we offer ourselves  
in stanza form -  
travelling salesmen, hoping she will buy.

She sees our ideas dangling  
from the bar stools  
and knows our legs can't reach the floor.

When accidents occur,  
she distracts us with suggestions  
and wipes away embarrassment.

Judge at our weekly show,  
she holds each pressing up to light -  
tests the bouquet and tastes the wine.

After a pause and due consideration  
she spits each out and moves on to the next -  
preserving a respectful distance.

Mezze plates and tapas follow.

Her grin spills over as she pours another glass, ... **CHEEKY GRIN - PAUSE**  
"You can lie in poetry you know."

... **PAUSE**

**(Slide 28 picture of Les Murray at launch of *Taller When Prone*, 2010)**

**STAND UP – left stage and look at the photo of Les Murray – look back at audience**

In his poem, **11. 'Eucalypts in Exile'** Les Murray, the great Australian poet, takes our iconic gum tree and looks at the effect of bullying and criticism and uses the Eucalypts to makes us cringe at the depressingly familiar behaviour of an Australian mob

**(Slide 29 picture of quote from 'Eucalypts in Exile' quote by Les Murray)**

**slowly feel LOVE Vs MERCILESS**

*"Loveable singly or unmarshalled  
they are merciless in a gang"*

Ted Hughes in his poem **12. 'God Help The Wolf After Whom the Dogs Do Not Bark'** reflects on the reaction of the English academic establishment to the arrival of the young Sylvia Plath, **Slide 30 - photo of Sylvia Plath)** the visiting American Fulbright scholar and poet.

**Still STANDING lift your head--notice the audience and be irritated**

**Slide 31 - picture of quote from 'God Help the Wolf..' quote by Ted Hughes**

*"The Colleges lifted their heads. It did seem  
You disturbed something just perfected  
That they were holding carefully all of a piece,  
Till the glue dried..... **PAUSE***

***Nobody wanted your dance,  
Nobody wanted your strange glitter – your floundering  
Drowning life and your effort to save yourself,  
Treading water, dancing the dark turmoil,  
Looking for something to give – "***

**PAUSE and HAPPY NEW TONE - MOVE CENTRE STAGE**

In 2008 I attended a semester in the University of Sydney's Creative Writing course called **Poets at Work**, allowing us privileged access to the forests and timber yards of the poets Peter Boyle, Stephen Edgar, Martin Harrison and Judy Johnson.

At the end of Judy Johnson's course **Slide 32 of photo of Judy Johnson** one of the students was **still holding out for that one** definitive, algebraic, termite-free, **absolute answer** to the question of poetry.

### STAND STILL CENTRE STAGE and recite

Here's my poem **13. 'Method in her Madness'** – for Judy Johnson (with apologies to A.A. Milne's 'Forgiven' and Alexander Beetle)

She had a little question  
 And she asked it fair and square,  
*"Oh please tell us Judy Johnson  
 If it's possible to bear,  
 Have you got a little method  
 That you use to write a poem?  
 A little tiny method  
 We could use about the home?"*

*'Aaah' method'* our fair poet said,  
*'Oh what a lovely word!*  
*No, I haven't got a method  
 Though they say I'm quite well-read.*

*Yes I'd LOVE to have a method,  
 That could go straight to my head.  
 I've done the rounds of Roget  
 (And can highly recommend it!)*

*I've cast and soldered images  
 While wide awake in bed.  
 I KNEW something was missing  
 And you've nailed it on the head.*

*I haven't got a method!  
 Should my heart be filled with dread?  
 No! There's method in my madness  
 And you can't teach that', she said.*

### Slide 33 – picture of Russell Crowe playing John Nash in 'A Beautiful Mind' writing equations on the windows at his college

Christian Lander author of (Stuff White People Like) takes Nobel Prize winner John Nash's Equilibrium theory and equation on repercussions (as outlined in the movie 'A Beautiful Mind') and extrapolates the implications into Chaos theory, wondering if, just as butterfly wings may lead to a typhoon, that a critical literary comment could similarly lead to a world war.

## Stay STANDING CENTRE STAGE but more philosophical

This poem is dedicated to all those suffering at the hands of an outer, or indeed, an INNER critic.  
(**YOU** know who you are!)

Slide 34 : close up of chess set with pieces knocked over

### 14. Gregorian Chant

#### point to sky

God the big chess-player in the sky  
Pawn-broker, moves my  
Black Knight to white Rook

While his screaming Queen  
Takes my Bishop where  
He doesn't want to go.

How come when I do something wrong,  
It's all *my* fault?  
When *you* stuff up, it's just *God's* will.

The last guy, you say,  
To try and change human nature,  
Had a lousy Easter.

Down the polished lino hallways  
They also blame  
Who only stand and wait.

God gives you  
Two warnings, says Dr. Phil.  
The first time you get a tap on the shoulder.

You don't listen. The second time  
You get another tap on the shoulder.  
Third time, he drops a grand piano on you.

See what happens,  
Chants my brother Greg, **smiling patronizingly**  
When you stick your neck out? **MOVE towards chair**

Towards the end of my 30 year journey to re-discover my mother, **SIT DOWN ...**  
my running subsided and I stopped long enough (*usually* around 4 am) to write a series of **Fear** poems.  
Here is the eleventh **Fear** poem...**15. Fear: Wooden**

(Slide 35 picture of fedwood timber yard)

I flop around in bed  
Then wake

I am an apple tart sliced in half  
Or steak and kidney pie  
A torso surgically cut  
For investigatory purposes  
*I may be at my own post-mortem.*

Now wide awake, I watch my kidneys  
Sitting there, still warm  
An accurate cross-section  
Not at all up-setting.  
*I could be at the Easter Show.*

Then my body pie's enfolded  
With an encasing crust so hard  
A ping pong ball would ricochet  
And careless coins would bounce and roll.  
*I am a piece of tallow-wood*

I seem to be quite petrified  
A solid plank of 4 be 2  
I bob and float downstream  
Providing my own ballast.  
*I cannot feel a thing.*

**PAUSE**

(Slide 36: poster advertising The Poets Union (black and white))

**STAY SITTING DOWN ...**

My next plunge into the big wide world of poetry came two years later, as the office manager and sole employee at the Poets' Union. The Union was based in Kings Cross - the ancestral heartland of Kenneth Slessor and from my Sydney-centric view, of Australian poetry.

Slide 37 : PICTURE OF STREET PLAQUE – You find this ugly, I find it lovely. Kings Cross at night

At the Poets Union, while volunteers and committee members beavered away inside the office on Darlinghurst Road, outside, earnest film crews shot the next episode of *Underbelly* with almost no need to pay extras and Vittorio provided a hearty minestrone with white bread at the Piccolo and yet *another* film set - for the television series, *Rake*.

Slide 38: photo of Kings Cross Knitted – 'in broad daylight'

For me, Kings Cross was *incredibly exciting*, even in broad daylight. My 25 year old daughter assured me that it was perfectly safe for clubbing on Saturday nights too, and that she had missed that fatal shooting at the BaDaBing (4 doors down from us) by at least half an hour.

In 2009, at the end of my first year at the Poets Union, in an interview on the website Arts Hub, journalist Amelia Swan said that the director of the Australian Poetry Centre in Melbourne had the unenviable task of turning poetry into **(newsreader voice)** 'a *SUSS-STAINABLE-INDUSTRY!*'.

I could hear **STAND UP LISTENING right stage** the howls of derision going up from poets all over Australia. **grab hat and sunglasses ...**

Next thing I knew I was at the Sugar Mill's comedy night trying to do Snoop Dog impressions with this 'rap' on sustainability. (16. Suss Stainable Industry Stutter )

**(Slide 39 photo of a typical demonstration BURST into full RAP – MOVING FREELY**

Suss industry  
Stain industry  
T'aen art industry.

*Unsuss suss suss*  
*Suss t'aenable industry.*

5 am wake-up industry  
Zola's Germinal industry  
Ivan Denisovich industry.

*Unsuss suss suss*  
*Suss t'aenable industry.*

Wild-poet farming  
Sonnet breeding lots  
And mating pens.

*Unsuss suss suss*  
*Suss t'aenable industry.*

Populate the barricades poets  
Run for your lives before a funding body gets you  
And NEVER assume the position.

*Unsuss suss suss*  
*Suss t'aenable industry.* **end with CROTCH GRAB**

**TAKE OFF hat and sunglasses ...**

**Soft serious voice - STANDING CENTRE STAGE**

It was the end of an era – the Poets Union underwent surgery and after a successful irony by-pass found itself in the recovery room of Australian letters with the new title, Australian Poetry Limited.

In December 2010 **Slide 40 : photo of farewell party at the Friend in Hand** about 100 member poets attended the farewell to the Poets Union at the glorious Friend in Hand Hotel, replete with cockatoo drinking cocktails in the downstairs bar. Here's my testimonial to all those who ever loved the sweet irony that was the Poets Union, a Lullaby called **17. Straight to Bed.**

Shirley Temple – sounding sorry, like she’s at the funeral / farewell - EVERY IMAGE ON EVERY LINE slow

Miss Po-et had a Une-yern  
Who was sick sick sick  
She called Arts Noo South Way-erlz  
To come quick quick quick!

Vir-gin-i-a- caa-ame  
And she shook her head,  
She said, *Miss Poet*  
*You lie straight in bed!*

*You will need some new funding*  
*And to lose your fear*  
*You just mer-ur-urge with Melbourne*  
*And you’ll... get.... It..... dear!*

*No more filling out*  
*Those year-ly forms, she said*  
*Our tri - ENN - iel funding*  
*Puts it all to bed.*

*For-get about your members -*  
*They’re sub-scribe-ers now.*  
*You’re the peak body*  
*Milk the Oz Co Cow!*

So all **we Po-ets** Shirley Temple meaning whole audience of Pro Poets Union poets  
From the Union wise,  
We had a great big  
Wallow in our own demise!

Miss Poet GOT the funding -  
And the last I saw,  
She was getting off her fae-ace  
In the.....up.....stairs.....bar!

**Complete change of topic – SIT DOWN**

Slide 41 : close up of lantana patch or actual flowers and leaves VERY CLOSE UP – NEED PHOTO

**PAUSE – EYE CONTACT WITH AUDIENCE ...**

Lantana is a noxious, politically incorrect weed in SUBURBAN and national parks all over Australia. It has very pretty pink and white flowers and a powerful cloying perfume. The thing is, when we clear Lantana, we usually destroy priceless habitats for fairy wrens and bell-birds.

This is my poem about a little girl who is totally unaware of the weed clearance protocols and bush-regeneration guidelines against Lantana. She crouches in the goal-less, time-less task of watching a beetle Slide 42 : scan of beetle from museum brochure on a fallen log – without any agenda whatsoever.

## 18. The Watcher Crouches

### STILL SITTING - LOOK DOWN

*Below* Orange  
 Indigo  
 Turquoise and  
 Black  
 Inscribes its way  
 Backwards and forwards  
 Covering the trunk.

### GLANCE BACK AT PICTURE OF LANTANA over your shoulder

Slide 43 - the lantana and red brick flats at Primrose Park

*Behind* Pink and red knickers  
 Of lantana frill and flonce  
 Over the hill  
 Strawberries and clotted cream  
 Smothering the ferns,  
 Prickle-banking gossip  
 To the red-brick border flats.

### look over to the middle distance at Middle Harbour

Slide 44 – the mud flats at Primrose park -

*Beyond* The grey silt mud flats  
 Of low tide  
 The brave mangrove shoots  
                                   *Which grow in octagons*  
 The timeless stream  
 Trickling to the bay  
 Where fat unopened oysters  
 Clamp the rocks

### (STILL SITTING - LOOK DOWN) back to the beetle

Slide 45 : photo of beetle on log at Primrose Park

*Below* It scuttles over the log  
 (A roadway cracked and splintered)  
 Devouring the distance.  
                                   *A figure of eight*  
 Stretching into an infinity  
 Of method's secret pathways.

And by droning permutations  
 Backwards and forwards  
 Engraves the invisible lines  
 Of orange, indigo, turquoise and black.

**PAUSE and STAND (comfortably) YOU ARE NEARLY THERE.....**



**Slide 46: plain poet from the inside of the Poet Tree :**

So now here I stand  
in this little clearing  
outside the wood of Australian letters.

From now on  
pruning of any kind  
will be kept to a minimum.

I have never had a leaf blower  
and I am not going to start now.

I'm going to keep writing poetry  
a bit too close to home  
and without Council approval.

I've found out  
how to break into  
my own orchard

and I've just forged  
a licence  
to pick my own fruit.

**Thank you!****Slide 47: The Poet Tree has so many people to thank****Slide 48 : Thank you to the following people****Slide 49: Cathy Bray wants to thank you for coming to POET TREE****Slide 50: POET TREE poster**