

SCRIPT DRAFTS – NO FIXED ADDRESS by Cathy Bray

VERSION 25 – Sept 22 FINAL WITH HIGHLIGHTED SLIDES

@ The Sydney Fringe Festival 2013

Hive Bar, Erskineville

Slide 1 Photo of inappropriate St. Trinians girl slugging red wine.

Slide 2 show title : No Fixed Address by Cathy Bray

((Stage Cathy: Cathy comes wandering in...))

Voice over : Here's Cathy Bray, the Tangent Queen, the Duchess of Over-disclosure, wandering vaguely, quite of her own accord !

Yet again, no one asked her to do it, and this time, she's of NO FIXED ADDRESS

Slide 3 - SCENE - SHOOT ME NOW

I always swore that if I ever had the time or the desire to write a Christmas Circular, that my children could take me out and have me committed. Sadly, **((Stage Cathy: Cathy smile voice and hold up script as if it's a circular))** that time has now come.

It all started in January when we went to visit my daughter who was living in Santiago in Chile. During this junket we had an excuse to go down the south of the country to Puerto Natales where I had what can only be described as an 'Epiphany' in Patagonia. Basically what happened was that my husband finally got through to me that if I wanted to continue on this crazy indulgent path of comedy and performance poetry, laughing at my own jokes, that the best way to fund it for the rest of our lives, was to sell the house. For the first time in 10 years I agreed with him.

I have to tell *someone* about it – I'm ashamed to say a Christmas Circular seemed the easiest way to inflict it on the greatest number.

Suffice it to say, I am now houseless - like Julian Assange, **(Slide 4 - Photo of Julian Assange in the Jalna Yoghurt ad)** but not in the Equadorian Embassy.

Slide 5 - SCENE BIT OF A TIDY UP

((Stage Cathy: Cathy have Stephen Fry book visible))

So I'm going to tell you how I got here tonight and the pieces and people one stumbles upon (especially when one starts using the 3rd person in a slightly Stephen Fry accent) once one decides to bite the bullet and confront one's borderline hoarding disorder.

Anyway, you get the picture, I started packing up and I found stuff - especially stuff about other people and the way they had changed my life.

Slide 6 SCENE – THE MESS WHISPERER

By February, I was flat out working with ((Stage: Cathy use American film accent) the **MESS Whisperer**, a very sane woman who ran a company euphemistically called 'Let the Sun Shine In'. She redefined my whole life in 5 categories: rubbish, recycling, charity, someone-else's decision and a keeper.

By the time the removalists arrived, ((Stage: Cathy look up quickly at 2 'removalists' in the audience as though you've just been caught masturbating) I was only 4 boxes short of having my life converted to the Dewey System. Those 4 boxes have gone into the Bermuda Triangle which is our storage container in Chullora. I will never see those babies again and I have no idea what's in them.

Slide 7 - SCENE – THE STYLISTS

Then the **MESS WHISPERER** said if I wanted help with getting the house ready for sale, then her friend Denise, was a **STYLIST**.

((Stage: Cathy start being Denise) Now Denise was used to working with normal sized mansions in Woollahra and Watson's Bay so she was **quite excited to test her skills** on a small Balmain terrace house. I assured her early on that I had no problems with losing the ((Stage: Cathy sitting point to each wall and ceiling inside The Hive allowing the audience to imagine the colours) saffron yellow, placenta pink and dark purple colour scheme of the ground floor.

((Stage: Cathy be yourself again and slightly turn to the screen showing the pictures) But really I said, as we went upstairs, Slides 8-9 Photos purple, henna and green colour scheme what's not to like about these green and purple walls, henna architraves and indigo ceiling?

Denise was going very very quiet at this stage. I heard later that she went outside, got into her Mercedes and wept. ((Stage: Cathy look over your back towards the window as if you are looking at Denise in the street below) HOW ON EARTH was she going to get this crazy Bohemian to wind back her kaleidoscope of a house into an executive residence. She had to call in the big guns. She emailed me that night and asked if her friend Sharon, a lecturer in colour, could come with her the next day.

Sharon very quickly sussed that I was a small child seeking reassurance that there would be some glimmer of my personality left in the house after their colourist purge. *Of course* they would use my books and my paintings **but ALL the colours** (and here she made direct ((Stage: Cathy be TOTALLY BITCHY –make steeling eye contact with the centre of the room - some poor member of the audience) and almost theatrical, eye contact), **would have to go!**

Four weeks later, the house had been autoclaved and whitewashed **Slides 10** photo of Chalk USA in Chalk USA (*matt* finish) and the *contrasting* Chalk USA (*full* gloss) **Slide 11** Photo 'contrasting' chalks.

The only surge of colour in the entire 3 storey house was the kitchen room divider and the chimney place opposite in the Dining Room, both in a gender neutral / metro-sexual taupe **Slide 12** pigeon rock called 'Pigeon Rock'

Slide 13 Poem title: *The Lasiandra – indigo purple, velvet ochre and green*

((Stage: Cathy stand - animatedly recounting this story – read the title)

The Lasiandra

Slides 14 Photo: purple Lasiandra

Bridget and I met on the wharf
 And struck up a relationship
 On the basis of indigo purple, velvet ochre and green.
 I lamented the diluting of purple
 And the degradation of the old lasiandra
 In its latest faithless manifestation into lilac and tibouchinaed purple.

I hate lilac.
 And Bridget agreed
 And she had a bright green raincoat
 The best I'd ever seen
 From Vinnies, to back it up.

I had an enormous Lasiandra
 In the garden blooming across the laundry roof
 Which one day just curled up its toes
 And died.

Forget that I had just painted
Two rooms in indigo purple, velvet ochre and green

Slide 15 Photo: of green and ochre leaves of the Lasiandra

To reflect and honour her beauty.

Bridget has a purple room in Adelaide
With potato prints across one wall.

And no regrets.

That poem was about the sudden disappearance of 'my' Lasiandra and the 2-room multicoloured legacy it had bequeathed me. **Slide 16 Photo: dark purple Lasiandra**
Lasiandras must have got just the right amount of rain at the right time last summer, and they were rampant this year. Their demanding presence reminded me of my cousin emerging one morning after a 6 month bout of depression and asking, 'How long have there been Lasiandras in Sydney?' I feel 2013 might have been *the first* 'Year of the Lasiandra' for a lot of people.

((Stage: Cathy hurry up NO GAPS))

Slide 17 - SCENE 4 – BOOK BY ITS COVER

Slide 18 - Photo of bookcases

Of course, the *real* victims of the move, were soft cover books and my most cherished novels and books and books of poetry. **((Stage: Cathy stand up - NO GAPS – don't say title, straight into poem))**

Slide 19 - Poem title: Judgement Day

Suddenly my favourites
were being picked from me
torn off like unready scabs,
scratched and bleeding
without a bandaid in the house
and badly needing binding.

And by a strange,
 completely revolting metaphor
 being swallowed alive,
 gone forever into the Minotaur's cave
 which is Palmers Storage facility at Chullora.

Shit! Like literary refugees,
 my books are in 'a facility'.

The stylists did not choose them

They judged ALL my books by their covers
 colour and hardness, a premium

((Stage: Cathy start fossicking and pulling out books from piles))

Slide 20 – photo of book cover ‘Owls Do Cry’

((Stage: Cathy lovingly find *Owls Do Cry*) So 'Owls Do Cry' was gone - a paperback and too pale in its unobtrusive psych-ward linoleum green.

Slide 21 - photo of book cover ‘Words’

((Stage: Cathy lovingly find *Words* and read the cover out

And Sartres, ‘Words’ “ I loathe my childhood and all that remains of it,” completely ignored.

Slide 22 - photo of book cover ‘Gentlemen Prefer Blondes’

((Stage: Cathy point to screen) *Gentlemen Prefer Blondes* written in 1925 by my hero, Anita Loos described by George Santayana as ‘Without hesitation, the best book on philosophy written by an American’ - not on my stylists watch! *Reject!*

Slide 23 - SCENE – WHEN I MOVE

Remember that Anthony Hordern tree **Slide 24 - phot of logo Anthony Hordern Tree** with the slogan “While I live I grow” well “**While I rest, I stockpile**” and “**When I move, I nest**”

We went to live in London for 3 years and nobody was here in Sydney to supervise me while I packed (well my Nordic cousin tried to make caustic remarks like ‘**You’re NOT taking that with you?!**’ But to little avail.) I took 13 large suitcases, and some bare essentials: two bookcases worth of books and 2 large framed Aboriginal paintings with me.

Slide 25 - SCENE – SENT PACKING

However for short stays, I am a brilliant packer of suitcases and I'll tell you why. My parents used to go on fabulous overseas holidays and pop me into boarding school for the year. So ever since the first time I was sent away from home in 4th Class aged 9, from a nightly meal around a largely *male* table, with my 5 older brothers, to an *all-girls boarding* school, I've been an ace at packing.

((Stage: Cathy amazed as if you forgot you still had them - pull out your old sewing basket with the Cash's nametags))

I had my Cash's Name Tags: CATHERINE BRAY **Slide 26 Photo sewing basket with CATHERINE BRAY name tags** stitched onto every single pair of blue bloomers, grey socks, grey gloves, felt hat, straw hat, navy handbag, white singlets, and 9 different uniforms, including a Going To Church Dress (White with Navy Blue collar), Going to Dinner Dress –Summer (Orphanage Pink), and Going to Dinner Dress – Winter (Black Velvet with cape). It was all very '*Picnic at Hanging Rock*' **((Stage: Cathy stay happily confused NOT sarcastic))** except at North Sydney and it was NO picnic.

Over the whole year, nobody ever thought to bring my closest brother aged 13 to visit me – we're talking from Gordon where he was staying with his god-mother to my school at North Sydney.

Slide 27 Poem : *HMS Oronsay – Steaming Away from Childhood*

Going down to see off my excited parents catching the ship was made even more painful by the festive atmosphere and all the hoop-la associated with it at Circular Quay.

Slide 28 - photo of streamers from cruise ship

HMS Oronsay – Steaming Away from Childhood **((Stage: Cathy at Circular Quay))**

Great long stocking-ropes stretched from stern
To shore which Ross had so sweetly hurled
In one -last attempt to keep you
From severing all connection,
But you were already battening the hatches.

You clutched the coloured streamers
To your stomach
And as the ship heaved way
I saw they were our entrails
Stretched over the varnished rails.

((Stage: Cathy turn away and stand up you have to go))

They said I'd have to go, to be on time.
Someone dropped me off at school.
*'Let's take you up to School House dormitory,
And see the ship go steaming through the Heads.'*

I'd asked you why I couldn't stay with Auntie B,
My all-time favourite, too?
And you'd replied quite earnestly that
'Boys are easier to look after.'

My jaw dropped slightly
With the audacity of such a lie and
That you'd expected me to believe it.
Do her good to be with girls,' the pontiffs all agreed.

If you noticed any change in my condition
That Spring, you pretended not to.
But my iron levels were up
And my anaemia was cured. (Cathy sarcastic tone but bright)

By the time my oldies sprang boarding school on me again, I was a 14 turning 15 year old going into Year 9 . I went quietly but this time armed with attitude and scored my first Saturday morning detention, and my first un-parented holidays to Broken Hill and South West Rocks.

At a school reunion in 1998, pretentiously held for ex-pats in London, a woman announced to the table, that she was sick to death of her Year 9 son ringing in tears from Harrow begging her to bring him home. I put my Sagittarian foot in my mouth and said, "Oh Drusilla, I didn't know *you* went to boarding school!" "Oh no" she replied "I didn't". The next week a 15 year old boy hanged himself at Eton.

I have to beware people who tell me that they loved every minute of boarding school in the 1960s and 70s and that it never did *them* (or their kids) any harm.

Slide 29 SCENE: BARNYARD TESTIMONIAL

((Stage: Cathy find some country object to reference chooks))

This is a TESTIMONIAL for a friend of mine who I first met at age 12 and then more intensively when we were 14 and together in that Year 9 I spent at boarding school. When we were about 28 she saved my sanity by suggesting that if I got help straight away with my vertigo and dizzy spells, I'd be fine, but if I let it go for another 6 months I'd probably go nuts like she had. Without her help I'd still be unconscious and on the run. Her courageous life makes mine look like a cake walk.

WARNING : This poem is *not* a Bush Ballad

Slide 30 Poem title: *preamble to The Chook Pens*

The Chook Pens

*In the chook-pen at Urungie we found you house-sitting -
Chicken-wired in peace against the foxes of this world.
The children wandering with you through the hens and turkeys
All penned in, would have stayed all day to help you
Find the cream brown eggs plonked pricelessly on straw.*

Slide 31 Poem title: **THE CHOOK PENS - Boarding School**

Boarding School

At boarding school
When you arrived
All dark hair to her blonde,
All kind consideration to her
Bull-dog fatal dominance,
I trusted you immediately.

You held me at a country distance
For the first two years
Until I joined you in the third.
The lines and bells
The nit-picking music practice rules
And uniforms *now down to 3 from 9*
during my previous sentence.

You'd been sent for training
in the highly mirrored dining room
Where manners humiliated
the unwary and untutored
Until they came up to scratch
and smirk at new arrivals.

For you it was a liberation
and a prize *Which you won years later -
Miss Royal Easter Show Girl as a joke
That turned serious when they saw
Your husky-dog blue eyes.*

To be allowed to play a match
in the city *you got your place
in the Tildsley Shield*

And laughed
too loudly *to reassure yourself,*
at other people's jokes.

At visiting time
 Your mother's steadied country speech gets louder
 And stronger as she shrinks.

A wise young doctor magically appears
A Cheshire cat all-knowing and confusing
 And tells her to get you away from there
*She moves in tortoise-like and takes you
 out beyond the walls
 inside her shell.*

Slide 34 Poem THE CHOOK PENS - Part 4 - Lost At Sea -
(Stage: Cathy PAUSE WAIT GIVE THEM TIME TO CATCH UP)
Lost At Sea

A kindly shrink, a spring cleaner for your psyche
 then begins a life's work
 to restore your old faith
 in humanity *but not alas in us.*

The Owl and the Pussycat went to sea

You **((Stage: Cathy look at Sue stage left))** get out and launch your Odyssey,
((Stage: Cathy start looking down the back of the lounge next to you lift up a cushion))
 looking under all the cushions
 and down the backs of lounges for the reason
 and the where-with-all
 of your betrayal.

For ten years you **((Stage: Cathy look at Sue stage left))** are completely lost
 at sea with schools and children.
 Somewhere between Walgett and Goulburn
A stow-away
 utterly marooned in other people's lives.

You **((Stage: Cathy look left at Sue))** cast an Aboriginal boy
 as the policeman in 'The Removalists'
*What about us you bastards? An elder yells
 enraptured from the audience.*
 Tut-tutting and confusion swamp the town.

Unconscious on a daily basis
 you fight back the challenge from within.
 Only your pinning pupils give away
 the groundswell slapping you inside
 against your boundary fence
 as the foundations of your sea wall
 start to crumble against the pounding surf.

((Stage: Cathy PAUSE – LET AUDIENCE RECOVERCathy sit down and chat to the audience)

Segue / Aside:

Years after I had written these 4 poems, I was told about an academic bemoaning their role as judge of a poetry prize – they claimed they just could not take one more, ‘barnyard testimonial’ - this immediately galvanised my determination to call those poems “*The Chook Pens*”

Slide 35 SCENE 8 – FROWN MARKS

As I wander around the house **Slide 36 Picture actual mantel piece (before stylists)**

I see that old self portrait of a scowling **Slide 37 Sketch scowling self portrait**

((Stage: Cathy do huge Italian baritone accent) Fiore de Henriquez, the Italian sculptress, up on our mantelpiece.

((Stage: Cathy looking fondly at the Fiore portrait in your hand)

God I love scowling women. When I was a little girl and developed a frown mark just like Fiore’s they told me “Don’t look like that or the wind will change!” or they’d start quoting AA Milne’s ‘Oh What’s the Matter with Mary Jane? What not rice pudding for dinner AGAIN!’

Yes scowling women like Fiore is what we had to rely on before FCUK was invented.

((Stage: Cathy be hugely excited – build them a picture of the magazine and then Fiore’s studio)

Anyway we were living in London and I saw this ad in Country Life Magazine **Slide 38 Country Life magazine cover** which I used to buy for the sheer joy of seeing the idiot debutante of the month, 18 year old Lady Davinia Possington Mountbridge (etc. etc.) and that’s when I saw this little ad which said “*If you want to visit the last Bohemian Studio in London, get yourself down to the 3-week Open Studio of Fiore de Henriquez* **Slide 39 – Fiore as young woman with bronze sculpture** in ker-DARRR-gen Square.

So I pulled the girls out of school and dragged them down there in what turned out to be the last day of the Open Studio. Fiore completely blindsided me with her generosity, by giving us a 2 hour personal audience.

Slide 40 Photos of Fiore’s studio from later article. That crazy studio was the most divine residence I had ever entered. *I was SMITTEN.* **((Stage: Cathy remember how wonderful it was)** In one corner there was a tiny mezzanine level where she slept which was built in walnut in the shape of a grand piano that she got to by means of a little spiral staircase. The studio had huge 18 ft ceilings with French doors looking out over the Square. Fiore allowed me to ask detailed questions on every piece of art and sculpture in the place. **((Stage: Cathy stand up and go over to the pool of marble on a side table - don’t mention title just go straight into poem).**

Slide 41 Poem: *Reconciliation*

A pool of embryonic marble

Bathroom white

A little too shiny.

She sees my hesitation **((Stage: Cathy DEEP Italian now))**

'That' declares Fiore

'Is the reconciliation of two souls

In HEAV-en.'

She had created that in a 3 month residency in Australia with some friends who took her out there to the Hunter Valley!

Suddenly she turns to me, demanding, like a passport "What is your favourite city in Europe?"

"Umm Venice springs to mind"

"Yes! I ran away at 15 to art school to Venice!"

For the first hour we were there, my daughter thought Fiore, with her wonderful baritone voice and baggy painting overalls, was a man. In 2004 Fiore's biography titled 'Art and Androgyny'

Slide 42 - Photo of COVER Fiore's biography revealed she was born a hermaphrodite.

She wanted to sign a postcard for Edie (the official artist in our family) – 'What is her name?'

"Edie" Totally blank slightly irritated look. "Edie, short for Edith, like Edith Piaf."

"Ah YES. I KNEW her."

As we left, Fiore told me (as if it could give me a thrill and let's face it she was picking me like a nose by this time) to sign her Visitors Book. I was the *last* person to sign her Visitors Book at the end of the 3 week open studio and some dame at the opening cocktail party, signing herself across half a page *Elizabeth*, had been the first. **Slide 43 Fiore and Queen Mum in the studio**

(Tangent alert) Speaking of the Queen Mother, **Slide 44 Chaser logo** do you remember the best EVER cover of the Chaser back in 2002 **Slide 45 Queen Mum in lilac**

'Shock horror Queen Mother dies at 101' and the little aside up the top (Freddy Mercury's mum denies death rumours)

Fiore had bought an Etruscan hamlet called Peralta in Tuscany which she renovated for 40 years. It was up the hill above Cammaiore and overlooking Via Reggio. It was close to the Massimo del Chiaro foundry where she took her sculptures to be cast into bronze and the township of Pietra Santa with its **Michelangelo worked here** signs

– I actually said to an Englishman (who my husband claims had almost certainly made Dickens his life work), “It certainly shits all over those *‘Charles Dickens slept here’* plaques in London, doesn’t it?”

Now I need to get onto my next wonderful scowling woman....

Slide 46 - SCENE – AGNES KORY: SING-GING

Agnes Kory. Agnes was another eccentric I had the honour to meet. She was a Kodaly method musicianship teacher who ((Stage: Cathy high but stroppy Hungarian accent) taught **sing-ging**. Despite the fact that she was also a brilliant cellist who had played at Carnegie Hall as a 22 year old soloist, she claimed *nothing* was more important than the soul’s expression *through voice*.

Slide 47 : Bela Bartok Centre for musicianship symbol - hand ‘only from the clear spring’.

Slide 48 Poem title : Agnes Kory: sing-ging

Agnes Kory* ‘sing-ging’

On the wall behind Agnes’s head, her youthful face looks down, brown-postered now and peeling. Bored with my explanation she interrupts, *Playing an instrument is all very well. But sing-ging.....is for The Soul!* A magnetic fruit-cake, she draws me on. *So she will start next term, your daughter in the 15 year olds’ class and Henry with the 5 and 6 year olds. The 15s are my babies and most senior class. I have had them all since they were 5.* She marks her territory, ((Stage: Cathy be Agnes holding the children to her against the parents) the inner circle where children sit or stand, ((Stage: Cathy be Agnes drawing the line across the floor) a line now drawn across the parquet - carpet and humility outside her budget.

Will you be interested then, in Alicia coming to Bayreuth for the Music Festival? Because I have to have 300 pounds in cash tomorrow for the booking. I can’t wait any longer. Will you do it? Yes, I bite – hook, line and sinker.

*I LOVE Australians. I have very good luck with Australians. I have an ex-Maths teacher who has come to study cello from me you may know him, and my patron, Sir Charles Mackerras, he has been a great friend to me, perhaps you know HIM? I perpetuate this absurdity by saying Yes and Agnes never forgets a story. Six months later, she faxes the bemused Conductor, *Your ex next-door neighbour’s step grandson has just made his debut at my concert- St Swithun’s, Frognall, Hot Cross Buns.**

Slide 49 : photo of Agnes

So I have stumbled across a genius. Chucked out of the ENO for brawling with the other cellists, rescued by Sir Charles, who saw what they had lost. A purist and a dealer, a Kodaly practitioner (a swindler if need be) desperate for the sake of her and Bartok’s art.

All the women in her family have died young. She cannot afford to notice the dirt-white hand towel above the basin. In her bedroom she will not lower herself to sheets. Solidarity demands she rests (*who sleeps?*) with just a sleeping bag.

Post script: As a present to Agnes, after she took the 7-16 year olds on the 1998 tour to the Bayreuth Music Festival in Germany, we parents gave her sets of beautiful white towels, sheets and pillowcases. To this day, I suspect they are still sitting untouched in their cellophane wrapping ((**Stage: Cathy be Agnes looking up at that present**) on top of her wardrobe.

Slide 50 - Scene Kunst

(VISUAL) TANGENT ALERT - Get out packing case and say

Here's my precious framed print of Matisse's '*Interior with Violin*' – from the **Statens Museum for Kunst** in Copenhagen – this was rejected by the stylists at the last moment but it was always my favourite poster in the whole house and it had provided amusement for our gorgeous painters, so they helped me smuggle it out to the car before it was sucked into the removalists vortex..

I had the honour to be the neighbour of the artist, writer, poet and therapist, Elayne Russell. As a school-girl, Elayne had also been a brilliant violinist at the conservatorium. She was and is the first Renaissance woman I had ever met. On my 50th birthday, Elayne painted and gave me the most beautiful china plate.

Slide 51 – Poem title "*Ode to a Minge Plate*"

That's what my children

Called your glorious plate

Slide 52 photo of the china plate

Spuming red gold ringlets

Gingered ropey streamers

Streaming coir curls

Edible cherry nipples

Succulent mango cheeks

And sumptuous twat

An ankle tucked right under

A porcelain thigh

A flopping bone

Sinking to the floor

And rippling over silk

Her glorious apricot minge.

Slide 53 - WARNING: Tangent Alert

While we're off road (and out of range) I have to admit, I was very sorry to lose Julia's Tim Mathieson, as the First Bloke and patron of the Men's Sheds Association. There was something beautifully Leunig-ian about The First Bloke. Made me wonder what the English would do with that, ((Stage: Cathy over the top British accent) The Hon. First Bloke, Sir Timothy Bloke, KB, FFPMP (First Female Prime Minister's Partner)

Warning: this next scene has NOTHING to do with red pubic hair, Men's Sheds or Prime Ministerial partners. But because I know you haven't had enough of this stuff, it *is* the most politically charged part of the entire show. **All this talk of reconciliation, politics and conflict ...brings me to the most *political* of all rivalries.**

Slide 54 SCENE 11 – SIBLINGS

Slide 55 Poem title *Soundtrack for Childhood*

Adagio, move slowly

Our childhood has crept up on us

And we were not expecting visitors

We live in the same suburb

the emotional compass bugged

our geography gone South.

Childish paper cuts
 the shallowest seem to hurt
 the most and Chinese burns.

Our reference points and bearings lost
 our childhood rituals counted
 for nothing at all.

Our father's aspect
 true North and flexible to East
 his life's perspective lost in us.

I watch magnetic filings
 sliding into place, as opposites attract
 and we as likes repel.

Slide 56 SCENE – Budgerigars

((Stage: Cathy pull out Budgerigar book excitedly as if you KNEW you'd find it somewhere)

I'm ricocheting now from Bloke's Sheds and Siblings to another form of Australian male tenderness, **Budgerigar Breeding** which brings me to the best book title and cover I ever had in the house (Slide 57 : photo of "Budgerigar Matings and Colour Expectations" that's the eighth revised edition published in 1955 and last borrowed from (and subsequently cancelled by) Lithgow Library on 21 May 1993 (just 20 short years ago) .

Slide 58 : Poem title Earth Bound Icarus

Reality cheque
 Snipped plaits
 Basin cut
 Clipped wings
 Hello cocky

Nestling budgie
 Nibbling at your

School boy ear
Cupped and re-caged
By your tender hands.

And in the same breath **((Stage: Cathy slightly schizo voice))**
Clip over the ears anger
And mystifying fury.

While my brothers had budgerigars, my oldest brother got me a *series* of golden canaries.

I say *series* advisedly. The first one he got me was installed in a sparkling new cage with real sand on the bottom, right outside my bedroom door. At my 8th birthday party I took all the little girls upstairs to view my gorgeous present. Unfortunately an Australian Butcher Bird had got pretty pissed off with my little bird and had tried to sieve her by the neck through the bars of the cage. She lay decapitated on the sandy floor. YOU SEE WHAT I MEAN, YOU CAN'T MAKE THIS STUFF UP. After that we had to put chicken wire 4 inches out from the bars like a giant cake protector over the whole cage.

Slide 59 - back verandah

Meanwhile for the last 10 years in Balmain, we had a butcher bird (possibly from the northern beaches) who haunted the glass louvers of our back verandah every year. To get to this infuriating impostor, the butcher bird had to rip the flyscreen apart with its bare beak.

Slide 60 poem title 'Vicious Narcissus'

He hangs himself
And peers
Inverted indignation
At the enemy within

Pecks and slashes
At the mirror bound
Reflection unabashed
His angry twin unmoved

Our vicious Narcissus.

WARNING – this is a REVERSE GEAR SEGUE – “Oh did you think you were going to get out of here alive without seeing that shocking pitch **Slide 61 Tony and budgie** from the Gruen Transfer. I mean someone has to be punished for what happened last weekend. **Slide 62 Budgie smugglers**. And here he is in lycra, at 5.30 this morning, **Slide 63 Tony on marathon bike in lycra** doing a redundant downhill training ride, on his marathon bike.

Slide 64 SCENE – Funerals

((Stage: Cathy TOTAL CHANGE OF TONE – bring out Wesley scarf)

I always burst into tears and cry flat out at funerals because they give me a rare opportunity to experience the real sadness and grief of my own mother's death when I was six months old and devastatingly pre-verbal. Apparently I would have known she had died but I had no words to express it.

In February 2009, I attended the funeral of the wonderful Anna Donald who had been one of the first female Rhodes Scholars in Australia and who I had the honour to meet briefly through Wesley College Foundation Slide 65 - Photo of Wesleyan magazine after she had become desperately ill and returned to her mother and family in Australia. Hundreds of friends and family attended Anna's funeral at St. James's church in Sydney.
Is there anything worse than attending a young person's funeral?

This is "Appeal in G" for Anna.

Slide 66 poem title 'Appeal in G'

At Anna Donald's funeral
The great demanding bells
Bawl and rage down Phillip Street
In case God's not aware
Of the great gift
He is 'about to receive'.

The whole of Queen's Square
Has heard the great appeal
As canon crashing from the sky
Soar and whistle and thud.

Urgent bells out of control.

A roller coaster off the rails
 With maddening grief,
 Hurling steel against
 The gods of reason.

The metal cracks and soars
 Egg shell against china.
 The highest notes, tugged down
 Against blue logic
 Bruise the sky.

Slide 67 Scene title SCENE – Eccentrics

I love eccentrics. They fascinate me. I love it when they say the wrong thing at the wrong time or when they say what everyone else is thinking.

In 2001 I got to meet the Fairfax journalist Malcolm Brown, who like me had been to Wesley College at Sydney Uni.

Late last year Malcolm featured in an episode of *Australian Story* as he took voluntary redundancy from Fairfax, and you might remember the spectacle of him throwing piles of his shorthand notebooks from hundreds of trials and interviews into a large blue wheelie bin right in the middle of the Fairfax office.

As a young cadet journalist Malcolm was sent to report on the racial discrimination at Moree Municipal Baths. One night he turned a corner and came across 3 policemen bashing a young Aboriginal boy (Malcolm had done boxing and rowing at Newington where he had gone on a scholarship from Dubbo High School to do his Leaving Certificate) and he was a little too effective in his efforts to put a stop to this thuggery. He got himself arrested and was subsequently given a 20 year ban from entering the Moree Municipal Council precinct.

Here's my tribute to Malcolm.

Slide 68 : Poem title *Sailing Along the Edge of the World (preamble)*

Sailing Along the Edge of the World

*A man dressed like an undertaker
 A man who doesn't care about haircuts
 A man you expect to have dandruff
 A man whose collar is always too tight
 A man who helps himself to drinks
 A man you think is going to flatten you
 A man who can only give you his undivided attention
 A man permanently distracted by the demands of keeping his own sanity.*

Slide 69 : photo of Malcolm

Slide 70 : *Sailing Along the Edge of the World -The Old Collegian*

The Old Collegian

As you enter this college
 A footfall on the marble
 Your Methodist memory
 Whacks you in the throat.

You love this place so much
 And finding young intruders
 Have taken up residence
 Makes your blood boil

Anger returns as you round the corner
 Of your youth
 Bumping without apology into all that lost
 and unrecorded joy.

The silent hallways start you off,
 Whining at first like an old organ
 Then moving into full church mode.
 You have no choice

Booming out your old Welsh hymns
 You have to fill the gaps
 Left by your absence
 (And the present shenanigans)

It is so primal you don't see their glances,
 Who is this old bloke?
 I shush you like a mother hen **((Stage: Cathy make someone in the audience be Malcolm))**
 'Now Malcolm, don't frighten the children.'

Slide 71: Poem title *Sailing Along the Edge of the World*
 - *The Split Second Navigator*

The Split Second Navigator

*'No', you said, 'not my father,
 My older brother, died in a fire
 In a mental institution.
 Burned to death.'*

You told it matter of factly
 Which only made the scars more obvious.
 I had thought you were an only child
 Your role as a survivor now explained.

Each day you are a model boat
 Sailing along the edge of the world
 Braver than Columbus
 You hove to, beyond fear

Just one gust of wind,
 A split second of distraction,
 And over you will go.
 Nattering to yourself.

((Stage: Cathy look over Malcolm's shoulder amazed))

I catch you writing Latin haiku.
 Coming to, you reassure me
'Yes I'm alright. Just eccentric'
 Your apology for genius.

In 2005 Malcolm wrote about the impact on his whole family of growing up with his severely mentally disturbed older brother, Owen Millar Brown. The article had formed part of Malcolm's submission in the 1980s to the Royal Commission into Mental Health.

Slide 72 : Poem title Sailing Along the Edge of the World

Pillar of Salt

Pillar of Salt

*Between the ages of two and three
Owen started becoming obsessed
With things – things that turned round and round
And round, and running water. **

He lies staked out

Slide 73 : Photo of Leonardo's Wheel

On Leonardo's wheel
The fair-ground spruiker
Calls out to the crowd
**'A cruc-if-ixion here
On the chocolate wheel'**
Each spike sputtering
Against the leather strap.

Throw the book of Job
At that pillar of salt
See it slide
Sifting meaning
Bash it down
Before it sucks you into quicksand.

You cringe at taunts
**'Your brother's a spazzo.
Oughta be locked up!'**
Designed for your big brother
But magnetized on you.

**28 ! Ladies and gentlemen.
Don't be shy now.
28! A duck and his mate !
Who's got the lucky number?**

* **Malcolm Brown** *The Demon Within* - in the SMH Magazine **'Good Weekend: Special Edition – The Best Writing from 175 Years of The Sydney Morning Herald'** April 22, 2006. pp.90-91

The story of the short, tortured life of Owen Millar Brown was told by his brother, Malcolm Brown, in response to NSW Government plans in the 1980s to take 2500 patients - about one-third of the people living in psychiatric hospitals in the state – to live in the community. Dated March 26, 1983

Slide 74 Scene – **Somebody stop her**

My best stories are on a loop and automatic pilot – it's hard for my family to work out if I have Alzheimer's because my kids have been listening to these stories since they were in utero.

((Stage: Cathy take out copy of 'the Balmain Book))

There was a 10 year intensive in my life where I interfered in more people's lives than you've had hot dinners. If a committee didn't exist then I would create one. Friends of Birchgrove Oval, Balmain Networking for Women, everything from playgroups to save Balmain High, Balmain Girlzown Initiative to Amnesty International.

It was all part of my need to keep very very busy so that I wouldn't have to think about how the really important things in my life were going and especially to avoid any stray moments for introspection or heaven forbid self criticism.

By the time we got to London in 1997 my husband made me sign a statutory declaration that I would not go on a committee anywhere in wider Europe. **That's when I found out how normal people live.** When we came back to Sydney I swore I would never hold an executive position on a committee ever again – it's a sickness! Changed attitudes they reckon, can aid recovery.

Well the year's nearly over – and here's my final disclosure....

((Stage: Cathy stand sharing audience's relief))

Slide 75 poem title: **(over) [dis] closure :**

(with apologies to AA Milne)

Dame Dame Duchess Disclosure
Birchgrove-proud cooee
Took great care of her suburb
Since nineteen eighty three.

Dame Dame said to her neighbours
Neighbours she said said she
Let's form a new committee
And make me Secretary (sek ra tree)

This went on verbatim
For years and years and years
Anyone could have told her
It all would end in tears

Dame Dame Duchesses neighbours
Rushed to St. John's church hall
They couldn't remember the reason
But they all could sense a fall.

Dame Dame Duchess Disclosure
 Had let it go far too long.
 She'd learnt a valuable lesson
 She listened to the throng.

After 10 years interference
 In other people's lives
 Dame Dame Duchess Disclosure
 Said her final good-byes.

Now Dame Dame says to her daughters
 Daughters she says, says she
 If you stay off all committees
 You'll live till one hundred and three.

**It ain't over till the last fold of the cardboard, the last rip of the masking tape,
 the last box on the truck, the last load into storage, the final bang of the
 container door**

– WHY, IT *IS* OVER! We have closure. THANK YOU

((Stage: Cathy sharing audience's relief - WALK OUT))

Slide 76 : Yep – it's over – we have (over) [dis] closure

Slide 77 THANK YOU FOR COMING !

((Stage: Cathy COME BACK IN to say thank you and take a bow))

THANK YOU FOR COMING !