

**SCRIPT-PUBLISHING -FINAL: preambles and poems for LATITUDE PLATITUDE by Cathy Bray**  
**Sundays Sept 14, 21 & 28 – at The Record Crate, 34 Glebe Point Road, Glebe NSW 2037**

## **LATITUDE PLATITUDE by Cathy Bray**

**(Silver platter on coffee table with various books and 2 scripts)**

**(Sound: senior FLIGHT STEWARD, Damien Reason, voice- over introducing the flight rules)**

**(FIGHT OR FLIGHT RULES for surviving one of Cathy Bray’s poetry shows.)**

1. Ladies and Gentlemen – Welcome aboard this LATITUDE PLATITUDE FLIGHT. I’m Damien Reason your Senior Flight Steward on this one hour, return flight to The Record Crate.
2. Please ensure that your seatbelts are securely fastened and that your expectations are stored safely in the overhead lockers.
3. On that note, we would like to remind passengers that this show is NOT a pure poetry reading with stand-alone poems. ***Where would be the fun in that?***
4. Don’t answer that – the whole show is rhetorical.
5. Don’t ask questions either – just don’t. In return, Cathy will NOT have sing-alongs or invite audience participation of *any* kind. You paid for your ticket. ***Let HER, entertain you*** - obviously without the nudity.
6. Please remove clothing with inflammatory colours – this little poet is pissed off enough, as it is.
7. Bray will be re-orienting your ethics and dismantling a lot of the platitudes, superstitions and sayings that have damaged many of you up till now – a moral compass and a first aid kit, are located **under your seats**.
8. Passengers, **( Cathy start walking towards the stage)** please don’t move around the cabin during the show - stay in your seats and no one gets hurt.

**( Cathy turn and toast the audience at same time as voice over) So WELCOME !!!**

.....

**HAIKU** (Cathy with strong attitude – shut up this is my story...)

**Re : Birth – a string**

Daddy lines the bars  
Of my cold cot  
With cotton towels

I don't like his gift  
Of Vegemite and honey  
Offered with such care

## Platitude 1: Childhood: the best days of our lives

Also known as *The Good Old Days*.

One question. If childhood was so perfect, why are there so many therapists?

So, (Cathy hold up copy of the book so that audience has time to read the cover or read it out pointing for them) *Everything you needed to know, you learned in Kindergarten, did you?* What a crock of shit. WHERE WERE YOUR PARENTS? 0-5 years? DID THEY OUTSOURCE YOU?

(Cathy: sit forward and list them on your fingers) I had a father, 4 brothers, a housekeeper who washed my mouth out with soap, our cleaner Edna Appleby and an ironing lady called Mrs Burnie, to teach me heaps of shit about what I could and couldn't do, before I even hit kindergarten.

(Cathy: confide) *It was Sunlight soap by the way, over the concrete tubs, in the laundry under the house, and it was because little Jimmy Dobber, aged 4, from across the road in Alexander Street, came over to play at my house and said 'Say BLOODY BUGGER BUM' and it just goes to show that even at 3 years of age, I was already a sucker for alliteration and a poet at heart and a compliant but smart little girl who already knew it wasn't rocket science that in order to keep the peace, it was generally easier to do what you were told. So I said 'BLOODY BUGGER BUM'. And he went racing up to our housekeeper and said (Cathy: imitate dobber) 'Mrs Rogers, Mrs Rogers, Cathy just said BLOODY BUGGER BUM'.*

**(Cathy: Beat, Pull pained face of outrage on the little girl's behalf)** And what a two-faced, little lesson in hypocritical bastardry from a future politician that was!

**(Cathy: start reminiscing)** I DID learn one great lesson from my classmates Mark Rosati and George Papadopoulos while we were standing under the Norfolk Pines **(Cathy: look around at the pine trees and then scrunch your feet)** crunching pine needles with the soles of our shoes at Narrabeen Infants. First Class ,or it could have been Transition (a word with entirely different meaning these days) were lined up in two lines (of 17 kids in each line) **(Cathy: show them the two lines)** and in the line next to me **(Cathy: point to the line on your right)** was Mark Rosati the doctor's son and behind him was George Papadopoulos whose father ran the Greek milk bar at Collaroy – I haven't changed the names because both of these little boys have become mythical heroes in my mind. Mark Rosati deserves the Nobel Peace Prize for Pacifism and I'd like to see a little bronze statue of him (just like the Little Mermaid in Copenhagen), erected across the road at Narrabeen Surf Club. The infants school is no more and a Pre-School and Community Housing have replaced the rows and rows of our demountables, but the pine trees are unchanged. Anyway I digress...**(Cathy: wait, drink water)**

**(Cathy: Magic Australian story continues...)** So I look over at Mark Rosati (who I may have been in love with because not only was he the best looking little boy in the whole school, he was also very gentle and shy.) And at that moment George Papadopoulos vomits **(Cathy: move body forward in sympathy with George's vomit – almost stumble cause you weren't expecting it)** two or three or maybe four, (and pretty much WHOLE poached eggs) *formerly* known as his breakfast, down the back of Mark Rosati's neck where they dripped and ran down the inside of his white school shirt. So we are in slow motion now and I am waiting for the roar and the derision and the *slapping* **(Cathy: hurt physically)** that must surely await poor George Papadopoulos according to the Sibling Rivalry and Conflict Handbook in MY family of origin. But Mark Rosati doesn't even turn around at first, he just adjusts his neck with an expression on his face that says 'That's not good.' Then he turns gently towards George with a sort of hurt and confused 'What's going on?' expression that was almost tinged with sympathy and 'It's okay, I know you couldn't help it.'

And while I still stood there transfixed, one of the teachers came up and put her arms around Mark's shoulders and said. 'Let's get you home Mark, so you can have a shower and get cleaned up.' I looked around to see if anyone else had witnessed this madness. They may have been talking Swahili – these gentle boys were not from my planet and proving only the good and very foreign side of

## **ACTIONS SPEAK LOUDER THAN WORDS.**

**(Cathy: more brash tone – Aussie share)** I don't know about YOU, but there were no Matildas in the class and no Miss Honeys among the teachers in *my* Infants school. Here is a poem about the bitch troll teacher I had in First class, and the loud action she took with a wooden ruler, the year after I had '*learned everything I needed to know in kindergarten*' **(Cathy: fast – sassy same tone for poem)**

### *Arithmetic Solution*

In Miss King's class  
 First grade at Narrabeen  
 No progress, no regress.  
 A margin wrongly spaced  
 (Angles and Jutes)  
 A wooden ruler thwacked  
 Across bare knuckles  
 Confined all our solutions.

The great tired Opsimath **(Cathy: explain to the audience)**

A creature with time

On his hands

Gentle giant, showed us

Another way.

Left and right he turned **(Cathy: begin to sway like Mr Snuffleupugus)**

Until the pendulum

Began to swing for itself.

Ask not, he said, what  $5 + 6$  equals. **(Cathy: explanatory, confident tone)**

Rather, what + what = 11?

**(Cathy: with the intensity of a Physics teacher)**

You see the  $\sqrt{25}$  pittosporum  
 Plus 4 million pittosporum  
 Minus 3 million 9 hundred and 99 thousand  
 9 hundred and 94 pittosporum  
 Equals 11 pittosporum.

**(Cathy: take one step away and then go back)**

An afterthought on purity...  
 Pearls before swine,  
 You can't subtract grease pans  
 From pots of wild gerberas.

**(Cathy: casual individual aside for last line, to someone in the audience, like a drunk cat who's just realised how witty she is:)**

But you might take a silk purse from a sow's ear.

**Platitude 3: *You don't have to go to church to be a good Christian***

This is the parable of Sunday School and the young Existentialist.

**(Cathy: change tone to INTIMATE and INCLUSIVE – for the Northern Beaches )**

The house I was born out of at 14 Alexander Street, Collaroy was directly across the road from the spartan (no, more prim and primal) Methodist Church Hall – painted in creosote brown and all wood from the ceiling to floorboards.

Alexander Street had the steepest gradient of any street in New South Wales, designed by an Austrian surveyor with a sense of humour who built it like the Olympic downhill ski run at Kitzbuhl. Needless to say, we lived at the anti-climax of the street right down the bottom near the finishing line. Though **(Cathy: smile)** it got quite animated in the case of that driver whose brakes failed outside Number 208 and they still have the *PLEASE DON'T QUEUE ACROSS INTERSECTION* sign at the T-junction with Pittwater Road, because of that guy.

ANYWAY...every Sunday morning my slightly older brother aged 7 and I, aged 3, were shipped across the road to give my father his once a week 1-hour sleep in before he had to get up as President of the Collaroy Men's Amateur Swimming Club and run the races from 10.00 till 1.

After a couple of years of this, my brother dropped off the radar and I started to take a long hard look at those well-meaning, organ-thumping Methodists. So one Sunday (*Jean Paul Sartre eat your heart out*), I said to my single-parent father, "Daddy, why don't you have to go to church on Sunday?" And he thought "*Cripes! She's got me there!*" **(Cathy: pause to give your Daddy time to think)** "*Well, that's because you don't have to go to church to be a Good Christian.*" **(Cathy: with childlike acceptance:)** So that was the last time I had to go to Sunday school.

**(Cathy: go quickly but a little bit eerily straight into poem – like there was Divine Intervention)**

### ***Off the Baths***

#### *Straight after Sunday school*

The boys' swimming club's  
Been cancelled. Surf's up!  
King Tide – says it all.

#### *Land locked, my feet itch on the concrete steps.*

Scratching sea-weed  
Scours the red rock underlay  
And chokes the frothing foreshore.

#### *A sea snake turns to **bite** an unbeliever.*

**(Cathy: look down at the bite)**

The dry-retching surf  
Rocks grey-green  
From the sandy floor.

#### *Stopped by the hulking sea- wall*

The heaving waves  
Spit and spray  
Against the chains.

Some children scream with joy **(Cathy: joyous, skylarking)**  
 And fall to safety  
 Into the pool below,  
 Pretending danger.

*A storm in their tea cup.*  
 Only the craziest will go out  
 To crack that bombora **(Cathy: look at the horizon behind the audience)**  
 But the pull is irresistible

*and with an audience like that! (Cathy: point thumb behind ear)*  
 They take their leaden boards  
 Their Malibu now magnetized  
 And go in **(Cathy: look over audience's head to the horizon)**  
 – off the baths.

#### Platitude 4. TRY TO ACT YOUR AGE

**(Cathy: CASUAL ENQUIRING ATTITUDE looking out at audience)**

You know the novel '50 Shades of Grey' Did you ever read it? The rest of you? No, neither did I. It reminds me of Phyllis Diller the American comedian and how she felt when her neighbour Mrs Clean used to come over to Phyllis's place and boast that that you could eat off her floor. And Phyllis couldn't see why that was something to carry on about. You could eat off *her* floor anytime you liked – baked beans, meatballs, peanut butter sandwiches. **(Cathy: reflecting...)** Only 50 Shades of Grey eh? Well I am reliably informed, that there are more than 50 shades of grey in my BEAVER alone.

Here's a poem *almost* on topic – well it *would be* if we were talking about beards and Brazilian waxing - written after someone at my Writers' Group asked about the origin of a character's name and how to pronounce the surname McMurkin. If I could SING, it would be to the tune of Greensleeves, with apologies to Mr Whippy **(Cathy: calming the whole audience ) BREATHE – I only said IF.**

**The Merkin Maker** (Cathy: read in nice bright Peter Rabbit accent verging on Judy Dench. SPEAK – do NOT sing)

There was a young boy from Gerringong  
Whose friends all wondered where he had gone.  
At Newtown High he had well learned his trade  
Singing and dancing and not getting paid.

Some said he'd gone off to WA  
And learned how to act and got a BA.  
But getting the bastards to pay a wage  
Was way way harder than getting on stage.

But the one big question from which he hid  
Was when strangers asked what his mummy did.  
A Merkin Maker from Marrickville she,  
But should he put **that** on his new CV?

Well proud he was of his sweet mama dear  
So **OUT** he came and he sang it quite clear: (Cathy: okay sing these last 2 lines...)  
I'm the Merkin Maker from Marrickville's son  
And we don't say sorry to *any* one.

**Platitude 5: Out of the mouths of babes (and surly teenagers)**

We're not dead yet ! Can we lighten up on ageing? It's not pretty but as a young friend of mine used to say after beating ovarian cancer, (Cathy: as though a nurse is taking her breakfast before she's finished) "I'm not dead yet!"

(Cathy: with attitude again – fat and fugly, don't hold back) I had Pneumonia once and I was so stuffed that I couldn't even hold up a book to read to myself. And we had this attic bedroom at the time so I just had to lie there looking up at the ceiling and watching clouds through the skylight –



- which, I decided was not *all* bad but then I remembered I had 3 children to look after. So I called down to one of my teenage daughters, and made just *one request too many* for her services, and she said just like Patsy Stone did to HER selfish hippy mother in the nursing home in Ab Fab: “*Oh just DIE will you?*” And we have been using this as a mantra in our family whenever anyone does anything mildly annoying and pissing ourselves ever since.

This same daughter (regarded and touted by me as the artist of the family) once terminated an argument with me as she got out of the car, by yelling through the window, **(C: look right as teenager )** “*ANY talent your children had, has absolutely NOTHING to do with you!* **(C: teenager slams door to right )** *It was a recessive gene!*” **(Cathy: look left, dismayed, call out through window)** ‘Bye darling!

**Truculence (Teen Valkyrie)      (Cathy: look towards the just slammed door)**

Truculence storms out slamming the door  
in high dudgeon.

Absolutely enraged, apropos of nothing  
other than we are staying and she is out of here.

The anger of the middle child  
which we can’t understand.....

I was the youngest in the most adored  
and privileged of positions.  
You, the oldest, using and abusing  
the power that entailed...

Every day an Icelandic crusade.  
Our Valkyrie puts her horns back on,  
Her back-pack leaves her sword-hand free.  
The 433 deposits her on the distant shore.

She strides the Glebe hills scowling **(Cathy: point to the right, up the hill)**  
and scans the far horizon.  
A wave of relief washes over her  
- they are *all* there.

Waiting for her, near The Valhalla.

## Platitude 6: One man's meat is another man's poison

**(Cathy: excited / drunk / engaged about FEMINISM and the CHASER STUNT)**

Some people were always going to be incompatible. What do Osama Bin Laden and Gloria Steinem have in common? Absolutely nothing! But they both brought something very important to Australia.

The American writer and feminist Gloria Steinem was the editor of MS, the first feminist magazine. **(Cathy: take a sip of champagne)** Some time after the publication of her 1983 book, *Outrageous Acts and Everyday Rebellions*, Steinem came out to Sydney Uni to challenge young women like me to **start taking risks**. Steinem had found that undergraduate women underestimate the power they possess in their 20s and start out rather conservatively taking sub-leadership and administrative support roles. The good news she said, was that it appears women become more fearless and radical with age.

As I said, not a lot in common with Osama Bin Laden.

**(Cathy: keep up the excitement)** Bin Laden's greatest gift to Australia was providing the inspiration for the CHASER stunt at the 2007 APEC conference in Sydney. You won't ever get a more searing intellectual analysis of Australian attitudes to politics than our reaction to the breath taking larrikinism, careless guts and piss-taking that was encapsulated in that stunt. Of over 24,000 Herald readers surveyed the next day, 90% thought that the stunt was funny.

I'm thinking of doing a post doctoral thesis on it. **(Cathy: PAUSE – give audience time to take in the joke)** After I finish my PhD on Procrastination in the Arts.

## On the News - Hyde Park Demonstrators

(Cathy: read with utter JOY: )

All the way to APEC  
 Laughing youth  
 Teach a sombre world  
 How to drink the joy  
 Of craziness with purpose.  
 Restoring faith,  
 Refueling the torch.

They semi-circle playfully (Cathy: smile at the playfulness)  
 And bowing to the camera (Cathy: just bow head before you turn)

They turn (Cathy: look with delight and appreciation – one hand on  
 your butt before you turn it to the audience)  
 And moon for peace.

(Cathy: read in a semi circle the 3 individual butts)

Stop Howard      Out of Iraq      Eat my Bush!

(Cathy: happy amazement at this last best sign of all)

## Platitude 7: Clothes Maketh the Man

(Cathy: sip of champers here) Clothes Maketh the Man or in my case '*Clothes Warneth, Forbodeth and Often Illustrateth the Insanity*'.

Clothes and especially fashion rules the world. Well the word 'rules' is there to be broken. But even I weep when I think of some of the outfits I have got up in over the years. Bright pink and turquoise knickerbockers, a calf length purple knitted skirt worn in summer with a red and black top, a snow-man knitted jumper from Target. **WHAT WAS I THINKING?** Well I wasn't – I was certifiable but the people around me were way too gentle and sensitive to have me sectioned for abuses to good taste.

It all started in 1971 before our HSC results had come out, when my girlfriend Jo and I were suffering from post-exam cabin fever and spent many days at her house, lying on her lounge room floor, listening to her latest Iron Butterfly, Gil Scott-Heron and Jethro Tull albums.

One Friday we went down to David Jones at Warringah Mall in Brookvale to get 2 T-shirts custom-printed, causing the perfectly lovely 45 year old sales-assistant and mother of 6 who had already been humiliated at the coal-face of parenting and could handle just about anything really, to go home that night and ask 'WHY?' Why would those two gormless, giggling, private school girls decide to ruin her day by asking her to print two T-shirts, with **31 letters each** with the caption on one saying :

**(Cathy: read out the captions like you are a Rolling Stone editor) :**

**THE REVOLUTION WILL NOT  
BE TELEVISED**

and on the other:

**THE REVOLUTION IS GONNA  
BE LIVE**

This is a poem which illustrates the theory in relation to fashion, mental health and millinery disasters.

### **Clothes Maketh**

The paper doll  
Cut-out clothes  
The certain outfits  
Of insanity  
I recognise on you...

A green felt hunting-hat  
Placed cockily to one side.  
My red Robert Burton dress  
With black Akubra hat  
Bought at Coonamble general store  
Wooden floorboards  
Swept not polished.

Each square-cut outfit  
 With bend-over corners.  
 All in one dimension.  
 No lifting of skirts  
 No going behind the curtain.  
 A sleight of hand  
 An outfit changed.  
 Mood swings  
 And petulant merry-go-rounds

Flattened out **(Cathy: strong and slow)**  
 To perfection.

### Platitude 8: You can't choose your family

**(Cathy: smirking cynic)** *No, but you can dream.*

Families are complex machines .

**(Cathy: stay Aussie...)**

I am yet to road test one, but I like the sound of the ***Unconditional Family*** model. No matter how much you fight or loathe your family, when you wake up the next morning, you are still a fully paid-up member. This is very different to the ***Mint Conditional Family*** model where love is *very* conditional and based on you doing exactly what you're told.

My dad used to say (only half jokingly) '*While you live in this house you'll do as I say at all times. When you turn 18 you'll find this doesn't suit you anymore – and that's a really good time to leave home.*' So all 6 of us did. And were very grateful for his blessing. **(Cathy: stay wise now and slow...)**

By the time I started enforcing this little homily with my ***own*** kids, they were a little more self actualized than I was at that age, and had the brains and the guts to stand up to me. One left, one stayed for much longer and one fled interstate – but it was all in their own time.

This poem is for that most political of relationships: for siblings everywhere...

## Soundtrack for Childhood **(C: keep Australian accent – slow. Not Linda)**

*Adagio, move slowly  
Our childhood has crept up on us  
And we were not expecting visitors*

We live in the same emotional suburb  
the 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.

## **Platitude 9 : Judge Not Lest Ye Be Judged**

**(Cathy: keep Aussie accent)**

This one's in praise of my daughters who came home after their first day in North London as the new ORSE-TRAYL-YEARN girls at The Mount school in Mill Hill, to announce (and they seemed to be pointing the finger at me!) that they were the only two heathens in the WHOLE school who didn't know the Lord's Prayer - even that OTHER new girl in year 9, Amy Winehouse, knew it **(Cathy: only for a second, ask someone up the back of the room)** (What was that ? Oh yea- name dropping!)

and so did their **(Cathy: count them)** Jamaican, Japanese and Indian best friends.  
**“Mum, everyone in the British Isles except us, knows the Lord’s Prayer!”**

Three years later the 16 year old got an A-star in the GCSEs in Religious Studies and confided that like her siblings, she had learned everything she knew about religion (including inter-faith dialogue) from watching The Simpsons. I begged her not to break her Scripture teacher’s heart by telling her that. All she could say to reassure me was, OKer-LEE DOKer-LEE!

**Platitude 10: It is easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter Heaven.**

**(Cathy: confident, wondering)**

Is that why Walt Disney has had his head cryogenically preserved? I mean there are so many creative solutions to death and really isn’t it safer to just take the money? ‘Cause no one knows for sure that there really IS a heaven and even if there is, when you get up there the gatekeeper might not be St. Peter but an elderly Buddhist nun who doesn’t speak English or Aramaic **(Cathy: shrug here – bondkers, innocent)** and is perfectly happy to let you pay your way in with buffalo dung for her fire.

I’m sorry I brought this up actually because this sort of thinking could bring down global Christianity. And also I really hope I win the lottery next Saturday, because as my poetry lecturer at uni used to say, **(Cathy: pontificating university lecturer)** ‘There are only three poets in Australia making a living from poetry – Les Murray, and ‘ **(Cathy: give up counting after Les - smile helplessly)** ... I forget the names of the other two.

**Platitude 11 : When in Rome, do as the Romans do (except maybe not so much in Mosul) (Cathy: keep shaking your head) or Abuja or Chibok or Mingora or Columbine or any nightmare city of your own making...Here's mine**

**Fear A Bag Lady (Cathy: STAY STILL – do NOT move in this poem)**

I sat with Fear the bag lady  
Her two blue plastic bags  
Plumped full beside me  
On the nightly bus.

She watched me and I  
Smelled her blue-veined breath,  
My worries magnified  
And yet contained.

*With two blue plastic bags  
A teenager did his chores  
Over the head and round the neck  
Of a grown man in 'The Killing Fields'.*

Because I sat with Fear  
And did not turn away  
In disgust or start a conversation,  
I brought her into focus.

I did not question her  
But gave myself the time  
To ask God or Mother Courage  
To help me stay the urge to flee.

Because I sat with Fear **(Cathy: hand on chest near neck slowly twist )**  
I saw my fingers torniqued  
And caught up in her plastic.  
I drew my hands away **(Cathy: drop hand down)**

And breathing once again **(Cathy: flex fingers downward beside leg)**  
Flexed my fingers free and true,  
Knowing I'd sat with Fear  
And been gentle with her too.



## Platitude 12: Empty vessels make the most noise

**(Cathy: looking intensely annoyed at nobody in particular, out in the audience)**

*Who said YOU could call yourself a poet?*

Back in my Creative Writing class in 2008 , the poet Martin Harrison told us “Over a lifetime a poet has to do three things:

- *find out what their subject matter is,*
- *withstand the shock of finding out and lastly,*
- *create a pathway to the reader especially those who say ‘I don’t understand poetry’.”*

**‘Out on Parole - loitering with intent’ (C: copper Australian accent)**

Just a minute lady !

Right, pull over driver!

I’m going to need to see some identification -

Or at least a rough draft of the essay.

So... a poet eh? And not afraid to admit it! **(C: as copper look to left at Cathy)**

You’ve been a little too free

With your verse for my liking.

Three years in Creative Writing Class

And two more on parole

- yea, that can do it to you.

**(C: as copper glancing to left at Cathy in car – only what’s he’s been told)**

Got tickets on yourself in there I hear

Applying for everything that moves

And not too concerned about rejection.

“Yes, but I got an inkling **(Cathy: looking up to right at the officer earnestly)**

*Of my subject matter, officer.”*

Oh you DID, did you? **(C: as copper pretending to be interested)**

Well I'll let you know (C: copper VERY SARCASTIC now)  
When I want to hear about it!

Judy Johnson, Martin Harrison,  
Stephen Edgar, Peter Boyle  
You wanna watch who you hang around with -

Looks to me like you're gettin' in (C: as Aussie copper look down to left)  
Way out of your depth kid  
Take my advice...stop punchin' above your weight!

Go back to your roots kid - (C: as copper to left almost conciliatory now –  
**lean down to window: just a bit of advice)**  
AA Milne, Banjo Paterson, Ogden Nash  
You can't go wrong!

### Platitude 13 : You're only as old as you feel

Well that's okay except some days I feel about 86 and other days I honestly believe I'm quite attractive. Of course as a woman, I'm usually afflicted with looking in the mirror every morning and going *'Oh my God I look **old!**'*  
**Whereas my husband** (and he's not afraid to admit this) like most blokes, looks in the same mirror and says, *'Not bad. Not bad at all!'*

No, but my husband and I feel pretty good and if you make the mistake of asking us, we can bore you SHITLESS by giving you tips on preserving a long term relationship. We have been married so long that forget **PRE**-nups, we have just worked out our **POST**-nups.

For every one of our kids that starts paying their own mobile phone bill, my husband and I are gonna carve up another Honey Moon in our Post Nuptials.

**You can stuff retirement** too – instead of retiring we are having a Mega Gap. This will consist of **(Cathy: smile dreamily at the thought of all the great shit the two of you are going to get up to)** an endless stream of GAP Years (plural) – from when we turn 60 till we're 100.

After that, our children can come round to our rented penthouse and **(Cathy: take out pistol and shoot quickly to the side)** shoot us. **(Cathy: look positive and nod head at audience like it HAS to be done)** .

**(Cathy : hold up PAMPHLET for the VOLUNTARY EUTHANASIA PARTY)** Here's a pamphlet I found at yoga, for the Voluntary Euthanasia **PARTY** (I really like the way only the word **PARTY** is in bold and DID THEY REALLY MEAN 'PARTY'? Or did they mean more like ASSOCIATION or FOUNDATION? Don't get me wrong – I'm delighted with the idea of everyone having a party, once they've fulfilled my wishes.)

## **Platitude 14: Give me a child until he is 7 and I will show you the man**

*Back on religion – but don't worry, the end is nigh!*

Remember that old Jesuit saying "Give me a child until he is 7 and I will show you the man." (They don't seem to be quoting *that* line very much these days!)

Personally I always preferred the homily from my wise old HSC Geography teacher, Mrs Raadgever, who had a PhD and had escaped Nazi occupation in Holland including a stint in occupied Dutch Indonesia, who said "*Ner yaa girls, children need to be educated by their mothers and should not go to school until they are 7.*" Inspired by her, I used to give my kids Mental Health Days from school...starting in kindergarten.

A gentle psychologist once told me that as my mother had died when I was 6 months old, that a lot of my foundations would have been neglected or never established and that I would need help to rebuild them.

**Foundations**                    *after the Lane Cove tunnel collapse in November, 2005*

I rewind and watch the newsreel  
in slow motion  
as the red brick block of 1960s units  
slips inch by inch into the tunnel below.

A living room dangles  
over the abyss,  
the doll's house furniture  
now permanently on 'Pause'.

The grey silk bedroom double bed  
exposed to passing traffic  
tilts forward with carpet flagging  
and wardrobe doors thrown open to defeat.

A bathroom mirror out of kilter  
survives against all odds  
as tiles slide  
unsupported to the floor.

A hard-eyed ghoul    **(Cathy: look at imaginary TV screen at back of audience)**  
I gaze at the destruction  
and wait with baited breath  
for the next move.

While I consider the odds  
and survey the damage thus far, **(Cathy: hold script like a clip board)**  
the body corporate initiates                    **(Cathy: start taking notes)**  
the search for my foundations.

## Platitude 15: The show must go on (not so much for poetry readings)

Yes in all *other* theatrical genres ‘the show *must* go on’ but my family believes that a poetry reading can *never* be *too* short! Like Helen Reddy’s old 1970s anthem I AM WOMAN, I’ve now changed my status (**Cathy: pr. STATT-ess**) from invincible to invisible and upgraded myself from strong to dangerous.

THANK YOU SO MUCH FOR COMING.

**(Cathy: turn and pack up your books and platter into air hostess bag)**

(Sound: senior FLIGHT STEWARD, Damien Reason, voice- over organising the parameters for orderly disembarkation.)

(FLIGHT RULES for disembarking from the LATITUDE PLATITUDE flight.)

1. Ladies and Gentlemen, the seatbelt sign has gone off.
2. Please be careful when removing emotional baggage from the overhead lockers as some of your tightly-held values may have re-arranged themselves during the show.
3. Those of you who are still in possession of unresolved platitudes are advised to off-load them now as there have been reports of sniffer dogs in the arrivals lounge.
4. Passengers may take the Moral Compass and the Gratuitous Advice Sheet with them for future reference.
5. Thank you so much for flying with LATITUDE PLATITUDE. Please join us downstairs in the Divinyl’s Lounge for Sunday roast.

**(Cathy: THANK YOU – bow again once and walk quickly to the exit / stairs )**

**Enditude (and downstairs for Sunday roast at The Record Crate)**