

'Mad Woman's Breakfast. Eat my Bush!'

Notes September 10, 2010 - Draft 10

SLIDE 1- POSTER (as Cathy walks in to Mad Woman's Breakfast. Eat my Bush!)

SLIDE 2 – PHOTO 'Poetrified. My Uncle Lionel has a petrified apple... (PHOTO of real petrified APPLE)

2. P(o)etrified

*My Uncle Lionel **has** a petrified apple,*

(Cathy look at the apple on screen)

Scared fruit – wooden and incomprehensible.

My whole life is verging
On verse.

I don't use building blocks anymore
I use stanzas.

Rhyming couplets nursery rhyme
My arguments.

I don't have elongated relationships
Just narrative poems.'

Rhetoric schmetoric!
I think in poems, okay?

SLIDE 3 – BLANK 'Ladies and Gentlemen...(BLANK slide)

3. Ladies and Gentlemen:

I am not entirely sure how I came to be here tonight – most days I just run around fairly unconscious. But from time to time I think up a project like this to add a bit of anxiety and excitement to my days. What usually happens is that my husband dies of embarrassment, my children disown me, I get a bad back or tonsillitis and then I start to get vertigo attacks. **Eventually**, someone has to take me out for my own good – a metaphorical frying pan to the back of the head while having the symbolic carpet ripped out from under me, normally does the trick.... **OR** I can find myself in front of an audience.

**Cathy to lean forward and pick up the book
(*Outrageous Acts and Everyday Rebellions* by
Gloria Steinem)**

I want to go on a journey of wonder and derision, admiration and contempt, about America. At the same time, I want to be able to return to the halcyon days of my shameless adolescence and laugh at my own jokes – **(Cathy admitting her own joke)**
I want to have my poetry and eat it too!

4. My American awareness starts in 1956 with the book I learned to read on, **SLIDE 4 – ...Little Golden Book's Johnny Appleseed (BOOK COVER)** Little Golden Book's '*Johnny Appleseed*'. And what a great advertisement for green pacifism he was - albeit totally male. **What I want to figure out**, is how I got from *Johnny Appleseed*, to sitting in Jamaica Plain just north of Boston in 2000, discussing the ethics of American stealth bombers with my second cousin, an 82 year old Episcopalian minister.

SLIDE 5 – 'I was pretty gob-smacked by the idea...' (PHOTO stealth bomber dropping bombs)

5. I was pretty gob-smacked by the idea that in 1999 the United States had 14 stealth bombers which had cost \$2.1 billion dollars **each** to produce, flying to Yugoslavia and back, to drop bombs. The planes were too valuable to risk losing and never landed in Europe – they simply refueled 3 times in mid-air, dropped their bombs and took the pilots back to Air Force *Global Strike Command* at Whiteman Airforce Base, Missouri **(Cathy slow and smirk)** in time to have a round of golf or see their son's little League game.

SLIDE 6 – BLANK 'This is my poem about a cop (POEM: p.s. 'Border(line) Patrol')

6. *This is my poem about a cop pulling over a poet and finding way too many metaphors in their possession for personal use...it's the sort of thing that can happen to a Creative Writing student who has stayed up until 3.00 am for an assessment due in at 9.00 the next morning, and has (Cathy smirking but with empathy, knowing how easy it is to fall in to that trap) started to like the sound of her own pentameter...*

p.s. Border (line) Patrol

Right, get your ass
-onance out of the car
and put your psalms up
against the wall.

I'm putting you on notice:
this poem's had about as much

re-writing as it can take.

Ya hear me?
One more overworked pun
like that and you're off the case.

(Cathy like naughty school girl to Officer Krupke)

*'Just looking for a rhyme
without a reason, officer!' (off-iss-err)*

Put those sequiturs down
and move away from the thesaurus.
Just as I thought, **(thORt)**

you got enough mixed metaphors
in here to slam you in poetry workshop
for a year.

And... I'm takin' your
poetic licence.

SLIDE 7 - 'From 1929-31 the Spanish...(COVER of book 'POET IN NEW YORK')

7. From 1929-31 the Spanish (or as he referred to himself, Andalusian) poet, **Federico Garcia Lorca** gave a number of public readings of his poetry in New York city and published his collection *'Poet In New York'* with a detailed introduction to his poems.

SLIDE 8 – 'I am a poet...who can sometimes (PHOTO of GARCIA LORCA)

8. "...I am a poet... who can sometimes escape from the murky ledge of the looking glass of day more quickly than most children. A poet ...who comes to this auditorium wanting to imagine that he is back in his room, and that you are my friends; ..."

Garcia Lorca said that "As a poet, the first thing one must do is invoke the *duende*. This is the only way all of you willbe able to capture, as fast as it is read, the rhythmic design of the poem... For the quality of a poem can never be judged on just one reading, especially not poems...that respond to a purely poetic logic and follow the constructs of emotion and of poetic architecture. Poems like these are not likely to be understood without the cordial help of the *duende*."

Cathy change dynamic here – be excited by the excuse...

And this defence of Lorca's, his desire to introduce each poem individually to its audience, I grabbed with both hands as a justification to do the same, to give you the background to my ambivalence about **America** and to my poems; to give you in fact the ingredients and the recipes for my **Mad Woman's Breakfast**...

Lorca was terribly overwhelmed by the crowds in New York...

Cathy use own Australian accent but WITH PASSION:

“And the crowd! No one can imagine just what a New York crowd is like, except perhaps Walt Whitman, who searched it for solitudes, and T.S. Eliot, who *squeezes* the crowd like a lemon in his poem, extracting wounded rats, wet hats, and river shades.”

9. This is my poem...

SLIDE 9 – BLANK ‘This is my poem ‘Negative Space’... BLANK

This is my poem...

Negative Space

- *a reflection after Times Square.*

Turning from the blaring Square
 A plain of desolation
 Whistles silence.
 Echoes intoned in pendulum
 Swing moodily
 Swaying the unconscious.
 ‘What about your therapy?’

Kandinsky's black lined clouds*,
 Borders delineated
 And boundaries drawn
 Like safety nets
 Above the rolling hills.
 Negative space
 Now charcoaled into sight.

Drawing on the right side
 Of the brain
 I stride strongly into the abyss.

(* Wassily Kandinsky's painting “Landscape near Murnau” 1909)

10. *Sometimes you feel as if you have been put on this earth for one time and for one purpose...*

Non-sequitur

So I'm standing in the queue in Duane Reade's Drugstore

SLIDE 10 – 'Drugstore on the corner of Broadway and...' (photo STREET SCENE - Duane Reade's)

On the corner of Broadway and W 56th Street

When I see the Thesaurus.

SLIDE 11 – 'The last one in the basket...(COVER of Roget's Thesaurus)

The last one in the basket
Between the Oreos and the deodorants
Which I have been pre-ordained
To purchase.

So that at 4.50 a.m.

Lying jet-lagged in my bed,

I can be reminded

That I have already written

'Put the sequiturs down

(Cathy move back physically as though repelled by Thesaurus – as though a bomb or loaded gun)

*And move away from the thesaurus'.**

(Cathy - pick up dad's *Letters of Travel* off the coffee table)

SLIDE 12 – 'In 1957 my recently widowed father...(BLANK for monologue)

12. **In 1957** my recently widowed dad had to leave his 5 children with our housekeeper, Marnie Rogers and go on a business trip with the Commonwealth Bank to find out about computers. All of this was recorded, handwritten and then typed into circular letters (now printed and bound by my brother as 'Letters of Travel'). I've got a black and white photo of dad with about 200 grey suited men– all sitting at long tables and all looking

directly at the camera as they have been instructed to do, at the National Cash Register NCR conference in Dayton, Ohio.

Dad's observations on America were a combination of – awe for the scale, admiration for the scenery, loathing for any litter and disgust for the size of the meals. He also visited the first supermarket we had ever heard of and confirmed that only Americans had nervous breakdowns and only Americans needed therapy. We, were strictly from the pull-yourself-together school of Psychiatry.

Back in Sydney, in those days, if you went into a Coles 'variety' store all the goods were laid out on diagonal shelves that sloped down towards the customer. Each tray of goods whether boot polish or cotton reels or nappy pins was laid out under glass. The shop assistant stood above the customers and lifted the restricting glass as the customer pointed to what she needed. **I was 3 and a half years old** when Dad went to America for **5 months**. I don't **remember** being scared that he would never return...

Fear - Part III Fear 'Examined'

The sign says 'Please don't touch!
The multi-coloured cotton reels
Of fear. Hard to get a precise match,
An exact dose, an antidote to fear even rarer.
Abandoned, marketed, merchandised.
Laid out - a display in a variety store,
To pick and choose between.

At Breakfast Club when handing
Out the food, I scare the children
With 'If you touch it, you have to eat it'.
They giggle at the tension as
If, the great Conditional, walks over
And arrests Curiosity while Sergeant Can't
Deflects their questions.

'Where are you going to Daddy?'
'There and back to see how far it is.'
'Why?' 'Because be-why, be-why because.'
Finality fear. Coming and going,
Coming and going, coming and going,
And out of the blue, a not-coming.

SLIDE 13 'In 1953 James Thurber wrote...(PORTRAIT OF THURBER WITH PIPE)

13. In 1953 James Thurber wrote about ambivalent feelings in 'A Final Note on Chanda Bell' (after reading two or three literary memorials, to this or that lamented talent, written by one critic or another) . **Here's Thurber on ambivalence...**

SLIDE 14 – It is hard to mark the hour and the day (Thurber QUOTE)

"It is hard to mark the hour and the day when the thunder-head of suspicion first stains the clear horizon of an old admiration, but I came to be drenched, in the horrid mental weather of last autumn, by the downpour of a million doubts and dreads of Chanda Bell. I began to fear that she had perpetrated, in her half-dozen dense, tortured novels, one of the major literary hoaxes of our time, and to suspect that she had drawn me into the glittering web of a monstrous deceit, in order to destroy, by proxy and in effigy, the entire critical profession."

Cathy lean forward and pick up 'American Journeys'

SLIDE 15 – COVER of *American Journeys*

15. **Australian Don Watson** famous for his book 'Death Sentence' and his work fighting the language of the bureaucracy and the idiocy of the computer manual – 'a cunning little linguist' (oh no hang on – sorry, that one belongs to Barry Humphries) **backs up all my ambivalence towards America in his book "American Journeys"...**

Don Watson: "On the United States of America my senses swing like a door with no latch. They are moved by fierce gusts and imperceptible zephyrs. Love and loathing come and go in about the same proportion. *Rage* is common. But then, one rages about one's siblings from time to time, and one's own country: it is not rational, in the main.

SLIDE 16 – LEAVE BLANK (for POEM Soundtrack for Childhood)

16. Here's my poem...

Soundtrack for Childhood (to Bruch's Violin Concerto)

*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.

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.

CATHY also holding the copy of 'American Journeys'

17. In 'American Journeys' Don Watson comments on the paradoxical nature of America, for Australians...

SLIDE 17 – "As much as I grew up with Australian landscapes, (QUOTE -Don Watson from 'American Journeys')

"As much as I grew up with Australian landscapes, Australian voices and Australian stories, I also grew up with American ones.For all their Anglophilia, most Australians were raised part-American, and these days it is a much bigger part. It follows that to be anti-American is a form of self-loathing."

SLIDE 18 – 'Back in my poetry class - LEAVE BLANK (for poem 'Out on Parole')

18. Back in my poetry 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'

Just a minute buddy!
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!
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.

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
Of my subject matter, officer."*

Oh you did, did you?
Well I'll let you know
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
Way out of your depth kid
Take my advice...stop punchin' above your weight!

Go back to your roots kid -
AA Milne, Banjo Paterson, Odgen Nash
You can't go wrong!

SLIDE 19 – COVER of Reader's Digest magazine

19. In 1978 my husband got a job working in the Sydney branch of **The Reader's Digest**. The head QUARTERS of The Readers Digest was located without any irony **SLIDE 20 – ...in Pleasantville, U.S of A. (PHOTO of head office of the Reader's Digest in Pleasantville)**

in PLEASANTVILLE, U. S. of A. On a business trip to Pleasantville the following year, the wife of our host comes home from shopping to show her husband and the two Aussie blokes her brand new fur coat. They wonder what sort of fur it is. She tells them it is shaved beaver. They react like 28 year old males. (On a later trip Christine drives me at high speed through Harlem in a beaten up Volkswagen for the sole purpose of telling me 'if we get stopped here we're finished.')

SLIDE 21 – BLANK (for monologue 'It is through the Reader's Digest....')

21. It is through the Reader's Digest that I come across my first **polite American, Chip Outten**. Chip has come to Australia from New York (so he had no business being that polite, but he had come from firm but gentle, Lutheran stock) in 1978 and stays on a 2 year work visa. He has a very large expense account and is feted wherever he goes. He

decides to stay 'in your wonderful country'. He gets an Australian passport and moves in to a flat down the end of Darling Street, Balmain. Within 3 months he has gone back to America. I am ashamed and amused by the reception he received here.

Here's how it happened - Flashbacks to 1980...

Script:

Scene 1) Post Cricket Test. A drunk staggers into the Paddington Green Hotel after the game with the Australian flag over his shoulder....Chip mystified, in fact shocked, turns to my husband and says, **'What a way to carry your country's flag!'**

Scene 2) Local Balmain digger at the Exchange Hotel, on hearing Chip's accent, **"What would you know, you bloody yank – you got us in to Vietnam!"** Chip leaves mortally wounded.

Scene 3) At lunch with an English friend of ours as he turns and chortles to Chip about (then) President Reagan **"Oh that's right you've got an actor for a President, haven't you?"** Chip (very hurt and with complete sincerity) **"Oh well, he may save the world!"**

- a) Three months after migrating here, Chip flees Australia and finds work in the Reader's Digest office in Belgium.
- b) He sends us a postcard saying that he is in the Brussels office and happily engaged. The Flemish people, he tells us **'are very interested in what we Americans have to say about foreign policy.'**

SLIDE 22 – photo :CHILDREN AROUND Black and White TELEVISION SET.

We didn't have a **television** until 1968 (**Cathy look at all the books on the table**) which meant I read a hell of a lot and my brothers spent hours in waterpolo training, riding surfboards and doing other things like building catamarans, passing uni exams and holding down part-time jobs. Every Christmas holidays, Dad would hire a television for us from John Alexander's father who often stayed to watch his son in the tennis after he had installed it. This prohibition approach to television meant that by the time we actually got television my dad was like a reformed smoker – he would get very upset if you talked while the television was on (as if it had some anthropomorphic powers or at the very least that it would be rude to talk over the top of the nice ABC newsreader).

SLIDE 23 – LEAVE BLANK

23. In 1975 I got my first real exposure to modern American literature and to television as the new media thanks to my lecturer, Don Anderson who included on our reading list the absurdist fable

SLIDE 24 – ' Being There, written by the Polish American'(COVER of Being There)
'Being There' written by the **Polish American, Jerzy Kosinski.**

Several years later, Peter Sellers announces that this is the film he wants to make before he dies. In 1979 Sellers stars in the film *'Being There'* the benchmark for all 'Presidential' and media movies made since.

The central character, Chance, **SLIDE 25 – ‘...a kind of idiot savant (PHOTO final scene of *Being There* with Chauncey walking on water.)**

a kind of idiot savant without the savant, has never moved outside his house and its walled garden. When his guardian dies, the estate is wound up and Chance is asked to leave. He has never been beyond the garden and his only hold on reality is based on the television which has been his constant and sole companion. He is run over by the car of the wealthy wife of a close friend of the President who mis-hears him when he gives his name as Chance the Gardener, as Chauncey Gardiner.

Here's Chance the gardener saying what he thinks they want to hear, misinterpreted by the press and by the President as his searing analysis of economic policy.

“In a garden,” he said, ‘growth has its season. There are spring and summer, but there are also fall and winter. And then spring and summer again. As long as roots are not severed, all is well and will be well.’ He raised his eyes. Rand **(Cathy start to nod slowly)** was looking at him, nodding. The President seemed quite pleased.

SLIDE 26 – LEAVE BLANK ‘In 2007 the Asia Pacific Economic Community (before start of poem ‘On the News’)

26. In 2007 The Asia Pacific Economic Community (APEC) was held in Sydney from 7- 9 of September. I flew to New York that week-end, where as usual, I found no mention of Australia, except for one tiny piece on the late late news of my first night at The Algonquin.

On the News

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
 And bowing to the camera
 They turn

(Cathy turns slowly in chair towards screen)
SLIDE 27 – PHOTO demonstrators mooning for peace, red jumper and photographer

And moon for peace.

Out of Iraq.
Stop Howard.

(Cathy turns slowly in chair back towards the audience)
SLIDE 28 – PHOTO of bottom saying ‘Eat my Bush!’

Eat my Bush!

SLIDE 29 – LEAVE BLANK: ‘I was greatly inspired...(for monologue)

29. I was greatly inspired by the **quintessential Australian political analysis** of one of the demonstrators standing in the background in Hyde Park. His simple placard: **(Cathy with sincere frustration) “Sign Kyoto you wankers”**

Back in 1976 I had started writing my Master's thesis on Jerzy Kosinski but by 1981 I had become really interested in the work of the scriptwriter Anita Loos and her novel **(SLIDE 30 – COVER of Gentlemen Prefer Blondes)** *Gentlemen Prefer Blondes (The Illuminating Diary of a Professional Lady)*, originally written by Loos in instalments for Harper's Bazaar. Her wit was incredible and in the subtlest way everything deserved a second look. That was the beginning of my love affair with the work of Anita Loos. I was not alone – here are 3 testimonials from 1925..

SLIDE 31 – TESTIMONIALS from Joyce, Santayana and Wharton

‘I reclined on a sofa reading *Gentlemen Prefer Blondes* for three days.
I am putting the piece in place of honour.’

JAMES JOYCE

‘Without hesitation, the best book on philosophy written by an American’

GEORGE SANTAYANA

‘The great American novel’

EDITH WHARTON

SLIDE 32 – COVER of But Gentlemen Marry Brunettes

32. In her sequel, the much funnier, *But Gentlemen Marry Brunettes*, Loos took several swipes at wealthy and intellectual New Yorkers including the illustrious literary members of the Algonquin Round Table.

SLIDE 33 – ‘Here’s the scene at the Algonquin: (PHOTO of the ENTRANCE to The Algonquin Hotel)

Here’s the scene at The Algonquin, after the blonde heroine Lorelei Lee has pumped the head waiter for information and paid him to have herself and her brunette side-kick Dorothy, seated close to The Round Table. They are within easy eavesdropping range of the conversation and the bon mots of the wits gathered there. By the end of her meal however, Dorothy has had enough...

Here's the blonde bombshell Lorelei Lee, talking with some frustration about her friend and the heroine of *But Gentlemen Marry Brunettes*, the dark-haired Dorothy:

“Well, Dorothy finally finished her chicken hash and spoke up and said that she had overheard enough intellectual conversation for one day, so she was going to go out to hunt up a friend of hers who only talks about himself, when he has a toothache.”

SLIDE 34 – LEAVE BLANK (for beginning of poem *The Algonquin*)

35. The Algonquin

Cocktailing Sunday, 5 pm.
Thyme Smash with tarragon and limes.

SLIDE 35 – INTERIOR LOUNGE: LIGHTS OF THE ALGONQUIN

We drop like stick-insects into amber

SLIDE 36 – INTERIOR LIGHT : art decoing the darkness

The lights of the Algonquin
Treacle-orbed above us,
Art deco-ing the darkness.

Already we are caricatures

SLIDE 37 – we are caricatures of the New Yorker wallpaper

Of the New Yorker wallpaper
Leading to our room.

SLIDE 38 – Leading to our room

1211. Thankfully, not 9.

39. **The Simpsons** – I've always wondered about The Simpsons' writer who had a bad time in Australia (about 1992) – when to my shock The Simpsons turned the tables on us with an awkward script expressing American intolerance of Australia – **‘just not that interesting!’**) **SLIDE 39 –MARGE Simpson** Marg is shown ordering **‘caarffee’** and being told she must mean **‘beeeeerr**.

Marge: I'll just have a cup of caarfee

Aussie Barman: Beer it is!

Marge: No, I said caoarfee

Barman: Beer

Marge: Coff – eee

Barman: Beer – ear

Marge: C - O

Barman: B - E

I didn't want to reconcile this negative reaction to Australia with the utter genius of Simpson scriptwriting gems such as

SLIDE 40 – GRANDPA SIMPSON'S Nursing Home

'Thank you for not discussing the outside world' – the sign outside Grandpa Simpson's nursing home. And all this, from **the same culture** that bought us Deepak Chopra.

SLIDE 41 – MAGAZINE article Inner Life by Stephanie Dowrick

Here's my Open letter to Stephanie Dowrick inspired by a 2002 Good Weekend article Stephanie wrote about the non-confrontational and pacifist philosophy of Deepak Chopra.

41. Dear Stephanie

I just wanted to let you know
That your article quoting Deepak Chopra,
*'Completely desist
from defending your point of view..'*
is set to destroy life as I have run it
perfectly successfully up to now.

Things are moving pretty quickly around here
since I read your dammed article.
I wrote one of the best bitching letters of my life
Then filed it under 'I' for immature and 'D' do not use'

My children read your article
and sensed a gap.
And indeed this homily
of dear old D.C.'s
has really taken the wind
out of this Fat Controller's sails
(their description, not mine).

I mean how are you gonna start a war with that?
Who's gonna stack the dishwashers?
Who's gonna make their beds
unless someone is right there assuming a position
and then defending it to the hilt.
Who is going to go on a committee?
Stand for election? Oppose the motion?

I spent the rest of the afternoon sitting
in a warm puddle of self satisfaction,
concocting personal affirmations
and minding my own business.

The *scented candles* aroused suspicion
and there was a lot of pounding and shouting
coming up from the ramparts.

No one had noticed
that the gate was open
and the drawbridge had already come down.

SLIDE 42 – COVER of *Dumbing Us*

1991 John Taylor Gatto wrote SLIDE 42 – COVER of *Dumbing Us Down* (on the failure of inflexible, compulsory schooling) after receiving his award as New York State 'Teacher of the Year. Gatto said that these were the appalling things he was paid to do...

"I taught in 40 minute blocks. Then I said there is the bell. Stop what you are doing no matter how interesting and jump up and run to another part of the building and pretend to be just as fascinated by a completely unrelated topic."

SLIDE 43 – 'in his 26 years of Teaching..' BACK COVER QUOTES: *Dumbing Us Down*

"In his 26 years of teaching, Taylor Gatto concluded that the keys to helping children break the thrall of our conforming society were,

- independent study,
- community service,
- large doses of solitude
- and a thousand different apprenticeships with adults of all walks of life

For the sake of our children and our communities, Taylor Gatto urged us to *get schools out of the way...*

SLIDE 44 – LEAVE BLANK (for introduction '*Emeritus Professor Keith Johnston... before poem 'Arithmetic Solution'*

44. Emeritus Professor Keith Johnstone, came out from Calgary University to Australia in April 2004 to give improvisation classes at John Marsden's 'Tye Estate'. His course was entitled 'The Art of Improvisation. Better than the Art of War.' His course advertisement said,

"We were warned that Algebra would be really hard, whereas Einstein was told that it was a hunt for a creature known as 'X'. And that when you caught it, it had to tell you its name."

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*
 A creature with time
 On his hands
 Gentle giant, showed us
 Another way.
 Left and right he turned
 Until the pendulum
 Began to swing for itself.

Ask not, he said, what $5 + 6$ equals.
 Rather, what $+ \text{what} = 11$?
 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.

An afterthought on purity...
 Pearls before swine,
 You can't subtract grease pans
 From pots of wild gerberas.
 But you might take a silk purse from a sow's ear.

STILL BLANK with quote starting 'John Taylor Gatto is a passionate opponent...

John Taylor Gatto is a passionate opponent of globalism and centralised bureaucracies. His motto is 'think **locally** act **locally**'. The second half of his book (**Cathy still holding Dumbing Us Down**) traces the unbelievable speed of change in the religious communities in New England, such as Salem, where witch-hunting once occurred, to their present status as the centre of free thought in America.

"This new system began with the first Puritan church at Salem, organized in 1629 by the so called "Salem Procedure." No "higher-up" was around to approve the selection of the church authorities, so the congregation took that responsibility upon themselves. With that simple act, they took power that had traditionally belonged to some certified expert

and placed it in the hands of people who went to church. ...**It was an act of monumental localism. For the next two hundred years that simple shedding of traditional authority corroded the monopoly power of the state and church to broadcast uniform versions of the truth.**"

Still BLANK for intro...'This poem was written after reading an ad ...(for intro. to poem 'Fatal')

This poem was written after reading an advertisement for the Australian Poetry Realm generously trying to promote poetry and offering Lifetime membership, Regional and national exposure and Recognition for your endeavour's...(apostrophe s) **SLIDE 45 - advertisement the Australian Poetry Realm**

45. Fatal (apostrophe S and Derrida with one R)

Apostrophe S
Brings out the bitch
In me.
Patronising cowhood!
Ingrained. Unnatural.
Who cares?

Hoisted by their own pettard
(one 't' - see me after school)
I shaft them first
Then cut the rope.
I watch The Australian Poetry Realm
Crash to the deck
And sink to the ocean floor.

So God punished me
For the apostrophe s
Pomposity
Inflated out of all proportion
While world oil supplies
Terminate in 30 years.

I was quoting Derida
Via Martin Harrison
But all was pearls
Before swine

Because although I *thought*
 I understood
 I couldn't spell C-A-T
 Well, DERRIDA
 In a Poetics lecture.

46. **Speaking of putting things in to perspective**, let's just go back for a minute to consider the American comedian, **Phyllis Diller** **SLIDE 46 – photo of Phyllis Diller –** (who, I have just found out, was a breastfeeding advocate and mother of 6 children. I knew her husband was called Fang but I didn't even know she had children!) **She was the first feminist to come in to my life.**

In the 1970s when Phyllis first hit television, Australia was being swamped by the most appallingly inane advertisements for washing powders and hot water systems and toilet cleaners all coming with a threat of moral bankruptcy if your housekeeping was not up to scratch.

I was brought up in a house where the Hoovering was done at least 5 days a week and where no one went to sleep before the washing and drying up was done. To be fair, my stepmother did ask me at about the age of 5 and a half and just after she married Dad, to do the drying-up. I just looked at her mystified and said, 'That's one of the boys' jobs.' (I was working to rule and my jobs included putting out the 8 empty milk bottles for the milkman, setting the table, and clearing the table. Full stop. My older brothers did the washing and drying up.)

Anyway when I first heard Phyllis Diller I just wished she was a blood relation. I was surrounded by women who took surfaces, sewing, washing and cooking very, very, seriously. I will never forget the first time I heard **Phyllis on her next door neighbor, Mrs Clean.**

“Mrs Clean – oh god that woman. She's always coming over to my house and boasting about the cookies she just baked or how you can eat off her floors. What's with that? You can eat off my floor – baked beans, jelly, peanut butter, meatballs!”

And her wonderful confession that she was 18 years behind with her ironing and that over the years she'd had to bury a lot of it in the back yard.

47. **Clothes Maketh... SLIDE 47 – Paper cut-out dolls**

The paper doll
 Cut-out clothes

SLIDE 48 – ‘the certain outfits of insanity...’ leave BLANK for rest of poem

The certain outfits
 Of insanity
 I recognise on you...

A green felt hunting-hat

Placed cockily to one side,
 My red Robert Burton dress
 The black Akubra hat
 Bought at Coonamble general store
 Wooden floor boards
 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
 To perfection.

(still BLANK)

49 -51. My parents used to go on overseas trips when I was a child and pop me into boarding school for the year. On their return, the slides of the entire 9 month junket would be sorted and collated and the long winter nights of Slideshows would begin (usually with our long-suffering neighbor Mrs Bashing and her handcuffed husband Vic.) When I eventually got to Europe at the age of 42 I had to keep reminding myself that I had NOT been to Greenwich **(SLIDE 49 – Greenwich)** or the Champs Elysee **(SLIDE 50- the Champs Elysee)** or seen the Little Mermaid. **(SLIDE 51 – the Little Mermaid)**

All these things were just **déjà vu** experiences from *hundreds of slideshows*.

SLIDE 52 : leave BLANK “Unfortunately I didn’t get to know the work of the comedian Erma Bombeck...”

52. Unfortunately I didn’t get to know the comedian Erma Bombeck until 2002. If only I had known her earlier I might be able to stay awake at the movies instead of having the Pavlovian reaction I have on entering a cinema as soon as the lights go out.

Now I’d really like to show you some of my slides from the New York Public Library and Bryant Park and Times Square but ... **SLIDE 53 : COVER of ‘When You Look Like Your Passport Photo, It’s Time to Go Home by Erma Bombeck.**

53. **“No one wants to see your slides.
 Get that through your head
 Not your parents who gave you life. Not your kids who are insecure and need your approval.”**

There are only a few occasions when slides can be shown to benefit mankind.

1. Take seven hundred of them to a war and within minutes, everyone will disperse and go home. *Most* countries consider slides inhumane, but they can be used in confrontations where no peaceful solution is feasible.
2. Slides are effective in isolated areas where kitchen table surgery is sometimes the only option and anesthetic is not available. There have been cases where the patient only has to hear a click and a voice introducing a couple met in a diner and he is out like a light.
3. *Police* are just beginning to realize the benefits of a tray of slides to pry confessions out of criminals who proclaim their innocence until force is used. The problem is, they confess to anything. One man claimed he was responsible for firing the shot that killed Bambi's mother.....

.....
It is within the realm of possibility that slides may one day replace nuclear power as a bargaining chip to establish peace between nations. ... Only a fool would fire off that first slide."

SLIDE 54 : leave BLANK for intro "Perhaps we can look for a minute...

54. Perhaps we can look for a minute at some Australians in America...

In 1999 Barry Humphries was asked by an interviewer how Edna Everage **SLIDE 55 – photo of EDNA EVERAGE** could possibly have made it on Broadway. Humphries, defining what you *need* to make it in New York, explained how the people of New York had simply recognised Edna Everidge as one of their own. The British interviewer asked how they had possibly understood Edna's humour?

Barry Humphries assured her that *to be successful in New York*, you need **3 things in your background**

- you need Dutch heritage (like the Vanderbilts) ,
- you need Irish heritage (like the Kennedys)
- and, he said, you need a few Red Sea pedestrians.

Edna Everage, Humphries said, was indeed able to trace her ancestry in this way.

SLIDE 56 – photo of PETER CAREY

56. Prize-winning author, Peter Carey, now resident in New York made a scathing and rather unpopular speech at the 2010 Sydney Writers' Festival criticizing the dumbing down of the reading public. He was accused by at least one member of the Sydney press of being rather un-Australian and elitist and of turning on his own people.

In 1994 Australian film-maker SLIDE 57 –photo of Gillian Armstrong on set... Gillian Armstrong directed 'Little Women' the film of Louisa May Alcott's 1868 American classic set in Concord near Boston and starring Winona Ryder. Concord resident contemporaries of Louisa May Alcott and her family included her godfather, Ralph Waldo Emerson, (poet, transcendentalist and individualist), Henry David Thoreau 'Walden - Life in the Woods'(1854), and Nathaniel Hawthorne, the author of 'The Scarlet Letter' (1850))

SLIDE 58 - GERALDINE BROOKS newspaper article.

58. **In 2006 Geraldine Brooks** –won the Pulitzer Prize for her book 'March' based on the life of Louisa May Alcott's father, (Cathy pick up Bronson Alcott book 'Outrageous Questions') the teacher and abolitionist, Bronson Alcott. Geraldine Brooks, lives outside Boston– not too far from the Alcott family home in Concord. In a phone interview with the Australian editor and literary journalist, Susan Wyndham, Brooks spoke about winning and American generosity..

"The Pulitzer Prize comes with a historical freight, it's a wonderful, historic prize. It speaks to the special quality of this place, that you can come as someone who didn't grow up here, and they're willing to listen to you. I hope Australia is the same."

SLIDE 59 – newsclip on Amelia Lester

In August last year Amelia Lester Australian journalist, landed herself the position of Managing Editor of *The New Yorker* at 26 years of age. She grew up in Sydney and had attended North Sydney Girls' High and Sydney Uni before going to Harvard.

(SLIDE 60 – PHOTO of Bryant Park with 'In 2007 on my second night...)

In 2007 on my second night in New York, I stumbled on Bryant Park. It had been raining lightly. The entrance was blocked by the floodlit glare (SLIDE 61 – 'of the Mercedes Benz New York Fashion Show tents) of the Mercedes Benz New York Fashion Show tents. I went around the back (SLIDE 62 – and came into the quiet cobbled stone strip) and came into the quiet cobbled stone strip of the park next to a towering building (SLIDE 63 – which turned out to be the New York Public Library) which turned out to be the New York Public Library. A small statue presented itself - (SLIDE 64- beside her was a little pamphlet..) beside her was a little basket of pamphlets, announcing the last poetry reading of the summer.

(SLIDE 65 – leave BLANK for poem Bryant Park 'Seeing in the Dark'

Bryant Park 'Seeing in the Dark'

And that's how I came
to hear poetry in Bryant Park
On my second visit
In two nights.

And thanks to Gertrude Stein
For being so familiar
Squatting there
That I could see you glistening in the dark.

STILL BLANK 'The following day, in teeming rain,

The following day, in teeming rain, under a white marquee and red umbrellas was the last summer reading of the American Society of Poets.

The Reading Room

A scurrying cockroach lacquered brown
I teeter over the cobblestones
wet and sharp and shiny
Though softened by the ivy.

A gardener sweeping annoying butts
And leaves from between the cracks
My most unlikely guide, softens.
Yes, he knows the Reading Room.

Under the red umbrellas
Around the corner he says.
Someone turns as I arrive
Welcome! I think we can begin.

Our little film set under siege
From rain and lightning – one poet bolts
As suggested, to Barnes and Noble.
We optimists wait and Bob Hicok starts.

After, with his Roman head and white T-shirt
He immediately regrets
His 'Welcome to America' autograph
As too pretentious.

I flee like a schoolgirl
From a cake shop
With three pink finger buns

SLIDE 66 – PHOTO 'off to to the New York Public Library

Off to the New York Public Library.

67. One of the first things you see when you walk up the stairs **SLIDE 67 – STAIRWELL LIGHT 'one of the first things you see'**

at the New York Public Library is a list of the donors to The New York Public Library Named Endowment Funds. **SLIDE 68- PHOTO Wall of names** And written under the hundreds of names is this statement:

“Access to knowledge is the superb, the supreme act of truly great civilizations. The New York Public Library is, in this regard, both symbol and act of what the best civilization has to offer.” – Toni Morrison, 1986

I read that 20 times and was so captivated by the first line that I missed the ambiguity of 'the best civilization' in the second.

69. In Wilfrid Sheed's book **SLIDE 69 – COVER 'The House That George Built... The House That George Built** he gives numerous examples of the sheer energy, exuberance and generosity of the American musicians of that great era in the first half of the 20th century with Irving Berlin, George Gershwin, Hoagy Carmichael, Harold Arlen and Jule Styne..

Chapter 1 of **The House That George Built** is titled "*The Little Pianist Who Couldn't*", a reference to Irving Berlin's famous inability to read music or play the piano.

Sheed tells us "Irving's pianism was so primitive that **Hoagy Carmichael once said** that it had given him the heart to go on, on the grounds that **'if the best in the business is that bad, there's hope for all of us.'** "

SLIDE 70 - leave BLANK for closing 'Let's end on that positive note

Let's end on that positive note from Hoagy. I'll have to get cracking. I need to get home and bury the ironing! *But first....* I just need to thank a few people.

SLIDE 71 – SPECIAL THANKS & Credits

Special thanks to...

Adrienne Jerram , Julianne Wargren , Johanna Steinmann and Alex Farner

Poster : Spoonful Design (Johanna Steinmann, Director and Alex Farner, artwork)

A-Z thank you...

Advertising enlightenment: - David Barnes (*currency ideas*)

Ironing & support:- my wonderful husband Geoff Moss (*The Strategic Triangle*)

Script development:- Adrienne Jerram , Alicia Gilmore, Julianne Wargren, Luci Temple and Ralph Bergman (*Badde Manors Writers' Group*) .

Script advisor and Dramaturge:- my son Henry B Moss

Show feedback: - Alistair Cowie and Neil Watkinson.

Slides editor:- Julianne Wargren

Technical director :- Adrienne Jerram

+

The Sydney Fringe : Claudia Santangelo, Meryl Rogers,

City of Sydney : Steve Mitchell, Team Leader at Newtown Library who asked me if I knew any poets who'd like to do something for The Sydney Fringe

Venue: thanks to Soni , the owner of *Madam Fling Flong* and to Mitchell and staff on duty during these performances of *Mad Woman's Breakfast . Eat my Bush!* during The Sydney Fringe.

SLIDE 72 – the poster (last slide) END SHOW

CD- PLAY AUDIO : *Nice Work if You Can Get it* by George Gershwin.

MAD WOMAN'S BREAKFAST : Eat my Bush!

Special thanks to...

Adrienne Jerram , Julianne Wargren , Johanna Steinmann and Alex Farner

Madwoman: Cathy Bray

Breakfast / Script: Cathy Bray

Poster : Spoonful Design (Johanna Steinmann and Alex Farner)

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Ironing & support:- Geoff Moss (*The Strategic Triangle*- education and mentoring)

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