

Cathy settles into the comfy lounge upstairs at Mr. Falcon's bar in Glebe for the RhiZomic Poetry reading and is introduced by Micah Horton Hallett. She's relaxed with a nice glass of red but starts with attitude reciting her poem: ***(Without) A Leg to Stand On***

### 1. (Without) a Leg to Stand On....

Pretentious ? Moi? **SLOW**  
 Ego-centric? I ?  
 Judgemental ? Me ?  
*Tickets please!*

What do you mean  
 you didn't know  
 you had to have one?

Ticket sales are on your left,  
 by the Confessional.  
 And make it snappy - **FAST**  
*The show's about to start!*

Somebody turn those dammed spotlights  
 Off high beam!  
 You trying to blind me?

**(Stage directions: Cathy change of tone , gets comfortable**

2. For the last 30 years 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 50<sup>th</sup> birthday, Elayne painted and gave me the most beautiful china plate.

## ODE TO A MINGE PLATE

That's what my children

Called your glorious plate

**Slide** 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.

### 3. I love scowling women – Cathy holds up the postcard of Fiore

We were living in London and I saw this ad in Country Life Magazine **Slide 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 – 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 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).**

#### 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 - 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 expression. "Edie, short for Edith, like Edith Piaf."

"Ah YES. I KNEW her."

Fiore - androgynous artist (reconciliation of 2 souls)

#### 4. I want to talk about DREAMS

A lot of people can recall their dreams and can take great pleasure in recounting the whacky little episodes, which they can cinematically replay in minute detail, from the night before.

I can never remember my *ordinary* dreams, but I do a **very nice line** in living and re-living **transport**, and **missed-commitment**, NIGHTMARES.

I specialise in extended self torture: the long journey on the wrong bus to the wrong destination (with only *some* of my children) while my husband and some dame I've never seen before, sit behind glass on the other side of the airport, listening to our final boarding call.

By now I'm on a suspension bridge (**Cathy sway hand like the moving bridge**) half way between that scene in Midnight Express (**Slide: Midnight Express - Cathy point behind her to the photo**) when the girlfriend visits him in the Turkish prison and (**Slide: Klute - Cathy point to photo of him running**) where the pervert in Klute runs across the elevated walkway at the end of Grand Central Station.

At about the  $\frac{3}{4}$  mark of any dream, I wake up. (**Cathy breathe**) And quite quickly, at the point of partial consciousness, I **always decide** (call it control issues, if you like) (**Cathy in movie blockbuster voice**) **to go back in!**

No really forget Euridyce and the underworld...**THIS is hell!** It's hell with pike and a backflip... it's **(Slide: Revenge of the Nerds)** *Revenge of the Nerds* meets **(Slide: The Matrix – where they are lying down)** *The Matrix*. It's the cast of **(Slide: family in campervan)** *National Lampoon* completely roots **(Slide: in injection room)** *Inception*.

From this point on the dream screenplays into pathetic farce as I try like a junkie's father to bribe my way out of the nightmare. I go around moving other people's chess pieces and cheating at Scrabble until it finally dawns on me that it's all over. I turn off the alarm.

I get up, go into the shower and have a 30 minute day-mare, trying to remember why the bus-driver looked so familiar.

**(Stage Directions: Cathy to recite poem with title Fear : A Bag Lady)**

### **Fear : A Bag Lady**

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 (Slide: Picture from The Killing Fields – and off)*

*A teenager did his chores  
Over the head and round the neck  
Of a grown man in The Killing Fields.*

Because I sat with her  
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  
I saw my fingers torqued

And caught up in her plastic.  
I drew my hands away

And breathing once again  
Flexed my fingers free and true,  
Knowing I'd sat with Fear  
And been gentle with her too.

### **5.BLOOD CLOT** - a woman on Nauru

(dedicated to Prof David Isaacs and Alanna Maycock the nurse who witnessed this incident and reported it to a Senate enquiry just before the ban on mandatory reporting was introduced- this poem is **dedicated to** all the women, children and men suffering in Australia's detention centres

## **BLOOD CLOT**

Bent double with her menstrual cramp

A blood clot slides

Unpadded down her leg.

Three ghoulis guards

Observe its fall

On unforgiving concrete.

And how can I ignore this woman

Crossing the enclosure

With pain and devastation in her heart?

## 6. TRUCULENCE - TEEN VALKYRIE

This is a poem about my daughter who I was driving to school in Year 11, and I can't remember what we were arguing about, but it's gone into family folklore that she slammed the car door with... (Cathy adopt J'aime's spoilt school girl EVIL tone)

*"Any talent your children have, has **nothing** to do with you....it was a recessive gene!"*

### TRUCULENCE (Teen Valkyrie)

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.....*

And here our middling child  
stuck between two book ends.

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

She strides the sand-hills scowling  
and scans the far horizon.  
A wave of relief washes over her  
- *all* her friends are there.

Waiting for her, at The Valhalla.

## 7. THE READING ROOM (Cathy TAKE the 3 'finger-buns' / poetry books\*)

*In 2007 I was in New York and, in teeming rain, under a white marquee and red umbrellas I was lucky enough to get to 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\*  
Off to the New York Public Library.



3. **LATERS** - Now when My daughter interpreted the gorgeous Graphic for our reading tonight, my musical theatre son said *'No mum it's either a fisting joke or it's not!'* Oh shit only 10 minutes left...OH SHIT TIME'S UP

Okay, well this has been fun, but I'm only on poetry day-release and they're expecting me back by curfew at 9.

**(Stage directions: Cathy starts muttering 'Curfew Cunt' – anxious and pissed off with the list)**

## **Curfew**

enjambment

day release

special treat

paper clips

tarzan's grip

plasticine

rubber gloves

cling wrap

juggernaut

Vegemite

wedding bells

water slides

mouth guards

piss flaps

linoleum

love handles

big ears

huge jugs

jock straps

arm slings

tongue studs

safety belt

karma bank

jump on

hold tight

get a grip

no sweat

lights out? **(Cathy jumps up and runs out) UP AND RUNS OUT calling back...)**

**...LATERS, CUNTS!**

**THE END –THANK YOU!**

**RhiZomic poetry - readings curated by Lyn Vellins and Micah Horton-Hallett**

**Wednesday, 29 June 2016**

**Poems by Cathy Bray**

1. **Without a Leg to Stand On...** from the Introduction to INAPPROPRIATE Sydney Fringe 2012 – upstairs at Madam Fling Flong, Newtown
2. **Ode to a Minge Plate** from NO FIXED ADDRESS Sydney Fringe 2013 at the Hive Bar, Erskineville
4. I love scowling women - **RECONCILIATION** from NO FIXED ADDRESS Sydney Fringe 2013 at the Hive Bar, Erskineville
5. **DREAMS** - then poem **FEAR A BAG LADY** from INAPPROPRIATE Sydney Fringe 2012 – upstairs at Madam Fling Flong, Newtown
6. **BLOOD CLOT** - first read at the Green Left Poetry 'Resistance' reading 5th August 2017 at Resistance Bookshop, Mountain Street, Ultimo
7. **Truculence – Teen Valkyrie** from LATITUDE PLATITUDE at the Sydney Fringe 2014, upstairs at The Record Crate, Glebe Point Road.
8. **The Reading Room** from 'Mad Woman's Breakfast. Eat my Bush!' Sydney Fringe 2010 – upstairs at Madam Fling Flong, Newtown
9. **CURFEW – Laters** from the ending to INAPPROPRIATE Sydney Fringe 2012 – upstairs at Madam Fling Flong, Newtown