

## Reading and Relishing

*Edited by Robyn Rowland*

Like many poets, women poets in particular, I find the time to read poetry is constantly squeezed between snatched moments to write and the full tide of domesticity. It's interesting though, to have a look inside the reading lives of poets. Often, they give us directions in which our own reading might follow; often they introduce us to books and authors never discovered unless by word-of-mouth: our own e-mag. This section is a brief musing by a poet each month on their own reading of poetry, particularly the work they are enjoying. Hopefully, you'll want to go out and buy some more poetry.

### **Yvette Holt**

Do you still dream of that night?

Not father in my dreams anymore  
but Shahrukh Kahn in that movie,  
manly face pinched by that half-pout,

cute as the son whose entreaties  
would make his mother  
or any woman smile, Shahrukh Kahn

teasing a laugh out from the neighbour's  
daughter whom he loves.  
Mr Devdas in my bed and not

father upon me, whispering:  
Don't worry, don't move, this won't  
hurt, ok?

Cyril Wong © 2007

I have only just returned home after performing and panelising at the Byron Bay Writer's Festival 2008. It was my very first visit to the scintillating BBWF, however it certainly was not my first trip to the Bay. One's youth and memory of all things freeing and ferocious has journeyed my enthused soul-searching antennae many a times over to this transient sea-side village on the northern New South Wales, coastal line. But I digress, upon bewildering reflection I would imagine that we could all flex our

memories back to those mid-late 80's when shoulder pads and leg-warmers were not to be mixed with fluorescent lights after 9:00pm, and everybody wore their sunglasses at night (Hart, 1983) simply because Corey Hart said it was the cool thing to do. But enough about the matey 80's, and my restless years I want to shift your focus over to the P word if only for the next three hundred words or so.

Now please understand that I do not wish to challenge readers on a comparative study of exaggeration versus reality, life is way too short to frown upon those of us who engage in poetic voyeurism (self-confession). I will circumnavigate this article around a certain Mr Cyril Wong, and if anybody out there has read my poem 'Trippin' Over Your Tongue' (Holt, 2008) then you'll be familiar with the erogenous line...queen of the silver tongue, the NASDAQ of her trade. I would consider Cyril to be the Dow Jones, FTSE, Heng Seng anything but the All Ords of his trade! An exceptionally gifted wordsmith whose eloquence and adroitness knows no boundary, quite honestly I could listen to Cyril read all night long and then some.

I know, I know we poets shouldn't just bathe in the sacrificial glory of each other's individual poetic prowess, clearly we should be celebrating all recipes of poetic verse, but after having read Cyril's earlier works like 'Unmade Bed' and 'Afloat In A Dress Too Large' (Wong, 2000) I simply cannot bypass my appetite for his collected works. On Saturday, 26th July, 2008, at the BBWF, Morganics, Cyril Wong, Peter Bishop (Chair) and yours truly were panelled at 10:15am – 11:15 am for an enigmatic delivery on wit, humour and sheer brutal honesty it was titled 'Poets with Punch: Brave New Rhythms.' In Cyril's opening comments he mentioned the activity of gay hate crimes in his homeland of Singapore, and how increasingly infuriating these crimes were not only to an open-gay man but to the face of humanity. When it came to my turn to speak I raised the bar to all and sundry and declared that the only gay hate crime indeed, is homophobia to which the audience erupted in simultaneous applause. I can only assume that the applause was as sincere and forthright as those who had revealed home-truths and challenges on the panel for discussion before a packed attendance.

To conclude it is more than fair to say that I too enjoy an entire smorgasbord of poetry from Lily Brett to Charles Bukowski and all poets in between, though why I enjoy Bukowski is anyone's guess the man enjoyed the motion of self-medicating on

disastrous relationships and then bragging about it. Before I rest my weary fingertips from this now lethargic keyboard, I just thought I'd share with you the one thing I treasure above the sensation of loving and being loved, that is the need to oxygenate my soul with words...for me poetry heightens all my senses. It is the rainbow over the storm, the excited puppy at her master's feet before brekkie. 'Poetry, whose material is language, is perhaps the most human and least worldly of the arts, the one in which the end product remains closest to the thought that inspired it.' – Hannah Arendt

Let's all raise our collective pens in unity, strength and peace for all.

Yvette.

#### Biography:

Yvette Holt is a graduate from the University of Technology, Sydney (UTS), she holds a degree in Adult Education with a Major in Business. In 2003 Yvette received the UTS Human Rights Award in the category of Reconciliation 'for her outstanding contribution towards the elevation of social justice for Indigenous Australians.' She has lectured Aboriginal Women's Studies at the University of Queensland, where she also researches Indigenous Australian literature (Black Words subset) at AustLit: The Resource for Australian Literature. Yvette holds a keen interest in social justice and community leadership and development for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women, she speaks nationally and internationally on a variety of issues encompassing Indigenous women globally, she also mentors youth and homelessness and facilitates community workshops on storytelling/writing and Indigenous Australian literature.

In 2005 Yvette won the David Unaipon Award (Queensland Premier's Literary Award) for an Unpublished Indigenous Australian Author. Her collection of poetry aptly titled Anonymous Premonition was published by the University of Queensland Press in 2008 and has been best described as 'daring, evocative and poetically active'. A mother of one, Yvette has a beautiful daughter Cheyenne, aged 13.

#### References:

- 1 I Wear My Sunglasses at Night – Corey Hart, 1983.
- 2 Anonymous Premonition – Yvette Holt, UQP 2008
- 3 Squatting Quietly – Cyril Wong, (Firstfruits, 2000)