

Announcing the Judges of the SecondBite Poetry Prize

When I conceived of this competition I was mindful of the seriousness of food wastage and food insecurity in Australia. I hoped I'd be able to raise sufficient prize money and attract sufficiently prominent judges to reflect this and be able to establish a significant prize.

I couldn't be more pleased to announce that three distinguished and prominent writers have volunteered their services to be judges of the inaugural SecondBite poetry Competition. Poets Judith Beveridge and Chris Wallace-Crabbe will draw up a shortlist. After the shortlist is announced (on July 9th) Gay Bilson, writer and retired restaurateur, will join the judging panel. Together the judging panel will decide the overall winning and runner-up entries.

As the prize is a national one it was important to have two non-Victorian judges (Judy and Gay) for this first competition. I hope the prize may continue providing opportunities for poets and others in different states to be members of the judging panel.

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Both Judy and Chris have written extensively and over many years so it's not surprising that they have written about food. Without wanting their poems to limit what you think is possible for this competition, here is some of their work on food.

THE HARBOUR

for Robert Gray

Out on the harbour yachts are clustered like little wedges
of hard white cheese stuck with toothpick-thin masts.

The moon is a cocktail onion, or just a plain soda cracker,
but the sun is a dollop of hot chilli relish floating above

the vol-au-vent shape of Fort Denison. At Cremorne Point
a lighthouse gleams like a salt cellar. Out between the Heads
those white spinnakers are as tautly bellied as garlic cloves.

Now the sun is striking the waffle-grids of office blocks

with a glow thick as pureed apricots. Later down those streets
chocolate-dark shadows will set between the tall servings
of glass, but not before more daylight pours over them
as amply as raspberry syrup over sundaes. Now the wakes

of little boats bring bright florets to the edges of the quay,
sudden as popcorn bursts. The Opera House, standing
out on the point, seems a sumptuous restaurant's arrangement
of prim serviettes, or the divisions of the light-dazzled

wedges of a lemon. I'm watching all this from a balcony
just as the wind gets up, just as I'm remembering your poem,
Robert, about the late ferry crossing the water - and as
the light spills intemperately and wantonly as honey

Judith Beveridge

PASSIONFRUIT

used to be plump and glossy
but his mackintosh has shrunk
as he sucks in his cheeks
while somewhere inside the room
he is giving you the pip
with a wonderfully sour sweetness
like last year caught in a daydream,
the tang of paradise.

SALT ON THE TONGUE

We just can't do without it, watery friends,
acid sodium chloride, the spice of our lives

adding that Certain Something as a poem does:
our mineral tang of wry intensification
used even by the scribeless tribes for money.
Lacking it, life would be insipid;
poetry zings on the lolling tongue
 having crept up on you,
quiet as a glittering lizard
or the water swelling in at last
 by parched banks
Between these angular crystals and
their dark blue sea we live.

BANANA

The lordly nutritious banana
is peeping over the crinkled rim
of some old pottery bowl or other
up on a sidboard, at vantage;
look how his nose is black,
jetblack as lovebites that blotch
the yellow hide of his throat,
tropical patriarch
knowing perhaps
the new moon four days off.

GARLIC

Adhesive, papery,
the wan delicate skin
sticks for just a smidgen
too long, until

a naked clove
comes out successfully
 shining
virginal as the dawn

yet leaving
its ripe sex on your fingers
 for quite some time.

A LANGUAGE

(i.m. Jacob Rosenberg)

The summer streets run full of other diction,
Bright faces, differential skirt-lengths
And the bare tummies of young girls,
Which is a curious fashion,

But Yiddish sits in the café on his own
Mouthing sweet syllables as they fade
Over the final piece of strudel,
His coffee gone as cold as forgetting.

Liberation Larder is a community kitchen supplying food for those in need in Byron Bay, New South Wales.

Helping in Liberation Larder's generous and ego-less kitchen has also reinforced some of my long-held positions: that putting a price on food is often misplaced and lacking in equity for the grower as well as the population at large; that if we care about the health and well-being of all, good food should cost less than bad food. The homeless, the mentally disturbed and the very poor are supported here for the most part by food that is deemed unfit to be fed to those who can afford to buy it. The volunteers at Liberation Larder are grateful for the discarded produce and food. So too are the recipients, but a question arises: why should the financially secure eat better than those who haven't coped so well in our cut-throat world?

From an article by Gay Bilson for the Australian Financial Review, December 2012.

Judith Beveridge is the author of *The Domesticity of Giraffes*, *Accidental Grace*, *Wolf Notes* and *Storm and Honey* all of which have won major prizes. George Braziller Publishers are bringing out a selection of poems, *Hook and Eye*, for the US market in 2014. She is the poetry editor for *Meanjin* and teaches poetry writing at postgraduate level at the University of Sydney. Her poems have been widely anthologized, studied and translated.

Chris Wallace-Crabbe is an eminent Australian poet who has won most if not all of the Australian poetry prizes and published over 20 books of poetry in a long and distinguished career. He is also an essayist, a critic of the visual arts, and a notable public reader of his verse. He was founding Director of The Australian Centre and, more recently, Chair of the peak artistic body, Australian Poetry Limited.

Gay Bilson is a retired restaurateur and writer. She has created and directed several events centred on food and community, often for the Adelaide Festival. She is the author of **Plenty: Digressions on Food** (Penguin 2004). *Plenty* won the Nita B. Kibble Prize for Women's Life Writing and was also named The Age Book of the Year in 2005. Her most recent book is **On Digestion** (Melbourne University Publishing, 2008). In this extended essay she questions many of the assumptions we make about agriculture, produce and dining in Australia.