

Kathryn Hummel was in conversation with Dr. Brian Mendonca, poet, writer and blogger on 20 December 2014.

In the intimate setting of the Zuari hall, International Centre, Goa yesterday, Kathryn Hummel regaled poetry lovers to a reading of her poems from her debut volume *Poems from Here* released in October. It is not everyday that we have an Australian poet of the calibre of Kathryn amongst us. So when Vivek asked me to anchor the session I was more than pleased. As it turned out Kathryn and me were on the same page. We were both in some sense traveller-poets.

Considering herself nothing less than an explorer, Kathryn opened her poetry reading with: 'I always confuse / the sextant and the speculum . . . / Maybe they are joined / in my mind / as tools of navigation / for worlds vast as oceans, / steered in conference with the night sky.'

Widely travelled, Kathryn has spent years in Bangladesh, Japan and India. But it is in the in-between places, gazing at the moon, when she is lost and 'homeless,' that she writes her sometimes sad lines. She writes in 'Paradise Inn', Allapuzha, Kerala : The moonlight outside my blinkered range, / has the same pale pressure of the lover I wanted nights ago, / the one I summon to this continent from another: / with a touch to bleach the misdeeds and the bruises they left, / though never their memory.'

A doctorate in ethnographic studies, Dr Kathryn teaches creative communication at the University of South Australia, Magill campus. But she is not a stuffy academic. Rather, she pulsates with life, as a teenager, many of whom she has encouraged to look at poetry itself as valuable material for ethnographic study. The slim volume *Poems from Here* has been brought out elegantly by Walleah Press, North Hobart, Tasmania.

'Last Drinks in Adelaide' is a wonderfully evoked poem where friends sit around with the knowledge one of them is going to leave. The Australian mannerisms are retained, along with the minute details of Pip her dog: Near the pier where Pip got kicked (we think) / by a bogan out-of town, / we take in our drinks; at the same time, the sea. Her poetry is often self-reflexive. In 'Fatty Sobji' she masquerades as her acquaintances in Bangladesh reproving her for her weight: 'In terms of Rabindranath's Romanticism, / You are like the dahl of tomorrow left out in the monsoon of today: / You are expanding the bideshi border by your bottom alone.' In a recent poem Kathryn read 'Letter from Emily Bronte' in which she speaks as Bronte and replies to her detractors.

Kathryn is off to Kathmandu on Tuesday. As I read my poem 'Kali Gandak' written on the Gandak river on the Indo-Nepal border I bid farewell to Kathryn with the awareness in her words that, 'outside the syntactic torture / of the poetry workshop / waits the warming cordial / of friends and wine.' That, and her allusions to Mayakovsky, Neruda, Wordsworth, Pascal and Jibananda . . .

---