



**Tatjana Debeljački vs.**

**Cynthia Rowe**

Interview

**Can you tell us something about your hometown and growing up?**

I grew up in Australia, in the suburb of South Yarra, ten minutes from the city of Melbourne. My family have been academics, teachers, doctors, and church officials, from the time they arrived in Victoria, Australia, during the Gold Rush of 1850. I attended Melbourne Girls Grammar, a private Anglican girls' day and boarding school located in South Yarra, a school with many notable alumnae. It was expected that I would go on to study at the University of Melbourne, which I did, graduating with a degree in French and Philosophy.

### **When did you start to write and what inspires you?**

I started to write early, producing my first play when 9 years old and winning my first poetry competition at the age of 10 years. I continued to write while completing my university studies, and throughout my teaching career. I am particularly inspired by teenagers, by the problems they encounter through those difficult years, and by their courage in overcoming issues like body image and bullying, which occur both online and in the school environment.

### **When did you publish your first book and how did the success follow later?**

I published my first book in 2004. My published novels are: *Our Hollow Sofa* (2004), *Ants in My Dreadlocks* (2005) [Highly Commended in the Society of Women Writers NSW 2007 Biennial Book Awards], *Stinger in a Sugar Jar* (2007), *Bad Grass* (2009) [2<sup>nd</sup> Prize in the Society of Women Writers NSW 2011 Biennial Book Awards], *My French Barrette* (2012), *Pennyweight Flat* (2013). My general fiction novel *Couscous Threads* (2008) was Highly Commended in the Society of Women Writers NSW 2009 Biennial Book Awards. My poetry collection *Driftwood* (2010) was published by Ginninderra Press and I published a haiku chapbook titled *Floating Nest* in 2014.

In France and the French territories, getting to know these places well, and was awarded a *Diplôme Approfondi de Langue Française* by the French Ministry of Education?

My son worked in Paris for seven years, and during that time, I got to know France well. I have visited New Caledonia on several occasions while my husband was working for a company based there; and later when my son was involved in business negotiations on the Territory with the French government. In my Genna Perrier series of novels, the main character, Genna, is of New Caledonian origin.

**Cynthia Rowe's play, *Not the Vice-Chancellor*, was performed in the Short and Sweet Festival Sydney?**

It was very exciting for me to have my play chosen for participation in the Short and Sweet Festival in 2008. To see actors interpret my work on stage was extremely challenging—but satisfying.

**President of the Bondi Writers' Group, President of the Australian Haiku Society and Editor, Haiku Xpressions?**

I was President of the Bondi Writers' Group for approximately four years, during which time I helped to inspire others in their writing endeavours and had the good fortune to be able to invite published writers to speak to the group. A rewarding time.

I continue to be President of the Australian Haiku Society, a society which keeps haiku poets informed about events taking place in the haiku world, including competitions and opportunities for publishing.

Could you tell us something about the magazine you publish? What is its concept and what are the contents cultural Haiku Xpressions Magazine?

As Editor of Haiku Xpressions for the past five years, I have been pleased to be able to offer publishing opportunities to poets within Australia and internationally. Haiku Xpressions is a two-page spread within *FreeXpresSion* magazine, and publishes quality haiku, haiga and haibun. I have enjoyed 'meeting' poets from around the world through email exchange, developing friendships and generally helping poets to fulfil their capabilities. Some have gone on to succeed in various international competitions.

**Are you satisfied with the new Editorial team and the new members of Haiku Xpressions Magazine?**

I have a constructive and professional relationship with Peter Pike, managing editor of *FreeXpresSion* magazine. We collaborate in a fruitful way and assist one another in the running of the annual *FreeXpresSion* haiku competition which continues to be a great success, attracting entries from around the world.

**What can you tell us about your work, prizes, journeys and friendships?**

My short stories have appeared in national magazines and been broadcast on National Community Radio. My poetry can be read in literary journals in Australia and overseas. My haiku have won many international awards including the Thirteenth Annual Paper Wasp Jack Stamm Haiku Award 2011, the Polish International Haiku competition 2011, City of Perth Library haiku competition 2012, 66<sup>th</sup> Matsuo Bashō Festival Haiku Contest 2012 and recently received 1<sup>st</sup> Prize in the European Quarterly Kukai VIII Edition Winter 2014. I am a member of the Red Dragonflies group which workshops haiku and have many friends who are poets and writers.

**Do you think you have outwitted the expectations?**

I don't believe we ever achieve all that we set out to accomplish. There are always challenges ahead. Life would be boring if this were not the case!

**How do you manage all that with so much work that you do? Do you have time for yourself? What inspires you?**

I continue to write novels in whatever spare time I have. The creative process inspires me. Even though I have a basic plot when writing a novel, I never really know how the characters will develop and change. Of course, I enjoy reading but writing a book can be as exciting as reading a book.

**Is there anything that you could pinpoint and tell us about yourself between the dream and reality?**

Keep following your dream. Even during the hard times, when you think it is all too difficult, it is important to persist, to continue to strive. The journey is just as rewarding as the destination.

**What are your plans for the future creative work?**

My plans are to keep writing. I aim to explore different avenues in the creative process, to try different genres, to explore new pathways in order to remain fresh and invigorated. I enjoy words, the language and where it leads me. I have begun

translating my novel, *Couscous Threads*, into French, the language I taught for many years.

### **Cynthia Rowe's career in a few years?**

In life, we never know what is around the corner. I have travelled extensively around the world, and hope to spend more time exploring the vast continent of Australia and to write about this whether through my poetry or my books. I look forward to seeing my grandchildren grow, thrive and fulfil their dreams and desires.

### **Have you achieved everything you have ever wanted to and if you could live your life again would you be an artist again?**

There are more books to write, other artistic endeavours to explore. From time to time I delve into the visual arts, taking an interest in photography, trying my hand at sketching and resuming the challenge of ceramic sculpture, an art form I enjoyed many years ago. Yes, I would definitely be an artist again.

### **Is there anything you would like to say that you think is important and that I haven't asked you?**

Having people read and enjoy my work is important to me. My novels are available at <https://www.amazon.com/author/cynthiarowe> in both paperback and kindle editions.

DIOGEN pro culture magazine & DIOGEN pro art magazine -ISSN 2296-0929; ISSN 2296-0937

Publishers online and owners, Peter M. Tase and Sabahudin Hadžialić, MSc

E-mail: [contact\\_editor@diogenpro.com](mailto:contact_editor@diogenpro.com) / WWW: <http://www.diogenpro.com/>

My poetry books can be purchased through my website [www.cynthiarowe.com.au](http://www.cynthiarowe.com.au)

Readers can discover more about the Haiku Xpressions pages through the *FreeXpresSion* magazine site <http://www.freexpression.com.au/>

I would like to thank ‘Diogen pro culture magazine’ for the wonderful work that it does, and for giving me the opportunity to chat about my creative work and Haiku Xpressions!

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