

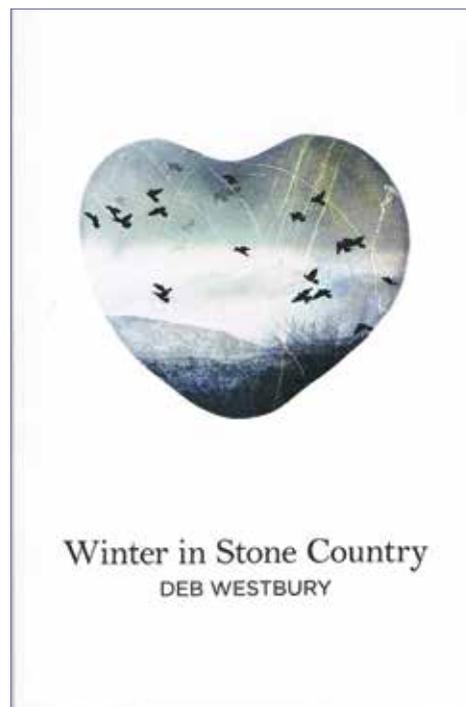
WINTER IN STONE COUNTRY

On Sunday 4 September 2016, the inaugural publication of Hope Street Press—Deb Westbury's poetry collection *Winter in Stone Country*—was launched at Varuna, the Writers' House, in Katoomba. A beautiful afternoon in early Spring, the launch was held in the gardens and was attended by over 80 people, one having travelled from Alice Springs and many others from Sydney and further afield. The book was launched by local poet and novelist, Mark O'Flynn. O'Flynn's speech was a celebration of both the poet and her book and paid tribute to Westbury's enduring influence—as mentor and teacher—on many of those in the audience and beyond.

Deb Westbury is an accomplished lyric poet and *Winter in Stone Country* marks her sixth collection of poetry. Her previous collections are *Mouth to Mouth* (1990), *Our Houses are Full of Smoke* (1994), *Surface Tension* (1998), *Flying Blind* (2002), and *The View from Here* (2008). *Winter in Stone Country's* opening poem, 'Ghostbride', is a classic example of Westbury's style—evocative imagery with a strong sense of rhythm and musicality. The poem is short enough to quote in full and the brevity is part of its power:

From a continent
unnamed
on a body of water
uncharted
our love comes trailing;
in its ruined wake
bouquets of orange blossom
sediments of ash.

In a cold harbour
half awake,
I'm still holding on;
billowing out
behind you
like a windsock
in a storm.



As is often the case with Westbury's work, the poem—so perfectly phrased—is freighted with hard-earned emotion. The lines 'in its ruined wake' and 'in a cold harbour' suggest a degree of desperation, but, and again this is typical of the poet, Westbury is able to cross-stitch with lines of hope: 'I'm still holding on' she writes. By the poem's end, we've moved from 'our love comes trailing' to the poet 'billowing out / behind you / like a windsock / in a storm.' There she is—even after all—pointing to love's presence in the storm.

Hope Street Press is an independent publisher founded by Craig Billingham, Vanessa Kirkpatrick, John Lekkas and Judith Martinez, all based at Katoomba. Following the model of the very successful Five Islands Press, it is a co-operative venture and was set up with guidance from Ron Pretty and Deb Westbury, both founding members of FIP, which since the late 1980s has made an enormous contribution to Australian poetry publishing.

The motivation for starting Hope Street Press was to demonstrate a commitment to poetry and to publishing in the Blue Mountains. As such, *Winter in Stone Country* is the first of a quartet of collections by local writers, both established and emerging. These books will be published in May 2017 to coincide with the Sydney Writers' Festival, after which Hope Street Press intends to broaden its activities.

Winter in Stone Country can be purchased directly from the publisher. Please email hello@hopestreetpress.com for enquiries.

Vanessa Kirkpatrick and Craig Billingham

Book design Judith Martinez