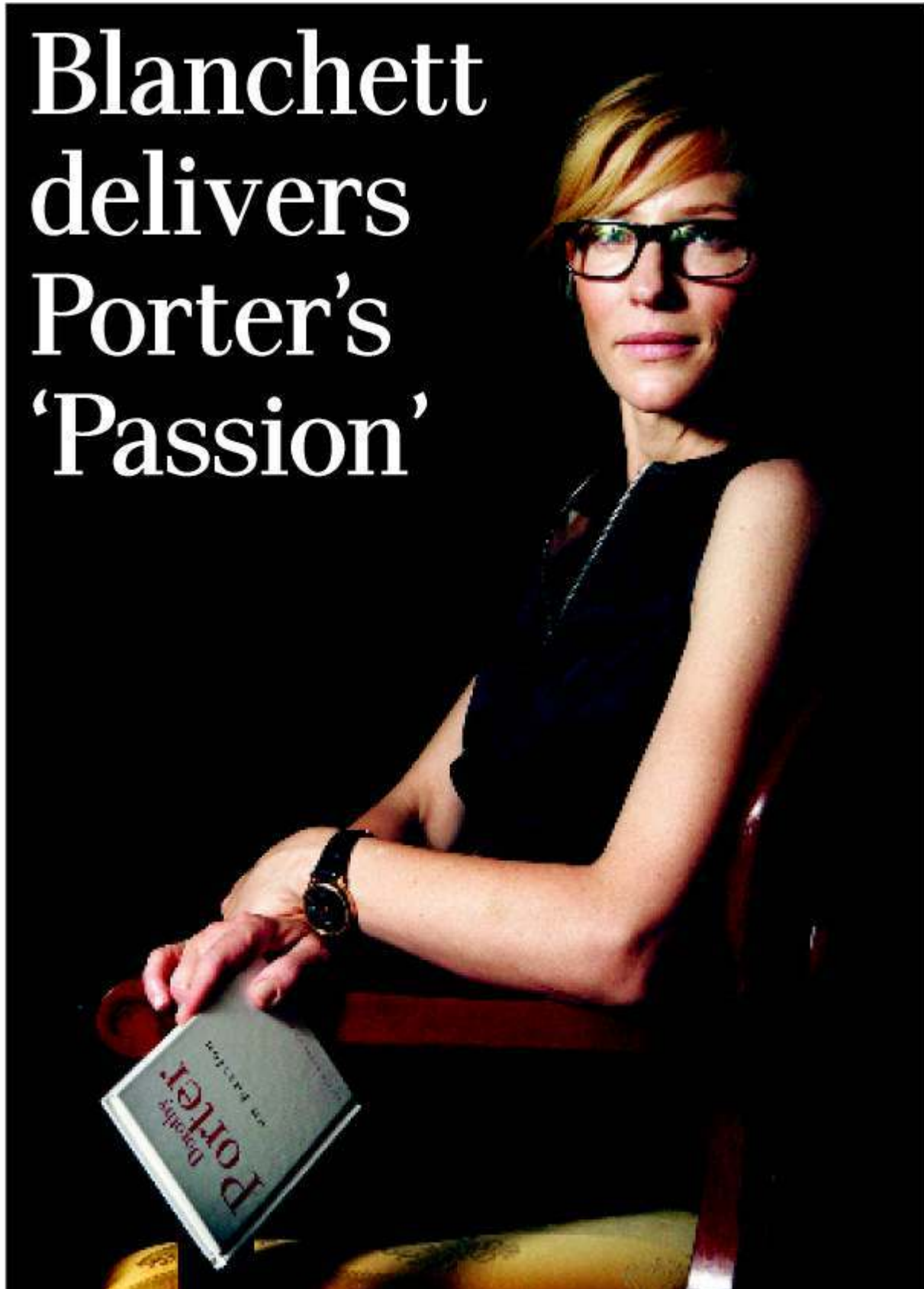




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Blanchett delivers Porter's 'Passion'





Poet Dorothy Porter's
final writings on the
power of her muse and
much more have been
given a stellar reading,
writes **Frances
Atkinson.**

IT'S not possible to bring back the dead, but yesterday the final work of Australian poet Dorothy Porter was brought vividly to life by actress Cate Blanchett in a sold-out Things On Sunday event at the Malthouse Theatre.

Blanchett read Porter's final book, *On Passion*, part of the *Little Books on Big Themes* series published by Melbourne University Press.

Written shortly before Porter's death from breast cancer in 2008 at age 54, the 10,000-word essay is a fearless reflection on the subjects that gave her life meaning: poetry, desire, nature, music and most powerfully, her own mortality.

The essay also explores the quieter moments of her life; a glimpse of an azure kingfisher, revelling at the novelty of an iPod, all

explored with what Porter calls simply "gusto".

On a stark stage, Blanchett delivered the essay with few theatrical flourishes. Wearing little make-up and a simple black dress, the Oscar-winning actress let the weight and wit of Porter's words speak for themselves.

In the audience was Porter's partner of 15 years, author Andrea Goldsmith, and Porter's parents and sisters.

Porter's first collection of poetry, *Little Hoodlum*, was published when she was 21. Two of her books, *What a Piece of Work* and *Wild Surmise*, were shortlisted for the Miles Franklin award, and her final book of poetry, *The Bee Hut and Other Poems*, was published last year.

As the house lights brightened once Blanchett finished the reading, the crowd responded immediately. Blanchett extended her arms

out slightly and clapped too, a gesture that appeared to be a thank you to Porter. Speaking after the performance, Goldsmith, visibly moved, said she found the experience surreal. "Dot did a lot of work in her head on the essay," she said.

"She did a brilliant first draft. I'd read it before she got very ill but it required very little editing. You can hear it in the work. She knew exactly what fuelled her passion."

On Blanchett's performance Goldsmith said: "It was absolutely wonderful. What I loved most of all was a sense of intimacy to it. She held me in the moment. Cate, like any great artist, knows passion. It was an ideal match."

Would Porter have been pleased? "Yes. Oh yes," Goldsmith nodded. "She would have been very, very pleased."