northerly

Byron Writers Festival Member Magazine Summer 2023

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northerly is the quarterly magazine of Byron Writers Festival.

Byron Writers Festival is a non-profit member organisation presenting workshops and events year-round, including the annual Festival.

Held on the lands of the Arakwal Bumberbin and Minjungbal peoples of the Bundjalung Nation, we pay respect to the traditional owners of these lands and acknowledge them as the original storytellers of this region.

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NSW GOVERNMENT

Artistic Director's note

As I write this message I am watching an impossibly blue sky and hearing the trees usher in the chorus of cicadas that signal summer has arrived. It is simultaneously hard and easy to believe that we have drawn a close on the year that was 2022. One that for many in our community and beyond was exceptionally difficult. So as we ease into summer, wishing to leave the endless rains behind, I am reflecting on some of the silver linings that emerged from this last year.

For us here at Byron Writers Festival, that was undoubtedly the return to stage of our beloved event. It was with great joy that we were able to present a wonderful and successful festival amidst a serendipitous final farewell to the Elements of Byron site. For many years the Festival has called Elements home, where readers and writers have met with the beach just over the dunes to celebrate and delight in their shared love of words. We are so grateful to Elements for generously hosting the festival for so long and will treasure the many wonderful memories we all no doubt share. As with all good things, an end has now eventuated and the Elements site is destined to a new owner and a new future.

As we shift our focus to new beginnings, I am are delighted to share with you that Byron Writers Festival 2023 will be presented at the Bangalow Showgrounds, from 11-13 August. For those of you unfamiliar with it, the Bangalow Showgrounds is a picturesque heritage site nestled in the heart of Bangalow, a charming hinterland village just a stone's throw from Byron Bay. As a historian by training, this heritage setting makes my heart flutter and sets my historical imagination on fire. The team and I are very much looking forward to bringing the site to life and creating a playground of literary delights for you, so stay tuned as we share more details over the coming months.

Until then, I invite you to dive into this issue of *northerly* and its fantastic selection of interviews and excerpts from authors featured at this year's Byron Writers Festival. I hope you enjoy reading them, preferably on a beachside holiday or in the cool shade of your verandah. And do tune in to our summer podcast series *Love & Wonder*, a selection of six inspiring and heartfelt sessions from the 2022 festival.

Finally, I want to thank you all for your ongoing support. At the heart of every organisation are its members, those who believe passionately in our mission and share our vision for a world informed and enlivened by reading and writing. Each year your contribution helps us to present our event and engage in a number of year round activities that stimulate the literary culture of the Northern Rivers region. I look forward to your continued support in 2023, and hope you will join us in Bangalow later next year to ring the Byron Writers Festival into its next era.

With best wishes

Zoë Pollock
Artistic Director, Byron Writers Festival

A cuppa with Shirley and Nan

Volunteers continue to be the lifeblood of Byron Writers Festival's connection to community. Tom Wolff, our festival administrator, paid a visit to two of our most treasured to talk about their fifty years in the Northern Rivers and their fondest memories of festival volunteering.

Nan Pulsford (left) and Shirley Nelson in Ballina.

Shirley Nelson and Nan Pulsford have been attending Byron Writers Festival since its inception over twenty years ago. As well as being strong advocates for arts and culture in the local region, the pair have been a valued part of the Byron Bay community since relocating here in 1970 off the back of a van trip around Australia.

These days Shirley and Nan, both longtime members of the festival, come into the office to help us with the quarterly mail-out of *northerly*. They always arrive with big smiles on their faces, plenty of stories to share, and usually a thorough review of their most recent reads.

Shirley originally hails from England, where she trained to be a midwife. She then flew out to Australia on a working holiday visa with some friends. After living on the South Coast of NSW on a farm near Berry, Nan moved to Hobart to study midwifery. It was here where Nan and Shirley first met.

In the mid-1960s Shirley, Nan and a friend of theirs – all in their twenties – decided to head off around Australia in a Ford Thames van that Nan's brother had fitted out so they could all sleep inside.

After their trip around the country, Shirley and Nan decided to move to Byron Bay after thinking that it was a beautiful place to live. 'We bought a pretty rundown old place on the corner of Cowper and Ruskin Streets.' explains Shirley. Although it was a little shabby the house had good bones: the previous owners, the Duncan family, owned a local sawmill and the house had been built with a combination of the beautiful rainforest timbers Red Cedar and Teak, combined with Turpentine floors. 'We paid $6000 for it in 1970.'

The conversation shifts to Byron Writers Festival – a mainstay in their annual cultural calendar for two decades now. 'I like reading and I loved the group that originally formed the Northern Rivers Writers Centre,' notes Shirley. Both women attended the festival for a couple of years before jumping on as volunteers in the late nineties and, 'Well, the rest is history, we've been with it ever since.'

Shirley quickly jumped into supervising the Southern Cross University marquee – ensuring fire regulations were met by ushering people out of the walkways and thoroughfares, often met with unimpressed looks. Nan, on the other hand, was the festival medic. She'd roam around the festival attending sessions with a mobile phone in her pocket in case of any emergencies. She'd be the unfortunate recipient of glares from members of the audience any time her phone rang. 'Eventually someone taught me how to put it on vibrate," she explains, chuckling. Since then the pair have been involved in all manner of volunteer duties over their time helping run the annual festival.

After a cup of coffee and a walk through Shirley and Nan's beautiful and well-kept garden, I bid them farewell, knowing I'll see them again soon for the mail-out of the magazine you're now reading. Thank you, Shirley and Nan, for your many years of service. Your tireless contribution is a gift to the community that we all ought to celebrate.

Margin Notes

News, events and announcements
from Byron Writers Festival

Thank you to our 2022 Members

As a not-for-profit organisation, our members contribute directly towards sustaining the arts in regional Australia and creating a vibrant community of readers, writers and storytellers. Thank you for your support in recent challenging years – it has made the world of difference!

A reminder that our annual Membership Drive will be kicking off on Monday 6 February, 2023, with all new or renewing members going into the draw for some fantastic prizes. Current 2022 memberships will expire on 28 February 2023, and we will be sending email newsletters with information about how to renew early next year.

Farewell Emma

It is with mixed emotions that we bid farewell to the wonderful Emma Keenan, who in late 2022 moved on from her position as executive director of Byron Writers Festival to pursue a full-time career in counselling. Emma was instrumental in supporting the festival's growth over her seven-year tenure and ensured our sustainability over some of the more challenging times of late. Her caring nature, astuteness and incredible passion for the arts will be greatly missed but we wish her all the best in her next career chapter. Thank you, Emma!

2022 Residential Mentorship recipients flourish under new mentor

Congratulations to the recipients of the 2022 Residential Mentorship and Mentoring Scholarships.

In November, four local writers – Kathryn Goldie, Melinda Kemp, Nic Margan and Jennifer St George – spent the week developing and refining their manuscripts under the guidance of esteemed local author Sarah Armstrong.

'The overall calibre of the submissions to the residency was striking, and the four who were chosen really took advantage of the opportunity, writing a lot and offering each other thoughtful feedback,' said Sarah Armstrong.

In addition, four shortlisted writers were selected to take part in a Firsthand Feedback session with a local author/mentor of their choice. The Mentoring Scholarship recipients were Ana Davis, Jacqueline Mohr, Nell Tynan and Sonya Voumard. Thanks to all those who submitted, and to our wonderful, hardworking judges.

Clockwise from left:
Nic Margan, Sarah Armstrong, Jennifer St George, Kathryn Goldie and Melinda Kemp

Summer listening

Our 2022 Festival Podcast program launched late last year with *Series One: Love & Wonder*, a collection of conversations recorded live at the 2022 Byron Writers Festival. *Love & Wonder* traverses matters of the heart and soul in all its guises; from big love stories and life-changing epiphanies, to tiny moments of clarity that serve to make sense of our place in the world. We hope you enjoy it, and stay tuned for future Festival Podcast series throughout the year. Available via **byronwritersfestival.com/digital** or search for Byron Writers Festival on your podcasts app or Spotify.

Young performers shine

In February this year, NORPA and Byron Writers Festival's StoryBoard program joined forces to collaborate on a Writing for Performance program with writer/performer Kate McDowell and choreographer Noa Rotem. Then the floods hit.

So, when seven aspiring writers finally took part in the Writing for Performance project this September, it was particularly moving.

Cover story

The artwork for the cover of this issue of *northerly* is a photo from local author Tricia Shantz's new book, *Neverland: American and Australian Surfers in Byron Bay 1960s and 1970s*. This image was taken by Bob Weeks in 1965, and shows the route to Byron Bay Lighthouse. Turn to page 8 for an extract from the book.

For five days, the group brainstormed, devised, workshopped and experimented to create an original performance work. The final piece, as told to family and friends, was unique, personal and courageous as participants integrated their own lives to tell their own stories.

Escape from floods, the challenge of hearing aids and the death of a beloved dog were some of the themes woven seamlessly together by movement and gesture.

Left: Writing for Performance participants. Photo: Kurt Petersen.

The group have formed strong bonds and are keen to work together on future projects. Watch this space!

Festival 2023 dates and venue

The festival team and board are thrilled to announce that the 2023 Byron Writers Festival will be held at the Bangalow Showgrounds, a charming heritage showground in the neighbouring village of Bangalow, from 11-13 August.

Following a long and vibrant tenure at Elements of Byron, the festival will venture to a new venue as this site is no longer available for events. Stay tuned as we share exciting future plans for the 2023 festival over the coming months.

Writers call-out

The magazine you currently hold in your hands, *northerly* (the official publication of Byron Writers Festival), is seeking anyone in the local community keen to contribute book reviews, literary essays, opinion pieces or author interviews. Experience not necessary, just a strong interest in books and literary culture and an ability to string a nice sentence together. The festival is now able to offer a number of perks and advantages as a 'thank you' for contributing in this way.

Additionally, the magazine would like to showcase the creative works and accolades of Byron Writers Festival Members. Whether you are interested in writing for *northerly* or just want to share some news, email: **northerlyeditor@gmail.com**

Feature Poet: Autumn Royal

To be consumed in something rather than by it

‘a moment’s unrecoverable banishment of self’ — Evelyn Lau

In whatever era this finds you, I am out of my depth — regardless,
of this, the more I say I write poetry, the less I express it, and so
into a container of salted water, I saturate my pages for tomorrow’s absence.
Inside the mist of living without death there is the accumulation
of living with death and the lure of drama, barbed assumptions, the only
way it goes—is drama. Natural versus man-made injuries—as if tragedy
allows for transferable roles and the glorious thrill of gorging
on the banquet that is your own body. No one has ever wanted to consume
me like this, and one must be composed when both guest and host.
Heritage-listed façades in the foreground, assemblies in the background.
The common areas of the complex, in order of appearance—the entrance,
the hallways, several outdoor-facing windows, and the laundry. Letters
to outline measures of permitted distances—as if adoration could be
restricted.
My account allows for building poems, not a house. Wipe a finger along
the dusty plaster of a wall and rub the powder over your eyelids. If possible—
leave your home during allocated hours—blink as a reminder
you may still own secrets and must harness the gift to lie. A circulated memo
updates the limits of imagination before it falls into predictability
or magical thinking. I am cushioned in pursuing experiences from written
scripts as you ache in a pre-arranged room for a statement to be recorded
after the accident—your mouth craving for water and space for slippage.
The fever of the scene heats, like love, endless love, rumoured to be as
expected
as flesh and since there were no physical injuries after the collision you must
form
and sustain a narrative, a statement for insurance. I sit and visualise the rising,
the falling of your chest, my cruelty heaves as I relate these undulations to
thoughts.

When each line assumes that the one(s) before it are addressed

‘Sometimes it feels like it is over and it’s not.
Sometimes it feels like it has just begun and it’s over.’ — Juliana Spahr

This whole account will be written for you,
yet will barely be about you and so—
O, I’m in dispute with words, distracted
by the task of detailing flowers—bouquets
brimming to escape poses with rosette
trimmings, weighted by childhood—dominating
the core of my figure, this form, not priceless
or refundable. Tell me this is terrible,
and I’ll believe it—not for need but for the sake
of it—it is all for the sake of it—an idea, an empty
bladder, a chamber to fill. The frills of naivety
render me as unkind as the assumption anyone
has ever been innocent, with a window
beside a bed overlooking a lake to bathe in—
after a breakfast of poached pears and cream,
stalks left intact—a cinnamon quill endlessly
bobbing about the boil. And as we evaporate
into the things that keep happening—a poet
may be positioned in front of a grand piano,
they cannot play. No matter what is requested,
some poems will enter streets—I hope for more.

Autumn Royal creates poetry, drama and criticism. Autumn was the founding editor of Liquid Architecture’s *Disclaimer* journal and interviews editor at *Cordite Poetry Review*. Versions of these poems were originally published in *Running Dog*, 2021.

Extract: Neverland by Tricia Shantz

Local author Tricia Shantz's landmark new book, *Neverland: American and Australian Surfers in Byron Bay 1960s and 1970s*, tells the story of the surfers who made Byron Bay their home during surfing's golden age. It is also an insightful social history of an iconic town that has undergone profound cultural change over the decades. Here, we offer an extract from Shantz's wide-ranging tome.

Byron Bay is a place people fall in love with. Its name is now known around the world for its spectacular beaches, creative, unique culture and individual style. Over its past 170 years, until the end of the 1970s, the town had a long and diverse history of primary industry, some on a world scale. Well known are: the timber getters who cut down the hardwood rainforests, Norco (still existing which began in Byron Bay) for its world-famous butter and pigs, farming of various types from dairy to beef, coffee, bananas, sugar cane and others, whaling, sand mining on its beaches, two jetties that were built and destroyed in storms, that had made Byron Bay the main port for industry in the region.

"The years of 1947 to 1966 marked the peak of Byron Bay's industrial era... The town was unkindly described as *reeking from the stench originating from the piggery, meatworks and whaling factories with their effluent colouring the sea and washing on the shore*." (byronbayhistoricalsociety.org.au). Towards the end of this era surfers came to town. They were the nascent beginning of a new industry. Travel is something that surfers do in search of waves and in the 1960s they began to move around Australia and the world.

Burgeoning hippy values and the counterculture were embraced by surfers as a lifestyle. Byron Bay was never really a hippy town, even though the media today still perpetuates the myth. Surfing's Shortboard Revolution, from longboards to shortboards, happened between 1967 and 1969, a significant part of this in Byron Bay sparked by American George Greenough and Australian Bob McTavish. Surfing magazines and films arrived and the 'soul surfing' era began. Surfers turned Byron Bay from fibro grey into technicolour, epitomised by the opening of the Neverland shop on Jonson Street in 1972.

Surfers set the agenda for what Byron was to become, changing it from its industrial, working-class roots into a culturally diverse town. They were small in numbers but in retrospect their influence was immense. They questioned the Vietnam War, conservative politics, and societal norms generally. Many were evading the draft and some had been in Vietnam. Surfers had worked out that there was a different way to live: surfing came first and the rest of life could be fitted in around it. There wasn't much interest in working a Monday to Friday 9 to 5 week. In Byron Bay and Lennox Head they found paradise: iconic, consistent waves, favourable climate, heightened atmosphere, cheap housing, food and freedom.

Throughout the 1960s and early 1970s Byron Bay was a very small town of a few thousand people. It wasn't big enough to have its own detectives so the detectives based in Lismore covered it. During the week it was a quiet town, with busy weekends. "We weren't worried about who was coming into town, except maybe what they were doing in town," according to one of the

detectives. The surfers attracted non-surfers including: wealthy young people living off their family money, actors and actresses, musicians and criminals. Byron Bay wasn't really the small town it appeared to be or, looking back from now, what people think it was.

The American surfers, mostly Californian, first arrived in Byron Bay in 1959 with Bob Cooper. They really descended in the late 1960s and early 1970s with the arrival of Derek Beckner, George Greenough, Bob Newland, Garth Murphy, Bill Engler, Rusty Miller, Roy Meisel, Peter Green, Michael Cundith and others. Some came to visit. Some stayed for the rest of their lives, others spent a decade or so and then returned to California. Some, such as Phil Edwards, American surfing hero, came through in 1961 for one day with Bruce Brown who was filming *Surfing Hollow Days*. Australian Paul Witzig brought American Bruce Brown to Australia in 1961 to show his films and travelled up the east coast with him and Phil Edwards that year. The local surfers saw Edwards surf. It was life-changing for them and history-making for the town. They stayed and watched, seeing Phil Edwards, then considered by accolade the best surfer in the world, surf their home break. Sixty years later the local surfers still remember seeing him in Byron Bay. Guys like eleven-year-old Donny Campbell, the Keever brothers, John and Jimmy, and maybe Bugs Wright. They just happened to be there when the Americans, including Bob Cooper, were surfing at Wategos Beach and The Pass.

Surfing Hollow Days was shown up and down the California coast when it was released in 1962. Byron Bay became known to the surf masses, who watched Phil Edwards surfing Wategos Beach and lazing on the grass below the Byron Bay lighthouse. As Byron local Paul Haskew tells it: "We saw the biggest change in surfing when Phil Edwards and his mates arrived from California and Hawaii with their Malibu surfboards... The Americans met up with a few of the bigger lads from the surf club, surfing on their hollow plywood surf boards. As far as performance in the waves, our local boards were a bit clumsy compared to the fibreglass and foam boards from California... A new era in surfing was being born as Phil and his mates finally headed north towards Noosa Heads, leaving a legacy with their new-found friends from Byron Bay; one Californian Malibu surf board and a few hints and tips on how to hang five and ride the tube." (Duke, P. 2010.p.62).

The American wrestling TV commentator and surf filmmaker Val Valentine from Hawaii came through Byron Bay in June 1963 with then Sydney University law student, Lester Brien, and Bob McTavish, who both subsequently moved to Byron Bay. In Sydney Val engaged another rising surf talent, Dave O'Donnell (nicknamed Stickman), to help show his film *The Northside Story* (1963). Dave, a long-time Byron resident, went on to become one of Australia's leading surf

From left to right, surfers Peter Rae, Joey Cabell and Ron Perrott at Angourie, 1964. Photo provided by Ron Perrott.

picture-showmen. Having shown the film in Sydney, McTavish took Valentine and Lester from Byron Bay to Noosa in a VW Beetle with a trailer for the projector. At the end of 1963 McTavish famously stowed away on a ship to Hawaii, headed to the North Shore and got a job painting Val's house. The house was directly on the foreshore of Hawaii's most famous surf break, Sunset Beach.

Bob Evans was Australia's first surf safari filmmaker, and also worked with Paul Witzig. Evans took a young teenage surfer and photographer, Albe Falzon, under his wing. Evans safaried up and down the NSW coast with wave-hunting surfers in tow, for his film, *The Young Wave Hunters* (1964). In Angourie, they came upon the Hawaiian surf star, Joey Cabell, who had just placed second in the first World Surfing Championships held at Manly Beach in May 1964. Evans's film had a couple of significant sequences that showed Cabell "riding close to the curl at Angourie, with skilled manoeuvres that were to prove influential in the future development of Australian surfing... this was a significant film, with its footage of Holden cars on dirt roads and visits to sleepy fishing villages with their spartan camping grounds capturing a time of apparent innocence, when Australia was on the verge of the massive changes that were to characterise its next decade, a time before the youth rebellion of the sixties had gained full steam." (Thoms, A. 2000. p.90). Joey Cabell recalled in 2021, "In 1964 I surfed Byron Bay. I didn't get a big day there, but I got shoulder-high waves. There were fantastic rights and the area along the coastline is so beautiful! Angourie was also a memorable experience riding perfect tube rides."

In September 1964 Bob Evans screened American Bud Browne's surf film, *Locked In* (1964). It featured Americans and Australians with one sequence showing the "recently discovered" Angourie. At the same time, Paul Witzig began showing American Bruce Brown's film, *The Endless Summer* (1964) in Australia. It quickly became the most widely-known cult surf film of all time. It told the story of two surfers who set out to hunt and chase for the perfect wave around the world. It premiered in a snowy winter Kansas City, US, to sold-out shows to non-surfers. Witzig shot the Australian sequences for the film. It was distributed by Columbia Pictures in 1966 to a worldwide audience. However, "It effectively marked the end of the Malibu phase of surfing, for the intense activity in Australia in the early 1960s was about to give birth to a New Era". (Thoms, A. 2000. p.91). Progressive surfers, some of whom were in Byron Bay, were experimenting with new board lengths.

American surf world guru, George Greenough, came to

Derek Beckner surfing at Main Beach, Byron Bay, 1965. Photo: Max Pendergast.

Byron Bay in 1965. He shaped boards and filmed *The Innermost Limits of Pure Fun* in 1968 at Lennox Head. It had an American release in 1970. George has lived in his hand-built, pyramid-shaped house at Broken Head since the '70s. He is one of the most innovative board-shaping, surf-creating geniuses in the surfing world. Many years later George invented the Greenough Active Response Craft (GARC), a surf rescue vessel that was eventually purchased by the American Navy. George (who is referred to by just one name, either his first or his last, and everyone knows who he is) founded Wilderness Surfboards in Santa Barbara in 1966 with Michael Cundith. Cundith also made Byron his home in the early '70s, having seen Greenough's film and been influenced by Bob Cooper about Australia. He began shaping boards under the label Sky Surfboards on Shirley Street, Byron Bay around 1972 or '73. Wilderness was reborn in Angourie by Australians Chris Brock, and brothers Gary and Terry Keys.

Then the photographs started appearing: American Derek Beckner surfing the pier at Main Beach in 1965 in an American surf magazine, taken by Byron local Max Pendergast. Stickman said that Derek Beckner was "the yank who 'blew' the crew away in the Bay." In 1968 in Hawaii, the Australian Bob McTavish gave American Don Morley an 8x10 black and white photo of Broken Head surf that Australian surf photographer John Pennings had taken. That was it. It became Morley and his friend Greg Weaver's dream to surf Broken Head. And, they did. Influential Hawaiian surfer, Randy Rarick, also came at that time, although he preferred the Sunshine Coast to Byron. While never living in Byron, he visited often, taking in what was happening in surfing here and shared this back home.

Neverland: American and Australian Surfers in Byron Bay 1960s and 1970s can be purchased in all local bookstores in the Byron, Ballina and Lismore areas, as well as Noosa and Brisbane. It is also available online at rustymillersurf.com, and Tricia can be emailed at triciashantz11@gmail.com

Deauthorisation: An interview with Chelsea Watego

Another Day in the Colony by Chelsea Watego is a blistering account of the racism and alienation faced by First Nations people in Australia, as well a treatise on resistance and sovereignty. Rebecca Ryall sat down with Watego at Byron Writers Festival 2022.

Reading Chelsea Watego's *Another Day in the Colony* was intensely uncomfortable for me as a white, non-Indigenous settler descendant. After reading the book, which so elegantly dismantles the concept of hope, interviewing the author at Byron Writers Festival, with the theme of 'Radical Hope', had me questioning on every level. Yet the encounter was more joyful than I could have imagined.

Chelsea, the experience of reading the book as a white person was deeply uncomfortable. You repeatedly state that you are not writing for a white audience. I can't think of another instance where I have read a text that was very deliberately not written with me, as a white reader, in mind.

I deliberately set out to write a book for my mob. At the time of writing the book, I was teaching critical Indigenous studies at uni, to predominantly white students. I would go home to Inala at the end of the day and think that I want to be having these conversations with Blackfullas. I wasn't trying to be exclusive, but I was deliberately not centring the white reader. Indigenous literature should be

about, by, and for Blackfullas. There is a particular type of Black writer that is celebrated because they appeal to a white market. This serves a comfortable narrative of rising above, and upward mobility of mob. Acceptable Indigenous literature is generally children's stories, poetry or fiction. *I want to see books where we get to be the authors of our own experience.* It's like, the publishing industry thinks Black people don't read. I want to see my book in Black hands, Black homes.

Did you feel guilty about reading the book? I get loads of emails from white people saying they read the book, even though it wasn't for them, and express that they feel guilty. The other kinds of emails I get are from mostly Black women telling me they have finally seen the violence in the organisations in which they work and have quit their jobs. So, I hear about white guilt and Black empowerment, in response to my work.

***Another Day in the Colony* also explores the experience of Blackness in the academy and other colonial structures. Thinking about it, I realise that most of the non-fiction I have read in relation to Indigeneity focuses on a narrative of deficit, struggle and poor outcomes.**

Yeah. I was really inspired by the work of Black writers in the 1980s. Jackie Huggins's *Sister Girl*, for example. Here was a Black sister, writing non-fiction, writing from and working at the University of Queensland where I would go on to study. Those older Black writers really inspired me as they carved this space out for us. We need to be critical about what is Black literature, who it's for, its function. I love what's happening in Indigenous literature, led by Black women, writing with authority from our own experience.

The central thesis of your book is 'fuck hope', and here we are at a festival with the theme of 'Radical Hope'. What did you think when you got the invitation to appear here?

Well, I was a bit wild at the start actually, because there was a panel happening on the subject of hope, and I wanted to participate in that conversation, because that's what my book is about. Why can't I sit at the table with the adults and add a Black criticality to the conversation?

I've realised that much of publishing is about selling hope. I'm currently curating a festival debate; I had a list of authors and the abstracts of their works, so I did a word search on 'hope'. It's amazing how many of the abstracts included the word. Well, I said 'fuck hope'. This has inspired Blackfullas – I sell truth about our power and beauty, not hope. I'm okay with people who need hope, but don't insist that I need it to do what I do. It's an imposition. Fuck positive thinking. There's a violence in it. There's still a way to find meaning beyond hope. There's more meaning to be found in the ugly truth. That's what drives me to stay up all night with the work I do and the fights I have. Not in the hope of change. The world is fucked, but let's talk about it and laugh and fight.

I listened to some of your podcast *Wild Black Women* and found it hilarious. You were so funny. It was interesting to juxtapose the podcast with your book, because the humour doesn't come through in the written text.

Mob see the humour and feel uplifted. Sometimes they're hurt or sad, but it uplifts them. We used to get complaints about laughing too much in the podcast. But we would just play little violins and laugh even louder! That's why we called it *Wild Black Women* – we wanted to co-opt those racialised and gendered stereotypes of angry Black women. I did a recording of the book, and it was when I spoke the words out loud that I realised, 'Oh I really did go in hard' in this or that section. Then I could see why people have responded the way they have to the book. I was writing from a place where I was broken and sad. I wasn't as strong as I normally feel. There's a vulnerability in the text that's not usually in my public stuff.

The response from Black readers is so special. It shows how undernourished and taken for granted Black readers are. I feel really proud that different kinds of Black hands are holding my book. It's really cool when I meet different Black sisters, crying and saying they feel seen. This book has led to sisters quitting their jobs after realising the violence in their organisations. I felt bad initially – I'm casting them into poverty! – but when you deal with the reality, not the lie of hope, you realise you are deserving of more, and so people are leaving their workplaces. I love the quitting emails. Proud that I helped them to see the violence they were experiencing and empowered them to ask for more.

Speaking of workplaces, your book takes aim at academic institutions, among others, and yet you work in one. How is it you still have a job, and why are you there? What is your role in this oppressive structure?

I never wanted to be an academic. I never bought the lie of academia. I see it just like the factory across the road where my dad worked. I see the academy as a place to raid, to get the things I need to do the work that I do. I spent a lot of time in my undergraduate studies working as

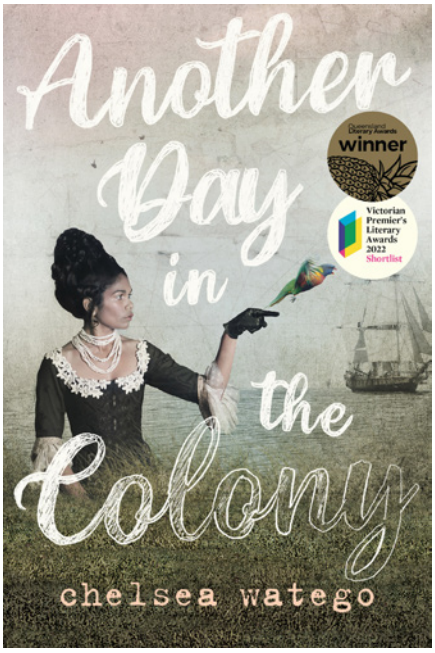
a research assistant. I worked on a range of projects where I would go out to communities and ask questions about what was *wrong* in our communities, what was *wrong* with our culture. So, with my PhD I set out to set the terms, to ask the questions and tell the story that I wanted to tell. I've been working in that system for about ten years now and I've finally got the freedom to do the work that I want to do. The institution doesn't have to like me. I bring in the money now, I get the fellowships to do the work. They can move me around and give me shitty little offices, but it doesn't matter anymore! My work is for the people I labour for, not the institution, which will never see me. Our faces are engraved into the sandstone of that institution, as a past people. They won't see me. So, I'm creating my own intellectual community of transdisciplinary activist scholars. We have formed the Institute for Collaborative Race Research, where we can do the political work, the work the institution doesn't love or value. We've created a new discipline – Indigenous Health Humanities – and I'm building an army of critical Black intellects, skilling them to be public intellectuals and inserting Black voices in every discipline. Not all intellectual work is done in the academy. You see this work happening in community organisations, art galleries… I'm getting to do work that I love and believe in, on my own terms.

It seems like you are quite comfortable working on the margins?

I love the margins! There is a freedom in being an outcast. I talk to mob in my book about what can be achieved from the margins. That's where change happens, not the centre. I love winning from that place, and on our terms. Recognition from Black mob is so much more important to me than a certificate from the VC. Not everyone is happy at the margins – some people like to hang there while it seems cool, but will rush back to the protection of the centre when they feel threatened. So, I'm very choosy who I work with these days. I'm involved with a very interesting community of scholars – Indigenous and non-Indigenous scientists, race scholars, journalists – and we are drawing on a collective wisdom, doing transdisciplinary work to fuck with things. It's exciting to work with people who know their place within the political structures, who can hold the line with us and not have to pander to white validation.

Decolonisation is a buzzword in academia right now. What do you see as the role of white people within this process?

Well, I don't think decolonisation is the right word for our context. Decolonisation describes a situation when the white fellas all leave, so it's just not appropriate in the settler colonial context. I prefer to talk about deauthorisation – thinking about power and rearranging how it is distributed. Everyone has a role in that. Sometimes people think they are decolonising, when what they are actually doing is indigenising and accessorising, which often just authorises the status quo. I'm much more interested in deauthorising power structures. Some people don't like that because they benefit from these power structures. They will decolonise but not deauthorise. White fellas have power to fuck with power structures. Angry white women can get shit done! That's how the world works. Use your power for good not evil. I work with some great white fellas who understand that, while they can't speak for us, they can amplify others. Everyone has a part to play. It can't be left to Blackfullas to dismantle the power structures that limit them. And it's also true that sometimes white people need to hear things from white women not Black women. Everyone has a responsibility to undermine violence wherever it operates. Everyone is a beneficiary of the Indigenous labour of calling for a richer and more caring notion of humanity. We are the best at primary healthcare – acknowledged by those experts who tell us that our Aboriginal medical services look and perform better than their metropolitan counterparts. Our ways of doing things are cool and work for everyone. I am advocating for non-hierarchical, better ways of being in the world.



Another Day in the Colony is published by University of Queensland Press.

Parallel worlds: Creating protagonists from personal experience

Northern Rivers writer Bronwyn Birdsall's debut novel, *Time and Tide in Sarajevo*, is based on the author's formative experiences teaching in the city – yet the process of fictionalisation took the narrative decisively away from any biographical elements. Birdsall appeared at Byron Writers Festival 2022, and participated in the Byron Writers Festival Residential Mentorship in 2013.

One morning before work in 2016, I found myself writing a scene that took me by surprise. I had been working on a memoir about the four years I'd lived in Sarajevo, but I seemed to be writing a scene about a politician – and I'd never taught a politician. And the 'me' character was saying things I'd never say. By the time I was running for my bus, I had figured out that I was writing fiction. Very quickly I came up with the basics of a story that took me several years to solve, like a puzzle.

I've told this anecdote endless times since the publication of my first novel *Time and Tide in Sarajevo,* in August 2022. It's a true story, of course, but it conveniently glosses over the main challenge I had in this fictionalised world: I had no idea who this character was that had taken my place at the centre of the narrative.

The other characters in the book appeared to show up on the page fully formed, each with their own distinct purpose in the story. The plot itself felt almost out of my control as these characters interacted, rapidly shaping into a narrative set over a couple of days and centred around a dilemma the protagonist faces. I felt so much freer in fiction, with all the complexities of Sarajevo coming through without the pressure I felt in non-fiction to contextualise and explain things that I barely understood myself. I'd lived in Sarajevo from 2007-2011, eleven years after the end of the long and brutal siege of the city. The details of life there were still very clear in my mind, especially after the time I'd spent working on the memoir.

But this main character remained unknown to me, like a stranger. I named her Evelyn, after one of my great-grandmothers. I gave her a similar background to me, and made her a 27-year-old English teacher, as I had been at one point in Sarajevo. I tried to ground the book in my lived experiences in the city, and hoped she would begin to reveal herself, the way the other characters had.

By the end of the first draft, I could tell Evelyn was almost the inverse of me. Where I would have said something, she would be silent. Where I would likely have made a joke to diffuse tension, she would look out the window. She appeared to have no belief in a future at all, as far as I could tell. I slowly found a logic to how she interacted with the world – she seemed somewhat avoidant, an unusual conundrum for a main character to have. I paid attention though to how much the other characters in the book were invested in her. It was as if they could see something I couldn't.

Just as I thought I was beginning to get a handle on her, I ran into a bit of a problem. A trusted reader of an early draft diplomatically suggested that Evelyn's perspective was too narrow for them to relax into the story. I then experimented with shifting from first to third person and it felt like the lights came on. Suddenly I had a narrator, an unnamed presence watching this scenario play out. Evelyn could be a character, and her intensity hopefully became endearing rather than overwhelming. Practically, it also meant I could layer in subtext that the reader might see that Evelyn might not, especially to do with the traumatic past of the city itself. Like with the shift to fiction, the third-person point of view gave me a new freedom. I began to see that this story was not so much about a young woman changing, as I'd first thought. Rather, it was about her realising that she'd already changed from who she'd thought she was.

Photo: Camila Tassino

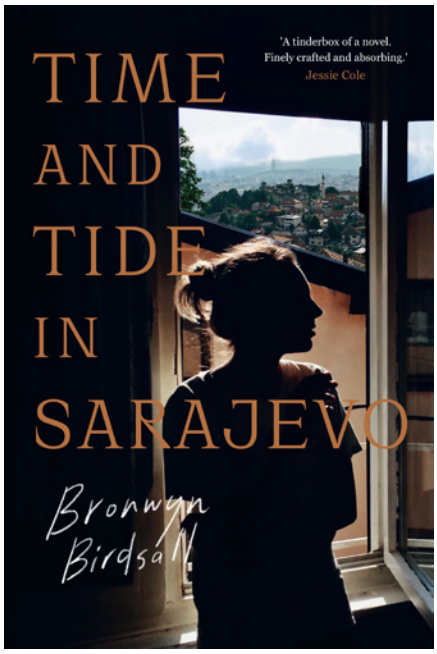
The right book at the right time

Several edits later, the novel was signed for publication by Affirm Press. During one of my structural edits, I got the feedback that Evelyn was still a bit hard to connect with. I came across *The Emotional Craft of Fiction* by Donald Maass. This slim gem of a book was the exact right book at the right time, a gift from the editorial gods. Maass is a long-time literary agent and states in the introduction to the book his desire for books that make him feel, regardless of genre or style. He systematically outlines techniques to bring the reader closer to the story. I think most writers have some things that they are naturally good at, perhaps dialogue or pacing, and others they need to work on. In Maass's book, I found a guide to the very thing I didn't know how to do instinctively.

Crucially, for my book, he believes an opening scene needs both a plot hook, and an emotional one. My story opens with an alarm going off in Evelyn's apartment building at 4.30am. It's a sharp opening, but Maass explains that we need to feel a protagonist's yearning before we even know what she yearns for. After a lot of trial and error, I added in just one line – that as she opens the door to the neighbour banging on it: '… despite the noise growing even louder, all she wanted to do was simply close the door on him and follow the gravity pulling her back to bed.' Who does that in an emergency? Someone yearning to avoid living. When she goes downstairs to the street with the rest of the inhabitants of the building, an elderly neighbour puts her gloved hands on Evelyn's cheeks to warm them. Later: 'When Evelyn tried putting her own hands on her face but, without gloves, it was like ice meeting ice.' And with this, we see that perhaps she's yearning for something more: connection and community. These brief moments began to bring her to life.

Maass suggests that with small, specific details like this, a reader can connect to larger emotions that they may not even be able to articulate to themselves. He suggests aiming to communicate what he calls the 'secondary emotions' of a scene. And with Evelyn, I knew what lay beneath the surface was complex and vivid – but Maass gave me the tools to share that with a reader. I continued to thread details throughout the book, such as a moment she finds:

> an unexpected item in the corner of her coat pocket – a rough, crumbling, dried-up eucalyptus leaf. Her mother had sent it in a letter, along with some articles she'd cut out from an Australian newspaper about mining in north-eastern Bosnia and a drawing by her sister's



younger son. She'd put them all by her bedside and cracked the then-fresh leaf like she used to as a kid, overcome by the rush of familiarity as the scent burst out.

Moments like this are the ones that now get quoted back to me when I speak to book groups or at events. And even after all those years drafting and re-drafting the book, it was adding in those details that finally allowed me into Evelyn's vast interior world.

Autofiction?

I wouldn't classify *Time and Tide in Sarajevo* as autofiction, where fictional elements combine with a writer's autobiography. There are many examples of that across literature, such as the recent Australian book *The Eulogy* by Jackie Bailey, or Karl Ove Knausgård's *My Struggle* series of six novels. My novel feels like a parallel world to my Sarajevo – similar, but nowhere near the same. No character is a version of any real person. If anything, they are each perhaps the combination of twenty to thirty people, from all parts of my life, even here in Australia. The story is informed by documentaries, art, poems, and conversations I overheard, as much as the actual events of my life there.

In the novel, I'm not re-interpreting what I experienced as much as taking small glimmers of truth, and morphing them into hopefully much more interesting scenarios. For instance, in the book, Evelyn's flatmate Aida runs an entire journalism start-up from their lounge room: 'whiteboards now on the large wall where artworks had once hung.' In real life, I was present when my flatmate had a meeting or two at our place about a project she was working on, not related at all to the events of the novel. An origin point of that storyline, perhaps, but a very distant one.

Farewelling Evelyn

Now that the book is complete, I do miss spending my days with Evelyn. She's funnier than she appears at first, braver too, and she allowed me a whole new perspective on Sarajevo. A reader suggested to me that the unnamed narrator is perhaps Evelyn, ten years on, looking back at what she'd experienced. This makes perfect sense to me, as I wrote the book about a decade older than when I lived there.

I was recently in a long queue at Sydney Airport when an announcement came over the loudspeaker that we had to change gates. Amid the groans, I followed my fellow passengers to our new location. As we passed the bookstore, there was *Time and Tide in Sarajevo*, up high on a shelf. I paused and looked at the silhouette of a woman pictured on the cover, the city of Sarajevo in the distance behind her. There Evelyn is, I thought, out in the world, out of my hands. I hope readers enjoy getting to know her as much as I did.

Writing circles: Lisa Clifford and the importance of bonds between authors

Local developmental editor and writing mentor Laurel Cohn profiles the Italy-based Australian writer and educator Lisa Clifford, and examines the importance of writers forging and maintaining connections.

The cafe we had arranged to meet at was closed, so we ended up in a creperie down the road with wallpaper featuring the Eiffel Tower. We found a table amidst school children being treated to afternoon tea by attentive parents. The young voices recounting playground dramas and the slurping of milkshakes faded as Lisa and I settled into conversation. It was one of those instant connections.

Lisa Clifford is an Australian writer and writing teacher who has spent the last twenty-five years in Florence. She is currently working on her fifth book, her first foray into fiction, and has, for the last ten years, been running writing retreats in Florence for English-speaking writers from all over the world. In 2022 she was in Australia for a few months catching up with family and friends. She reached out to me when a workshop of mine she had signed up for was postponed due to Covid restrictions. Unfortunately, she was going to be back in Florence on the rescheduled date, but would I be interested in running a session via Zoom for one of her writing retreats in Florence? And could we meet up?

So we found ourselves in Sydney, in the Parisian themed-cafe, talking about Florence, and life, and writing, and the publishing industry. We both revelled in the opportunity to 'talk shop' and discovered many points of connection. I was struck by Lisa's poise, clarity and authenticity. And I was curious about the path that had led Lisa to where she was now, and the work she does in supporting writers to grow, which has a lot of similarities to my own work as a developmental editor.

'At seventeen I didn't know what I wanted to do in my life and the Australian answer to that dilemma is usually travel.' Lisa ended up meeting 'this really nice Italian guy', Paolo, and staying for two years before returning home to train as a journalist. She worked in radio news for various stations before moving to Channel 10 as an on-screen reporter and later an associate producer of the late news. The radio and TV work led to newspaper and magazine articles.

Throughout these years, Lisa kept returning to Italy and Paolo visited Australia. After eighteen years of backwards and forwards it was time to make a decision and Lisa chose Italy. She and Paolo married and Lisa began the task of forging a full-time life in Florence. She shifted her focus to writing and her first book came out just before the birth of her first child. *Walking Sydney: A Guide to Sydney's 25 Best Walks* (1997) was a bestseller for Pan Macmillan, one of the first guide books of its type.

By the time her second child was born, Lisa had found a rhythm of sorts juggling parenting and writing. A humorous article about raising children in Italy caught the attention of her publisher and they asked her to write a book about it. Lisa said no: the children were still little – she hadn't raised them yet! She suggested instead a book about the eighteen years she and Paolo spent going back and forth. Pan Macmillan published *The Promise: An Italian Romance* in 2005.

As the children grew, Lisa put four hours aside a day, either at night or in the morning, to work on her writing projects. Sometimes she paid a friend to look after the kids, usually other English-speaking expats. Her third book for Pan Macmillan was *Death in the Mountains: The True Story of a Tuscan Murder* (2008) which was about the death in 1907 of Paolo's great-grandfather, a peasant farmer in the poor farming community of Casentino, north-eastern Tuscany. Casentino was not a well-known area and most people outside

Italy don't associate Tuscany with the horrendous poverty of share-cropping. 'I wanted to show others that there was more to Tuscany than the glamorous images featuring red and white checked tablecloths and chianti bottles with candles.' The book won the Victorian Premier's Award for Writing about Italians, an award which no longer exists.

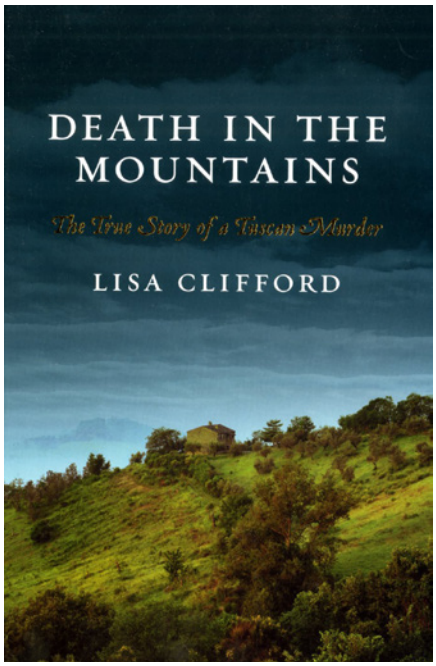
Lisa's fourth book was also an award-winner, claiming Australian Illustrated Book of the Year. *Naples: A Way of Love* (Penguin/Lantern 2013) is an intimate journey through the Naples most tourists never see, with photographs by Carla Coulson.

In the middle of all this writing, Lisa felt lonely and isolated. She had no connection to a writers group or writers' talks. Her life was in Italian; the ease in which writers can now connect through the internet didn't exist fifteen years ago. She travelled to the UK for writers retreats to fill herself up with English and to be with other writers. But after three or four of these she found herself needing more. As a mid-list writer living in Florence, she didn't need time and space to write, she wanted to connect with other writers in a more meaningful way. 'I've met writers who are content to be alone all day. I'm not like that. People feed me.'

By the time she'd finished the Naples book, Lisa had enough contacts in the publishing industry and enough writer friends to set up the kind of retreat she was looking for, one that teaches how to do it, that offers sessions on plot, character, backstory, sense of place, structure and so on, as well as time to go off and apply what has been talked about. And so The Art of Writing retreats in Florence was launched, backed by a strong ethos that writers are made, not born, and by a commitment to teach others what it really takes to get a book published. Aside from writers (including herself) and editors covering the craft of writing, Lisa's programs also feature agents, publishers and acquisition editors from Europe, US and Australia talking about the market and how to navigate the publishing industry.

Lisa lights up when she talks about the retreats: 'The connection with other writers and sharing what I've learnt feeds my soul. As we talk about narrative arc and pulse points and change and conflict and all these things we dig down into, you can see their eyes going off. They're on fire. I feel it's my job to light the fire and fan the flames while they're with us. Then they go away and make the bonfire.'

Writers come from the UK, US, Australia, South Africa, Scandinavia and all over Europe. Some are working on their first book, others on their fourth. There are writers of memoir, historical fiction,



women's fiction, crime, thrillers, and more. This year's participants have included a Danish cookbook writer, an underwater photographer documenting minke whales, and a British chaplain writing about her time working in prisons.

What connects all these disparate writers? 'Story is universal,' Lisa says. 'Engaging the reader is the same the world over and the principles we teach apply to all types of stories. How you write your story is not the same as someone else, but one of the delights of the retreats is seeing the messages of the teachings going off in all those different brains and the completely individual way writers apply those messages to their story.' I have had my own glimpse of that, zooming in from Byron Bay to teach several sessions in Florence through this year's European summer. What has struck me is that the writers seem so connected and receptive, so engaged and keen to learn. It is a testament to Lisa being able to realise her goal to create an environment where writers find their confidence, do the work, develop a skill set and gain a sense of direction.

Next year marks the tenth anniversary of The Art of Writing retreats and to celebrate Lisa is back home to hold her first retreat in Australia. Going forwards, she plans to divide her time between here and Italy. 'After twenty-five years in Florence, it's time to come home. There's a sanity injection and mental health check in coming back – touching my roots, listening to the birdsong, hearing the Aussie accent. I love how I can go to an English bookshop down the road. I love turning on the news and it's all in my language. I need a break from Italy. I feel connected to Australia.'

There's that word again. Connection seems to be a thread running through the conversations Lisa and I have shared this year. A desire to connect one-on-one sparked that first meeting in the creperie; a desire to connect to other writers inspired Lisa's The Art of Writing Retreats; and the desire to reconnect with Australia has provided the impetus to spend more time here and run the inaugural Australian Art of Writing retreat in Brisbane in February 2023.

As writers, it is easy to feel isolated and disconnected. Yes, writing is a solitary endeavour, but we can all benefit by connecting with others.

Information about Lisa's retreats can be found at www.the-art-of-writing.com. See also lisacliffordwriter.com

Developmental editor Laurel Cohn will be joining Lisa on the Brisbane Art of Writing retreat, alongside writer Tabitha Bird, publisher Bernadette Foley and literary agent Alex Adsett. She will also be teaching a four-day program for The Art of Writing in Florence in June 2023. You can find out more about Laurel at www.laurelcohn.com.au

Southern Cross University

A showcase of SCU student work,
compiled by Dr Emma Doolan

Thirty-three Thousand Days

By Deb Furhmann (Milgate)

The first fifteen hundred were easy;
A cry. Louder if needed. Attention seeking.
Time irrelevant, and not yet learned.
Day was lighter than night, until a light made night day.
Nourished. Content.
Five thousand days.
Twenty-six letters learned,
placed in order then spoken, read, and heard.
Some numbers; Count apples, multiply sheep. Subtract money.
Six thousand more.
Carefree. Que Sera Sera and The King and I. And Elvis.
Dancing at the Seabreeze.
The boys once dressed in slacks and gingham,
now men in finely tailored suits.
The young ladies sit, politely waiting to be asked.
Twelve thousand days.
A change of name. New titles.
Mother. Wife. Teacher. Carer
Loss and sympathy cards. Life cycle. The death of Elvis.
Three thousand five hundred.
Take that cruise!
The children of the children.
Christmas gatherings. The crackling and gravy.
Cards and presents. Soap. More photo frames.
Another five thousand.
The phone on the wall has gone. The new one is mobile.
A milestone marked. Invitations. The list is shorter.
Funerals and triangle sandwiches.
The children and their children visit less.
Day is lighter than night until a light makes night day.

Deb Fuhrmann (Milgate) is a fifth-generation Northern Rivers local. She has contributed for more than twenty-five years to the regional media industry and is an avid photographer. She is in her first year of an Associate Degree in Creative Writing at SCU.

2022 YA fiction in review

As Australian YA fiction continues to thrive, local writer and YA fiction expert Polly Jude guides us through some of the finest novels of 2022.

Unnecessary Drama

by Nina Kenwood

When eighteen-year-old Brooke moves into her first share-house, her new life in Melbourne is looking pretty great. It's a fresh start, a chance to re-invent herself and move away from childhood Brooke, who was an uptight stickler for the rules. City Brooke is going to be cool and casual and fun.

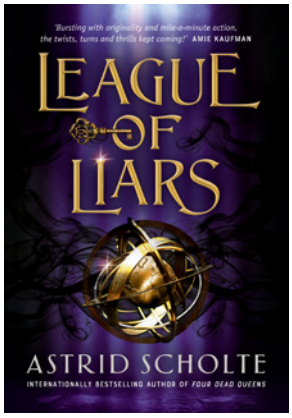
There are only three rules in the share-house. No pets. No romance. And no unnecessary drama.

Brooke would like a longer list, maybe even laminated and stuck to the fridge so there's no confusion. But she's new to the whole share-house thing, and she doesn't want to rock the boat.

When her hottie ex-best friend from high school moves in, they agree to ignore each other. But that proves hard to do.

This laugh-out-loud romantic comedy will appeal to the romantics (and their mums). It's written in a style true to Kenwood's previous YA hit, *It Sounded Better in My Head. Unnecessary Drama* is a cute coming-of-age story, and is quirky and fun.

Text / 320pp / RRP $24.99



League of Liars

by Astrid Scholte

Cayder Broduck wants nothing more than to punish all those who use illegal magic. He dreams of becoming a prosecutor so he can avenge his mother's death. When he gets his apprenticeship with one of the city's best public defenders, he intends to learn everything he can so he can bring the harsh rules of justice and punishment down on the criminals still using the dark arts.

Cayder soon meets three young criminals he is supposed to defend. He realises their stories, like his own, are complicated. Nothing is what it seems. He must unravel the truth and lies to work out what really happened the night his mother died.

League of Liars is a fast-paced, heart-stopping mystery. It will appeal to all who love fantasy – male and female. But be warned, the sequel, *Shadows of Truth*, isn't expected to be released until March 2024. If you love this one, you'll have quite a wait ahead!

Allen & Unwin / 320pp / RRP$19.99

The Museum of Broken Things
by Lauren Draper

Reece's head is still spinning. Now she's living in the small beachside town of Hamilton and everything is different. Reece misses her old friends and her old life.

Reece always wanted to be a doctor like her gran, but when her grandma dies, Reece inherits a rare collection of valuable books. Amongst the collection, there's a mysterious object. But the more she learns about the artefact, the more questions Reece has about the mysterious double life her gran might have lived.

Add the super-cute local lifeguard with some secrets of his own, new friends, old friends who know about her past and a lifetime of secrets. Reece can't run from her past forever and it's all about to come crashing in on her.

The Museum of Broken Things is a fast-paced coming-of-age story about enduring friendships and honouring the past. It will suit the mums as much as the young adults!

Text / 304pp / RRP $19.99

Sugar
by Carly Nugent

Since the mysterious death of her father nearly a year ago, a lot has changed for sixteen-year-old Persephone. When she is diagnosed with type-one diabetes, she feels like she's drowning in her grief. What really happened the night her dad died? Was it just a terrible accident? Persephone isn't so sure. Both Persephone and her mum are caught up in their own grief and guilt.

When Persephone finds the body of a young woman on a bush track, she is drawn to her. She feels a connection to the dead woman, Sylvia, and reaches out to her best friend. They strike up an unlikely friendship until the truth finally comes out and the fake walls Persephone has created start to crumble.

Sugar is a beautifully written book about loss, guilt and the search for truth and meaning. It deals with these sensitive issues with grit and humour.

Sugar is Carly Nugent's second novel and follows up her very successful, *The Peacock Detectives. Sugar* will appeal to a wide range of female YA readers but is recommended for 16+.

Text / 368pp / RRP $19.99

Dancing Barefoot
by Alice Boyle

There are a lot of reasons why Patch doesn't fit in at fancy Mountford College. She's not sporty or popular like the cool girls. She lives on the poor side of town, in a tiny apartment above her dad's record shop. It's a train ride and a world away from the leafy green streets where the other girls live.

Patch is trying to deal with a crippling crush on basketball queen Evie Vanhoutte, a jealous bully set to ruin her life, her transitioning BFF, Edwin, and a potential new step-mum who could ruin everything.

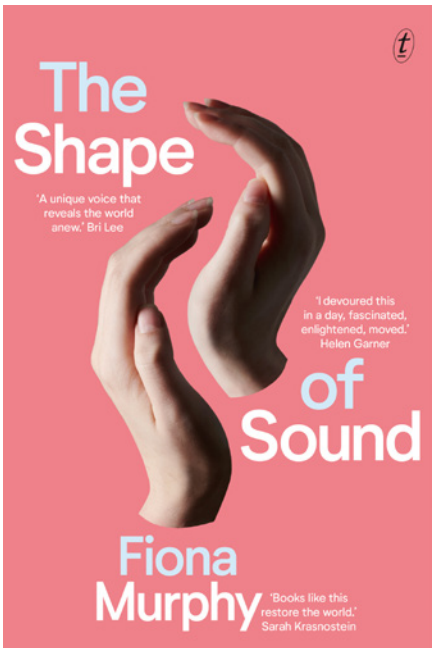
Dancing Barefoot is a feel-good rom-com coming-of-age story about flying your freak flag and overcoming all the crap life throws at you.

With kick-arse female characters, laugh out loud moments and a charming romance, *Dancing Barefoot* will appeal to romantics young and old.

Text / 320pp / RRP $24.99

Extract: The Shape of Sound by Fiona Murphy

Fiona Murphy's *The Shape of Sound* is a revelatory memoir about the experiences of deafness. Murphy appeared at Byron Writers Festival 2022.



Attack

In words

I was born in 1988, three days before the First Fleet Re-enactment Voyage sailed into Sydney Harbour, marking two hundred years since Invasion Day. As Mum was labouring in Bankstown hospital with her last child, the doctor suggested that she hold on, try to coincide my birth with the birth of the nation. She thought he was a fool.

By the age of five, I could rattle off the alphabet with singsong ease. I'd rove around the house annoying my two brothers and sister by reciting the letters as fast as possible. Quicker and quicker, until the letters stuck together.

In Year One at Burwood Public School, in Sydney's inner west, we were taught to keep our copybooks neat and tidy with the day's date recorded in the top right-hand corner, followed by a heading in capital letters. Towards the middle of that year, our teacher started giving out demerit points if we were messy or careless. The tip of my pencil hovered uncertainly in the air whenever she reeled off instructions. My copybook stayed neat, as most pages were left blank.

We would also get demerit points if we didn't put our hand up before asking a question, or if we were caught talking when we should have been working. The points were tallied on a large poster. Three demerits and you'd have to pick up rubbish in the playground. Not wanting to risk getting into trouble, I stayed quiet whenever we had to pull out our copybooks. I'd crane my neck, looking around the table to decipher what everyone was writing. If I couldn't figure it out, I'd draw pictures or arrange my pencils in neat rows, waiting for lunchtime.

In Year Two, instead of pictures on the classroom walls, there were charts of fractions and long words. And no crates of soft toys or building blocks. We sat at our desks for most of the day, only allowed to play during lunch break. Flecks of rubber lay scattered across my desk as I erased mistake after mistake.

At the back of the classroom there was a box of large cards. During reading-time, we had to select a card. Each one contained a short story, two or three paragraphs long, and sometimes a picture as well. There were questions on the card and we had to write the answers in our copybooks. Unable to read anything other than my name, I would trace my finger over the curved marks that looked like hooks.

A few weeks into the school year, Mum took me into the city. As the train carried us through endless suburbs, she told me that I was going to play a few games and then an audiologist would check my ears. Years later, I found out that my teacher, having noticed my blank copybook, suggested I be tested for a learning disorder. This, as well as my swimming instructor's concerns about my hearing, prompted Mum to book an appointment with a child-development clinic.

After I'd spent the morning stacking wooden blocks and colouring in puzzles, Mum and I went out for lunch at a cafe. When we returned to the clinic, we were directed to a different office. The audiologist told me to sit inside a large box in the corner of the room. He put a set of headphones on me.

'Now, Fiona, pay attention and just press the button in front of you whenever you hear something,' he explained, before shutting the

door of the box. The walls were covered in thick grey fabric that was supposed to trap all the noises inside. I wriggled with unease. I hated being the centre of attention.

The headphones squeezed my skull. I jabbed the button each time I heard a beep. The rest of the time I was bored. Finally, the audiologist let me out of the box and showed us a graph with two lines, one for each ear. The results for my right ear spanned the page, dots roaming through the full decibel scale. The results for my left ear sat on a straight line.

'Fiona is profoundly deaf in her left ear, and not all in her right,' the audiologist told Mum.

'Do you remember things suddenly becoming softer, Fiona? Quieter?'

'No.'

'Do you remember any loud noises? Any sudden pain?'

'No.'

'Do you remember ever feeling really dizzy?'

'Nope.'

He asked Mum if my behaviour had changed at all. Had I become more withdrawn? Mum said no. She told him that I was alert and inquisitive, and that I played well with my siblings.

'Well then, it's likely that she was born deaf,' he said. 'We'll do a few tests to make sure we haven't missed anything.'

I was told to lie absolutely still during the brain scan, even if I felt really scared. The machine made loud clanking noises. Lights flashed. I remember squeezing my eyes shut, then worrying if this meant the doctors wouldn't be able to see inside my skull.

Everything was where it should be inside my brain and my left ear.

'It looks all completely normal,' said the audiologist. 'Except, of course, nothing works.'

'Is there anything we should do? Hearing aids?' asked Mum.

'There aren't any hearing aids powerful enough for her left ear. Most deaf children have difficulty learning to read. All the sounds get muddled up. Fiona will just have to work hard to match letters with their sounds.'

'How?'

'With lots of practice. Besides, she seems to be doing alright.' Then he smiled at me. I grinned back.

Coincidently, my school had a small disability class, called a support unit, which had several deaf students. I had never spoken to any of them. I couldn't even recall seeing them in the playground. They only seemed to appear at school assemblies, a clutch of them standing off to one side of the enormous shade sail. Their classroom was in the old section of the school, where the windows were set so high not even adults could peek in. It seemed like a separate, faraway place. I refused to leave my class; I did not know those kids.

Despite the diagnosis, nothing seemed to change, the world was no louder or softer. But I was painfully aware that my ears somehow made me slower, less capable than my classmates. I began to notice how their pencils swept across their copybook pages. They could string together sentences and jot down answers during spelling bees. I remembered the audiologist saying that I had to work harder. I would tuck my pencil tightly into the web of my hand, trying to steady its tremble, as my copybook dampened from my sweat.

The Shape of Sound is published by Text.

After he kicks me in the nuts Mark Brandon 'Chopper' Read falls asleep at my desk, drooling on my keyboard

Short fiction by Paul Shields

1. I work near the airport. I could carpool to work with Nathan, the bloke who works two desks down and who lives on my street. But I don't want to.
2. Mark Brandon 'Chopper' Read has killed 'at least 19 people all of which deserved it'.
3. Despite being single and most certainly willing to mingle I have slept with less people than Chopper has killed.
4. He's also crippled 11 more.
5. Despite being single and most certainly willing to mingle I have slept with considerably less people than Chopper has crippled.
6. I don't carpool because the hour to get home on the Airtrain™ seems like a bargain compared to twenty minutes of well-meaning work-chat.
7. Chopper famously cut his ears off when doing time in Pentridge to avoid a hit. Bargain.
8. The Airtrain™ doesn't fly, it just goes to the airport.
9. Even if you haven't read the books or watched the movie or the TV drama, or the other TV drama or Heath Franklin's parody you probably know he cut his ears off.
10. Van Gogh (say it with a cough) either a) cut off his own ear after too much time on the green fairy or b) had it sliced and diced by Paul Gauguin after he spent too much time on the green fairy.
11. I get a discount on the Airtrain™ because I work near the airport, it's still *way* more expensive than the normal Queensland Rail train.
12. The hit was ordered on Chopper after his plans to cripple every prisoner on the wing were deemed a bridge too far by his cell mates.
13. No green fairy in Pentridge, just fermented orange peel if you are lucky.
14. Huffing glue if you're not.
15. The Airtrain™ is a regular train until it hits Eagle Junction station, magically turning into the Airtrain™ as it leaves the station.
16. Chopper had a magic trick — making everyone in the nightclub disappear as he pulled out a stick of TNT.
17. The only other people on the Airtrain™ are people flying somewhere or cleaners and baristas who work at the airport.
18. Except for a homeless drunk who sometimes gets on at Bowen Hills and confused, ends up at the International Terminal.
19. Between the ages of 20 and 38 Chopper only spent 18 months outside of gaol. Finding a rental was tricky for those 18 months.
20. I have lived in at least 21 different share houses, warehouses, and squats. I lived in a tent for six months and rode a stolen bike I didn't bother even properly cut the lock off. It whacked me in the knees as I rode.
21. Spending five minutes in prison scares me more than having my ears cut off by a crazy Frenchman.
22. Chopper reckons he never killed an honest man.
23. For the first few months catching the Airtrain I worked out a low rent Go Card™ scam. If you lived in Brisbane, you'd be familiar with it.
24. Chopper shot Nick the Greek, 'if you met Nick the Greek, you'd want to kill him too'.
25. I took a date to Grant McLennan from the Go-Betweens' funeral. It wasn't intentional and she was wearing a t-shirt that read *Tipsy* with a martini glass on it as we sidled into the row behind Powderfinger. If you met her, you'd take her to funeral too.
26. Chopper has no regrets, not even his ears. Which BTW are not the reason he is called Chopper.
27. I sort of regretted bringing Tipsy girl along after she said too loudly, 'That's Bernard from Powderfinger' as we sat down. But not later when I went and bought condoms from the New Farm Coles as she waited for me in my flat above a gym.
28. Drought breaker.
29. He is called Chopper after a cartoon character – a large white dog who wears a red tie and looks after his much smaller mate, the yellow bird Yakky.
30. It's unclear if Chopper had a real life Yakky or walked through life alone.
31. As they finished up on Grant's funeral service, The Monkees' 'Daydream Believer' played over the Cathedral stezza.
32. Chopper recorded a blues album, but his biggest success was a collaboration with Brooklyn horror-core rapper Necro on the song 'Do It'.
33. I handed in my notice a week ago at work. They pulled me from all the *interesting work* and now I spend my days classifying polyphonic ringtones by genre and curating my iPod with the six terabytes of music we have licensed and available.
34. On the morning Mark Brandon 'Chopper' Read is doing a guest appearance at my work I see two egrets flying low and next to my window on the Airtrain. The sun is still everyone's friend, slowly sticking its head up.

I listen to a UCLA guided meditation – the host inviting us to connect 'from the inside'.

35. Chopper's first book is called *From the Inside.* He has written seven books and sold 300,000 copies.

36. I live in New Farm, where my great grandparents moved up from Adelaide when it was fashionable to call it Jew Farm. It's way past gentrified now but all the good cafes are closed early in the morning when I head to work so I am forced to get a gallon-latte, eight billion sugars, from the Muffin Break at the Valley train station instead.

37. Chopper's first book sold 150,000 copies – his second did worse despite having a much better title – *How To Shoot Friends and Influence People.*

38. When I get to work Chopper's manager is using the communal Nespresso machine. I am almost universally disliked in this workplace. I am terrible at table soccer, and I always yell out 'That's what she said' too late or at the wrong time.

39. We always go for Friday lunch work drinks at the Pinkenba (the 'Pinky') Hotel.

40. Naked women sell raffle tickets at the Pinky every Friday. First prize is either a carton of VB throwdowns or a ten second motorboat with one of the ticket sellers.

41. My grandparents met in New Farm during the war. My grandmother Betty was dating a fella so she could get a play she'd written up at the Polish Club. My grandfather, finally gathering the courage to ask her out, stopped dead on her front steps as she was pashing the Polish boy in their loveseat.

42. Chopper's dad slept with a loaded shot gun next to his bed. When young Chopper had to take a piss in the middle of the night he would loudly announce 'It's only me Dad' to avoid copping one in the guts.

43. My big boss won the raffle and opted for the motorboat. Forty-five minutes later we were in a sales meeting together talking about metrics.

44. My grandfather went and saw the play at the Polish Club and gave asking Betty out another go a few weeks later.

45. I was work famous for one day after I drank two litres of milk in an hour in front of the whole office. I was responding to an internet challenge designed to make you spew. I grew up in Central Queensland. I could have done it in one gulp.

46. Chopper emerges from the toilet, wiping his hands on his legs. He walks past me and grabs a coffee.

47. I have worked with a killer before. A nazi who killed a gay man in Springhill in the 1980s and said he killed another man that same night that nobody was able to find.

48. He was crazy (duh). The cops didn't believe the second bloke ever existed.

49. Our work is paying Chopper, this killer of 19, crippler of 11 to star in some low-rent videos which will be pushed as mobile phone content.

50. The night before Chopper came into my work, I sat up watching old interviews of his on YouTube. His face on the screen dated by the image quality. Chopper is rat-arsed. The host Elle McFeast is playing it for laughs – 'How do you cripple someone Chopper?' He replies by repeatedly saying, 'Yeah, yeah.'

51. My non-carpool workmate Nathan, who I think might be in the *almost* camp comes over and tells me that because he wants to join the police force I, as the other bigger guy in the office, should be in the videos opposite Chopper. His bellybutton is at eye level. He gets distracted by something that is happening on the other side of the office and yells out, 'That's what she said', his diaphragm sucking in and expelling out with the yell.

52. We shoot the video in front of a green screen. It's a simple premise. A movie piss-take on *The 300*. I will throw phantom punches at Chopper, and he will yell out, 'This is fucking Chopper!' (Instead of the actual move line, 'This is Sparta!') and throw a phantom kick. Full of chutzpah and hoping to build on my recent milk-drinking fame I adopt a method acting approach – I am a loyal son of Xerxès, this is the battle at Thermopylae. My arms are flaying.

53. They have closed the loophole on my Go Card scam. So, I now pay the regular rate.

54. I accidentally punch Chopper. Not hard. But on the chin. He smiles at me through his teeth – 'You're a bit frantic, aren't you?'

55. The pay at this job is so poor, I could earn more pushing trolleys at Coles. I went to uni to learn how to write. I wash dishes on the weekend to have a bit of beer money. Funeral girl ignores my phone calls.

56. One night after seeing Regurgitator at The Zoo I come home angry, putting the toilet brush through the bathroom door.

57. Regurgitator are my all-time favourite band. I can't remember what got me heated.

58. We break for a minute. Someone goes and gets Chopper a glass of water. It's warm in here. I could go a glass of milk. They move the cameras around a bit and then they are set. I ease up on the punch throwing, cardio was never a long suit. Chopper delivers his line.

59. I wake up to my curious flatmate pointing to the embedded toilet brush in the door. 'What's all that about?'

60. It's cool in the mornings as I walk to the train station, past the Empire Hotel where my melancholy grandfather drank himself to death. I think about why he drank so much sometimes and how different Brisbane must be to where he was born in Portland, Oregon where his father was a timber merchant.

61. His dad played baseball with Ty Cobb and would tell anybody who would listen about it.

62. Chopper kicks me in the nuts, smiling at me.

Paul Shields lives and works on unceded Gullibul land and is a PhD candidate at Griffith University. His work has appeared in *Meanjin, Headland, Radio National* and elsewhere. Paul is the creative director of Kyogle Writers Festival.

Byron Writers Festival 2023 Long Courses

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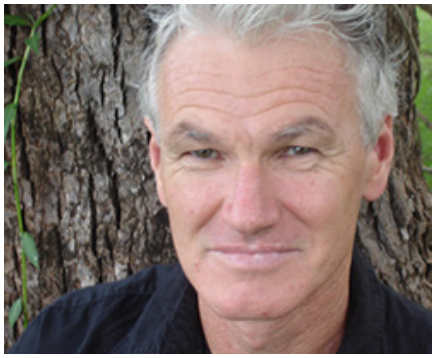
Sarah Armstrong has written three adult novels, including *Salt Rain* which was shortlisted for the Miles Franklin Award. *Big Magic*, published in May 2022, is her first children's novel. Sarah is an experienced writing teacher, mentor and manuscript assessor.



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Alan Close is a writer, editor and writing teacher and mentor, focusing on memoir. Over a long career he has published fiction, poetry, essays and creative non-fiction. He has written widely about men and relationships, including his memoir *Before You Met Me: A Memoir Of One Man's Troubled Search For Love*. Alan lives in Mullumbimby with his partner and teenage daughter.

The Next Draft
with Laurel Cohn

FRIDAY 13, 27 OCT, 10 NOV & 1 DEC

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10.00AM—4.00PM (3rd & 4th session)

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Have you got a finished manuscript? Are you bogged down in the revision process? Are you resisting approaching the next draft because it all feels too hard and you don't know how to go about it? This course helps you understand the role of redrafting in the development phase of a manuscript, how to go about it, and how to survive it.

Laurel Cohn is a developmental book editor passionate about communication and the power of stories in our lives. She has been helping writers prepare their work for publication since the mid 1980s, and is a popular workshop presenter. Laurel has a PhD in literary and cultural studies. www.laurelcohn.com.au

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