

Love in the time of corona launched: New creative writing anthology captures life under lockdown

Brenton Stacey

Avondale University, Cooranbong, NSW
brenton.stacey@avondale.edu.au

Keywords: anthology, creative writing, lockdown, love, pandemic

The introspection from living under lockdown to prevent the spread of a pandemic is captured in a new creative writing anthology by students at Avondale. *Love in the Time of Corona: Notes from a Pandemic* reflects thoughts on distance, isolation, connection and imagination. “It will become, for its writers, a creative time capsule, and for its readers, a creative anthropology,” says Lynnette Lounsbury, Head of the School of Humanities and Creative Arts.

She encouraged the communication and English students in her Creative Writing: The Art of Poetry and Short Story class to experiment with forms, figures of language and sounds. She also had them read the work of poets as diverse as Maya Angelou, T S Eliot and Sylvia Plath and storytellers such as Ernest Hemingway, Shirley Jackson and Jack Kerouac.

Class member Kathryn Staples wrote a fictional short story about an older man diagnosed with cancer who, despite the availability of a cure, cannot afford it. Resigned that death will come, he seeks to keep his spouse happy by forbidding any end-of-life talk. “I had someone very close to me pass away from cancer,” says Staples, whose writing helped her reflect on this experience—“something to just get off my chest.” The arts and teaching student used story as the form because while “it’s from the heart, it’s something that’s outside of you, not your story anymore but someone else’s to enjoy. There’s a distance between you and the story but still a connection.”

Creating the anthology—a “labour of love”—involved dozens of workshops on Zoom and hundreds of posts on a private Facebook group. In an introductory note, Lounsbury, a co-editor with alumna, writer and teacher Charlotte O’Neill, writes that despite the confusion and the uncertainty, “we shared what we loved across our screens and we

pushed ourselves to find words to describe what was happening, what we were thinking and dreaming about. . . . We created something from a time that felt formless. We were made expansive as we wrote.”

The book is dedicated to Associate Professor Carolyn Rickett, “a long-time champion of creative writing at Avondale.” She has co-edited five previous anthologies in which students at Avondale had work published alongside that of high-profile poets, receiving an Australian Learning and Teaching Council citation in 2011 for her contribution to student learning. “This anthology is a reminder of creative practitioner Karen A Chase’s reflection that while ‘writing is a solitary endeavour, being an author is not,’” says Rickett. “*Love in the Time of Corona* is a testament to the way creating and publishing texts can continue to build and connect communities.”

Rickett co-edited three of the anthologies with poet Judith Beveridge, who won a Prime Minister’s Literary Award (2019).

Author information:

Brenton Stacey is Avondale University’s Public Relations and Philanthropy Officer. He brings to the role experience as a communicator in publishing, media relations, public relations, radio and television, mostly within the Seventh-day Adventist Church in the South Pacific and its entities.

Editor’s Note

Love in the Time of Corona: Notes from a Pandemic is available as a Kindle (\$4.22) and as a paperback (\$16.32) from Amazon.

“
we shared
what we loved
across our
screens and
we pushed
ourselves to
find words
to describe
what was
happening,
what we were
thinking and
dreaming
”