

UTS Writers Anthology 2007 – ‘What you do and don’t want’ Book Review by Lucy Kippist

‘What you do and don’t want’ is the title of this year’s UTS new writer’s anthology - a publication that has been selected, edited and managed by a committee of UTS students for the past twenty years. Exploring the realm of alternate realities, this year’s anthology was launched in June as part of the Sydney Writer’s Festival.

Katherine Keefe - regular Loop contributor and UTS Diploma of Writing student was one of 31 contributors selected for publication. Her screenplay ‘In Thrall’ explores the life and work of Sue Smith one of Australia’s most acclaimed screen writers and play wrights.

Cleverly interweaving the plot of one of Smith’s own play’s ‘Thrall’ with interviews and research she conducted over an extended period – Katherine has captured what she describes as an interaction between the fictional world, as created by Sue, and Sue’s world that she has created -as the writer.

According to Katherine it was the intricacy of ‘In Thrall’s narrative that presented her greatest challenge.

“To find and develop a working relationship between the two narratives required spending a considerable amount of time with both. I cursed myself often for starting something I knew would be difficult.

“I find I get so encapsulated in the world of what I’m writing that I forget I might be on a completely different wavelength to the reader who doesn’t know the subject in the same way I might.”

The result is powerful; the reader is left awestruck by Katherine’s ingenuity. Not only does the narrative present us with an idea of Sue Smith- the woman, it also provides a canvas for her work.

While Katherine counts Smith among four of her most significant writing influences (which also include Harper Lee, George Orwell and Delia Falconer), she says that is the values behind the words -separate to the writing itself, from which she draws her inspiration.

“I don’t think my style mirrors theirs... it’s as much about who they are and what they represent as what’s on the page.

“Sue is luminous. I think I was initially drawn to her seeming curiosity with the world around her and her great warmth. She thinks with her heart as much as her head and I think that really comes across in her writing.”

The ingenuous title of the anthology finds you seeking answers from the first page -for Katherine these related to reflections on her life as a writer and often frustrating and isolated writing process.

“I guess “Thrall” can relate to a contradictory state of being whereby we might want something that isn't necessarily good for us... or we are enslaved to our desires/ passions. ‘In 'Thrall’ is about a writer and the writing process. Balance/perspective is something I think many writers struggle with at times as writing is an absorbing craft that can completely remove the individual from shared reality.”

The ‘what you do and don’t want’ 2007 UTS Anthology is available from ABC shops (also online) and UTS book shops. It retails at \$24.95