

LOVE LIKE THIS ISN'T HARMLESS

BRON BATEMAN

ABOUT THE BOOK

Through a fiercely feminist lens, this collection confronts raw realities with unapologetic honesty and profound insight, shedding light on the shadows that too often remain unseen. When tackling tough themes like sexual abuse and domestic violence, Bateman is unflinching and fearless, compassionate and courageous. These poems embody empowerment, evolution and healing.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Bron Bateman (she/her) is a queer, crip poet, editor and educator. She has a BA (Hons) and a PhD in Communication and Cultural Studies from Curtin University. Her previous poetry collections are *People from Bones* (Ragged Raven Press, 2002), *Of Memory and Furniture* (Fremantle Press, 2020), which was Highly Commended in the Victorian Premier's Prize for Poetry in 2021, and *Blue Wren* (Fremantle Press, 2022). She is the editor of *Women of a Certain Courage* (Fremantle Press, 2025) and has been published in a range of anthologies and journals including *Westerly*, *Southerly Magazine*, *Cordite Poetry Review*, and *Australian Poetry Journal*. Her interests are feminism, crip studies, Mad studies, embodiment, queer studies, cultural studies, and writing. She lives in Boorloo (Perth).

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What do you think the title of this collection means, and why do you think this particular cover image (an open hand and a dragonfly) have been chosen for it?
2. What kinds of love do you find within this collection? How does the structure of the collection as a whole speak to the title of the collection?
3. What do you think is the importance of love in this collection?
4. Which is the most painful poem?
5. Which poem is filled with the most hope?
6. What myths and archetypes does the author draw on in some of these poems?
7. How many protagonists can you identify in individual poems in this collection?
8. Which poem surprised you the most? Why?
9. Does its presence create an intersection with the other poems?
10. Using a poem as an exemplar, how does feminism fight the appropriation of female bodies in this collection?
11. How are difficult topics such as religion, abortion and domestic violence dealt with in this collection?
12. How are the personal poems also political?
13. What do you think they are saying about the intersection between the notion of 'love', and how sexuality, gender identity, queerness and crip identity politicise love?



IN YOUR OWN WORDS

1. Make a list of different kinds of love.
2. Choosing three of these, write a poem about each. Take the content of one of these poems and shape it differently. In what way does changing form affect its meaning? If you are doing this writing with a companion, you may wish to swap poems to do this exercise.
3. Write a love poem in the second person to a significant person in your life. It can be erotic, romantic, familial, a poem of friendship, to a heroine or hero, to a beloved child. Use language thoughtfully to add to the poem's meaning.
4. Pay as much intention to the form of the work as its content. How does the way your poem looks on the page underscore the meaning of the poem?
5. Write a poem about / to somebody who has hurt you.
6. If you were to write the poem of a 'great love' from myth or history, who would you choose to focus on? Can you write that poem?
7. Take one poem in this collection, change its protagonist and see what poem you can write.
8. Which poems in this collection are related to childhood? In your own words, write a poem from the child's perspective.
9. Write a poem about Keanu Reeves.
10. Write a bird poem or a dragonfly poem. Play with the layout on the page. How does form mirror the intent of the poem?
11. If given a chance, what is a question you would ask this poet?

INTERVIEW WITH THE AUTHOR

Can you tell us about the different kinds of love that exist within this work?

The point of this collection is that love comes in many guises. It can be harmless, harmful, evocative, meaningful, aberrant, familial, at the ends and beginnings of relationships, can be examples of self-love, psychological wellbeing and even of mental illness. I emphasise that self-love is a love which enables us to take care of ourselves, when others can't or won't. I have often written familial poetry, love poetry and erotic love poetry. These poems featured prominently in my three previous collections. This collection is a little different. In it is the focus on the end of a queer relationship and the ambivalence of feelings that exist in this breakdown. I have also written some queer love poetry, with male and female protagonists, and poetry that adopts a feminist lens, with protagonists who assert their personal, embodied experiences, standing up for themselves in a patriarchal world.

Where does a poem come from for you? Do you know what you are going to say before you say it?

Very few poems come from being 'struck' with inspiration. Usually a poem emerges from a prompt, another poet/poem, or an idea I wish to explore. I can sometimes be really literal with my writing and think: I need to write a poem about X, to fill an absence in the collection and then begin the work required to create such a poem. At other times I can get an image, or an idea and then tease out its implications. Sometimes I know

where I need to get to, in order to complete the poem, but the process of 'getting' can require some work. I can also write the less brave or grounded version and realise there is another poem struggling to emerge from what I am hiding from myself. And then, seldomly, a poem emerges fully formed and can be put down on the page in under an hour. That is the reward for all the sweat and tears that go into writing most of the other poems!

Which poem within this collection surprised you the most, and why?

The poem about abortion, 'Reprieve' (p. 58), surprised me the most. It was one of the easiest poems to write, in that I got the reprise 'size of a bean' running through my head one afternoon and sat down at the computer and wrote the poem relatively quickly. It was my galvanised anger at the appropriation of women's bodies and bodies with wombs that fuelled the rhythm and intent of the poem. I have written a number of poems about childbirth and pregnancy, and it was powerful and compelling to write about reproductive health from another perspective.

Can you tell me a little about what it means to be, as it says in your bio note, 'a queer, crip poet, editor and educator'? Are these necessarily political positions and identities?

Queer, crip (disabled), feminist, creative and educator are all political positions and identities as far as I am concerned. I know that I am speaking to a sympathetic audience when I say this. I do believe that now, more than ever, with the global political climate where lies are spoken without any pervasive sense of their immorality, or any squeamishness in uttering them, that asserting my identity as a person of marginalised groups is necessary, truthful and agential. My coming-out stories are repeatedly iterated and although sometimes I can grow weary of this, I will not cease foregrounding these marginalised positions.

What's next for Bron Bateman?

I am compelled to keep on writing and am already at work on my (as yet untitled) fifth collection. Poetry is my legacy to myself, my family and my community. As a feminist, I am focused on telling the embodied stories and experiences of women I know, and women who influence me. I am appalled by the rate of family and domestic violence perpetrated on women and marginalised women in our culture (crip, queer, mentally ill, trans, etc.). I do not pretend or intend to be a voice for all women, but in my small sphere of influence I believe writing from a feminist, queer, crip perspective is *my* call to arms for us all. If we, as women, can carve out a space for ourselves, we must use that space as a place to fight against patriarchal, cultural and capitalist appropriation of our bodies and our lives. These are the stories I am compelled to write in my next collection.



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