

Ali Bryan Author Bio

Ali Bryan is an award-winning novelist and creative nonfiction writer who explores the what-ifs, the wtf's and the wait-a-minutes of every day. Her first novel *Roost*, won the Georges Bugnet Award for Fiction and was the official selection of One Book Nova Scotia. Her second novel, *The Figgs*, was a finalist for the Stephen Leacock Memorial Medal for Humour and has been optioned for TV by Sony Pictures. Her essays have been longlisted for the CBC Canada Writes Creative Nonfiction prize, shortlisted for the Alberta Literary Awards Jon Whyte Memorial Essay Award and nominated for the Pushcart Prize. She won the 2020 Howard O'Hagan Award for Short Story and is a Lieutenant Governor of Alberta Arts Awards Emerging Artist recipient. Her debut YA novel, *The Hill*, was released in 2021 and was longlisted for the 2021 Wilbur Smith Adventure Writing Prize. Her short-form work has been published in literary journals and magazines in Canada, the US and the UK and has longlisted for the 2022 Commonwealth Short Story Prize. She recently served as the Author in Residence at the Calgary Public Library and as the Edna Staebler Laurier University digital Writer-in-Residence. She has three novels forthcoming in 2023: *The Crow Valley Karaoke Championships* (Henry Holt), *Coq* (Freehand Books) and *The City* (Dottir Press). She lives in the foothills of the Canadian Rockies on Treaty 7 Territory, where she has a wrestling room in her garage and regularly gets choked out by her family.

Thrift shops, mixed martial arts, pigeons, bagpipes, mountains, books, ska, history, Survivor, graffiti, the Olympics, France, punk, tumbleweeds, the paintings of Kim Dorland and Jean Smith and the films of Wes Anderson are a few of her favourite things. Before turning to writing full time, Ali worked in marketing and communications, arts management and as a personal trainer.

I write for and about the people. I write about the what-ifs, the wtf's and the wait-a-minutes of every day. I write about the downtrodden, the broken-hearted, the vulnerable. About lovers and losers, mothers and mutineers. I write about prisoners with daddy issues, and sad auctioneers and single dads and feminist kids. I write about immigrant shopkeepers and big men in cargo shorts and old women soccer players and abusive grandpas. I write about me. I write you.

Juxtaposition and ambivalence influence the genre I use to tell story, so I write poems about wrestling and short prose about big men. Long form creative nonfiction to reveal tiny truths, full-length novels to document single days. Quick personal essays that burn slow. Other people's memoirs.

My work is strongly influenced by philosophy, existentialism, cognitive psychology, biology, neuroscience and geography. Dialogue, humour and defamiliarization are my strengths. I write stories that aren't about issues but exist because of them. Thematically, my work explores the art and horror of being human, and the grief of living and losing. Hope and despair are at the core of my storytelling. I write what rattles, arouses, enrages, enlightens, and disturbs me. I write about the fight to survive, the fight to exist, to be heard, to be understood, to be valued. To be. My priority as an artist is to challenge perspectives, generate connections and make people feel seen.

Writer Cathal Kelly says, “it’s the banalities, that when you string a few thousand of them together creates a life.” It’s also through the banalities that big ideas become accessible, universal, and relatable. So, my stories take place at karaoke competitions and estate sales and school playgrounds and my childhood home. I’m provoked by the mundane and the ordinary and pairing humor with pathos is a hallmark of my work. “It’s much easier to write a solemn book than a funny book. It’s harder to make people laugh than it is to make them cry. People are always on the verge of tears.” (Fran Lebowitz). I do both.