

Diary into Narrative: Creative Non-Fiction and *The Sabotage Diaries*

Humanities Research Centre Seminar

Tuesday 16 August 2016, 4.15 – 5.30pm

Speaker

Dr Katherine Barnes, Australian National University

HRC Conference Room, Top Floor, A.D. Hope Building, ANU.

There's nothing like a good diary record for putting you on the ground with the person who wrote it, experiencing things through their eyes. And when the diary-keeper has been caught up in events that change the future of the country he's working in, events that threaten his own life too and those of people he loves, there's a big motivation to try to capture the immediacy of that experience.

That first-person viewpoint is what I wanted to retain from the war diaries of my father-in-law Tom Barnes in my book *The Sabotage Diaries*. Tom was parachuted behind enemy lines in Greece in 1942 on a Special Operations mission and remained to experience the impact of British policy towards the Greek people in general and the resistance fighters in particular, barely escaping with his life and the lives of his staff in the so-called first and second rounds of civil war in 1943 and 1944.

Tom was an important eye-witness to these events, and the records he kept are of considerable historical importance. In this talk I discuss how I created a continuous first-person narrative from the diaries Tom kept in Greece. Extensive research in a wide range of contemporary accounts, plus oral histories of survivors, filled in all the details you need for a continuous narrative. The result is a non-fiction book that reads like a novel.



*Katherine Barnes has a PhD from the ANU in Australian Literature. Her book about the Australian poet Christopher Brennan, *The Higher Self* (2006), won the Walter McRae Russell Award for literary scholarship on an Australian subject and was shortlisted for the NSW Premier's prize for literary scholarship. She lectured in creative writing, English literature and speechmaking at UNSW Canberra from 2004 to 2007. She has been a Commonwealth public servant since 2009.*

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