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## Half the Perfect World: Writers, Dreamers and Drifters on Hydra, 1955-1964

Wednesday 12 August 2020 4:15–5:00pm

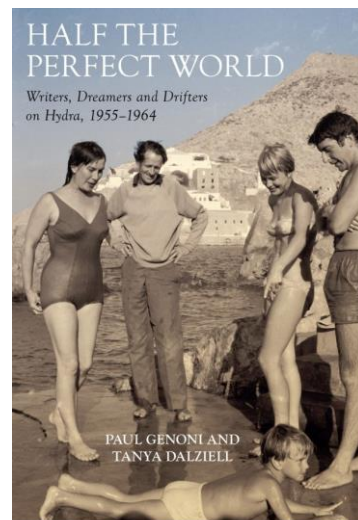
School of History Zoom Seminar Series & National Centre of Biography Workshop  
Speaker: Paul Genoni (Curtin University)

Meeting ID: 983 0423 9224

Password: 813159

URL: <https://anu.zoom.us/j/98304239224?pwd=Vm1lWEVzbW01bGxtZkhjbzZjdWliZz09>

This seminar will address the story of Charmian Clift and George Johnston, a power couple of Australian literature in the mid-20th century, who are the focus of the book *Half the Perfect World: Writers, Dreamers and Drifters on Hydra, 1955-1964* (Monash University Publishing, 2018). Clift was a pioneering travel writer, novelist, journalist and feminist, whose books and newspaper columns helped transform the lives of a generation of Australian women. Johnston was a celebrated war correspondent who went on to become a great novelist. On the idyllic Greek island of Hydra in the 1950s and 60s, in company with Leonard Cohen and other luminaries, they wrote some of their best work – as their personal worlds gradually fell apart. Clift died in her mid-40s in 1969, from a self-administered overdose of barbiturates. Johnston was dead a year later.



Clift and Johnston were devoted to their writing. It brought them considerable success and fame, which ultimately, came at a high price. This seminar will ask, was it worth it? And what are the costs of a life dedicated to creativity and personal liberty?



**Paul Genoni** is an Adjunct Associate Professor with the School of Media, Creative Arts and Social Inquiry at Curtin University. He has published extensively on Australian literary and cultural studies in national and international journals. Paul is the author of *Subverting the Empire: Explorers and Exploration in Australian Fiction* (2004); and co-editor with Susan Sheridan of *Thea Astley's Fictional Worlds* (2006). He and Tanya Dalziel co-edited *Telling Stories: Australian Life and Literature 1935-2012* (2013), and co-authored *Half the Perfect World: Writers, Dreamers and Drifters on Hydra, 1955-1964* (2018), for which he won the 2019 Prime Minister's literary award for non-fiction. He is a former President of the Association for the Study of Australian Literature.

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