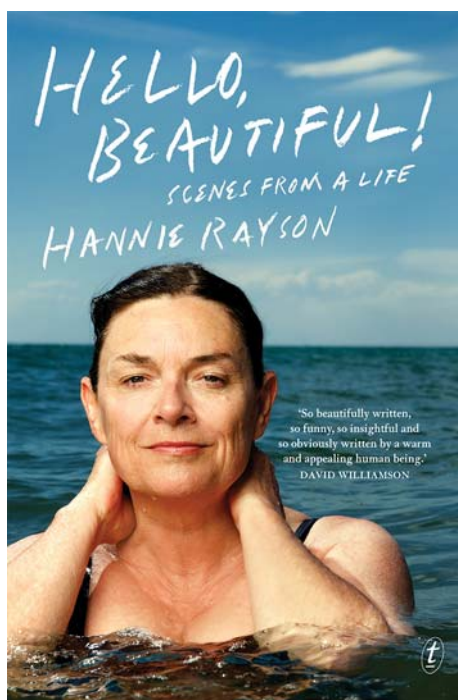


Hello, Beautiful!



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Hannie Rayson

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320 pp

Autobiographies are stories – they contain truth, but they are still stories. How much truth they convey depends on the author – subject to accuracy of memory and to the courage to reveal personal matters. There is also the question of how much the autobiographer is prepared to include family, friends and enemies in the revelations.

Hannie Rayson writes much that is revealing about herself and includes her husband – broadcaster Michael Cathcart – and her son and parents, along with a smattering of friends and acquaintances, plus an ‘ex’.

Some people write their lives from birth to the present, or from parents’ or grandparents’ births, and chronical the life or

lives in careful detail. The often rely on research to fill gaps in memory. Hannie uses her diary for some of the gap filling.

Hello, Beautiful! is a collection of vignettes that, taken together, weave a picture of Hannie’s life. The vignettes dovetail in interesting, sometimes surprising, ways. By the end of the book, I had a clear appreciation of Hannie as a complex person and the tribulations she has dealt with over her more than fifty years. She has been very generous to the reader.

The writer and writing teacher Annie Lamott (*Bird by Bird*, Scribe Publishing, 2008) says that it is safe to write very negative things about an ‘ex’ you don’t like, as long as you don’t name them, because such a person is unlikely to come out in the open to challenge you. Hannie Rayson writes a lot about her interesting relationship with her ‘ex’ and has no need to shame him.

This is an easy book to read – each chapter is complete in itself – and a pleasure. I laughed a lot. Hannie, with a number of well-known plays under her belt – such as *Hotel Sorrento* and *Life After George* – certainly knows how to entertain.