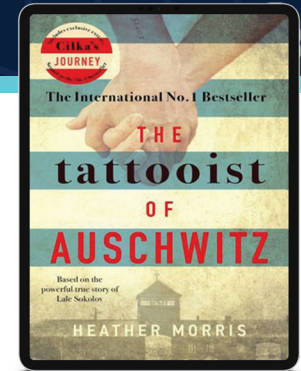




10-24 September, 2020



Dear Reader,

*The Tattooist of Auschwitz* was released in Australia on the 1st February 2018. A week later I made my first public appearance at a local public library, talking to a room of eager readers. So began my love affair with talking at libraries around Australia, New Zealand, the US and the UK.

Growing up in rural New Zealand did not give me access to a library, other than the small one at the High School I attended. Many hours were spent there, not necessarily looking for a book to read, but just to be in a room full of books. I would run my hands down the spines of the rows of books, occasionally pulling one out to flick through the pages and wonder what stories it told. My chosen book was often the last one I had in my hand as we were told it was time to leave.

It was not until my first child was born that I signed up to my local library, wanting him to share my love for books and not being in a financial position to buy them for him. From the time he was born we visited twice a week – well, he came along in the pram while I selected books to read to him. My husband didn't share my need to read children's stories to our son and could often be found with a tiny baby cuddled into him while he read the daily newspaper, or financial papers. He described the news in the same voice I used to read Little Red Riding Hood, with the wolf being the Minister of Finance or such. This remains a wonderful memory. With a brother and sister added to the family our visits to the library soon required a trolley to transport the books home. Given the early introduction to the joys of books and libraries, it is no wonder my first born subsequently married a woman who works in a library.

Last year I was the guest speaker at the annual conference of librarians in the state of New South Wales in Australia. To be in the company of over 1000 librarians was my happy place. To see firsthand the changes and innovations taking place to make libraries welcoming, as well as informative places to be, was wonderful. So much creativity, both simple and technologically advanced is moving libraries into the world of escape for all ages. I am seeing more and more libraries being remodelled, rebuilt, expanded to meet the needs of the local population. As a mother and also a reader of library books – oh yeah, after the children had selected their allocated number each week they were left to read while I got my stash – I clearly am a strong supporter and advocate for the local library. Having moved to a large city, Melbourne, I now get to appreciate the wonder and extra services a large state library has to offer. Researching for projects or just for pleasure, getting lost in the sealed rooms of archives has become my happy place. And now as an author, I get to appreciate libraries for the access they give to readers of my books, and I am so grateful they continue to thrive.

From the thousands of readers who have written to me, and the thousands I have met through talking at libraries, I know how much Lale's survival and subsequent sixty years with Gita brings hope to a world in desperate need of it right now. As I have said, I have visited many libraries in many countries. From the huge, packed function room at the Sacramento Library in California, to the tearoom in a country library in Victoria where twenty locals gathered to spend time with me, I thank you all for dedication and passion to helping us all read, listen and learn.