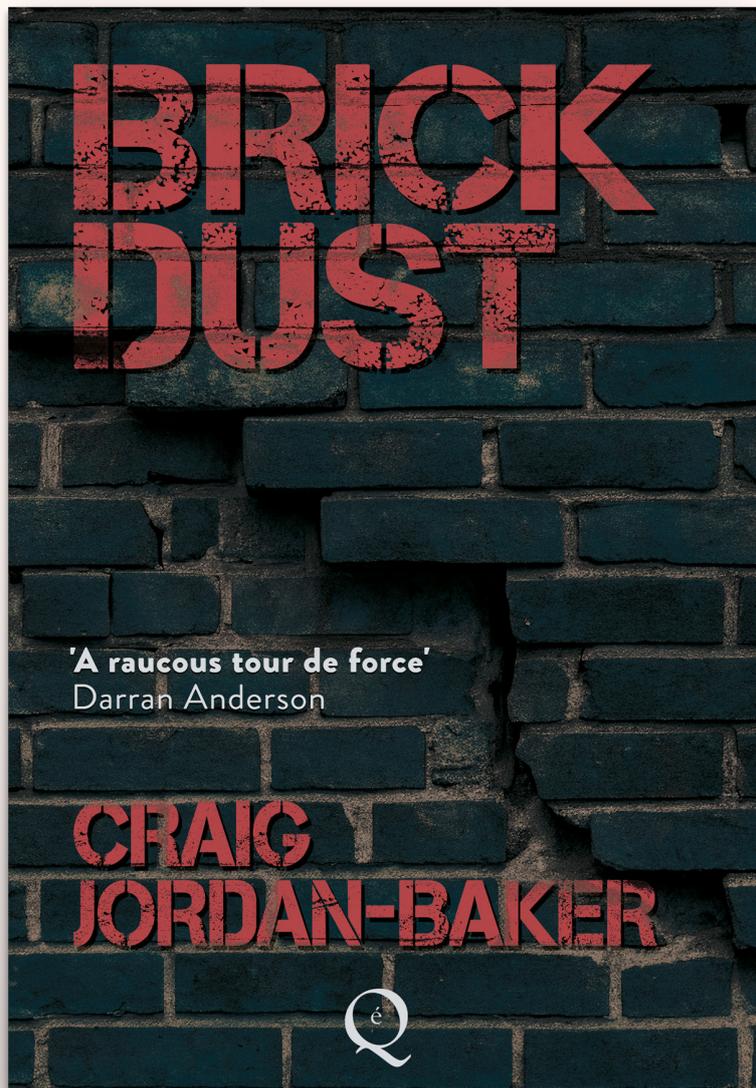


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BOOK CLUB AUTHOR Q&A
BRICK DUST BY
CRAIG JORDAN-BAKER



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Please see detailed below some questions and answers provided by the author in relation to their book.

1. How would you summarise the book and your motivations for writing it?

Not every story gets told. And our understandable democratic inclination that every story should, is of course impossible. We are therefore left with the question of what story you should tell. *Brick Dust* is about that question, and it has answers to those questions too, by telling stories about people so modest and events so everyday, that one might wonder why they are worth the telling. It tells stories about different members of the Nacullian family, who are modest and everyday people who would themselves, I'm sure, not want to read about such modest and everyday people. But we live everyday lives everyday, and if this is not worth giving attention to, then life is not worth giving attention to.

2. What is the significance of the title?

Brick Dust as a title is both a physical thing and a symbolic thing. Physically, it is the stuff of the building site, used as a pozzolan or worked into hands through the act of bricklaying. It's a gesture to these processes, of building and of strengthening mortar through an addition. And this is important for the title as a symbolic thing: The narrator is a collector who is, through documents and a fair few assumptions, trying to tell a story. It is a story of family and of family as a kind of wall, with bricks being parts and the narrator the mortar than binds them, makes them a structure you can look at.

3. What are the main themes of the book? What do these themes mean to you as the author?

The themes are based around interpretation: how and why we tell stories, what we need from them and how we build our identities out of them. The theme of this novel is story.

4. Did you decide on a specific style of writing for this book, and if so, why? What are you trying to convey through your style?

The narrator of *Brick Dust* is the same narrator as my first book, *The Nacullians*, and this novel, while standalone, is something of a follow-up. The style of this

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narrator is irreverent, foul, tender and colloquial. I wanted to give the feel of talking with someone highly intelligent, but perhaps not highly educated. This is essential because they need to be able to tell a story with aplomb, but be a part of the community they are telling stories about. The style here is to hopefully balance literary texture with authenticity.

5. Was the structure and layout of the book an important consideration? If so, why?

Brick Dust moves from prose narratives about certain characters, followed by a document, which is always a document the narrator has collected in his flat. In this way I hope we see how the narrator might have developed the story he has told, but also how the documents connect and add to the story itself. We might see this in light of a story about a girl's suicide attempt and then a letter about very long overdue library fines. We can read between the lines, and in doing so, we become storytellers too.

6. What would you highlight as some of the pivotal scenes of the book, what is their importance to the narrative and to you on a personal level?

Unlike many books, I think my writing does not have pivotal scenes, because the structure of the novel is not the classic European three or five-act structure. It is basically a jigsaw which builds a picture, and the picture it builds is never complete because the jigsaw did not come with all the pieces in the first place.

7. How important was the time period or the setting to the story? What were you looking to evoke through this?

It is set over 70 years, which is a long time and represents the heart of three generations of living. I think it is the length of time as much as the time period that's important, as it allows a reader to see intergenerational connections. But the time period itself captures a period of time – Post War to modern day – where life and our expectations of it have changed dramatically. In this context we have the horizontal pressure of family being matched by the vertical pressure of change.

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8. Which location in the book would you most like to visit and why?

I've been to everywhere the book is set and I'd prefer to avoid those places.

9. What emotions are you hoping to evoke in the reader?

There's nothing funnier than unhappiness.

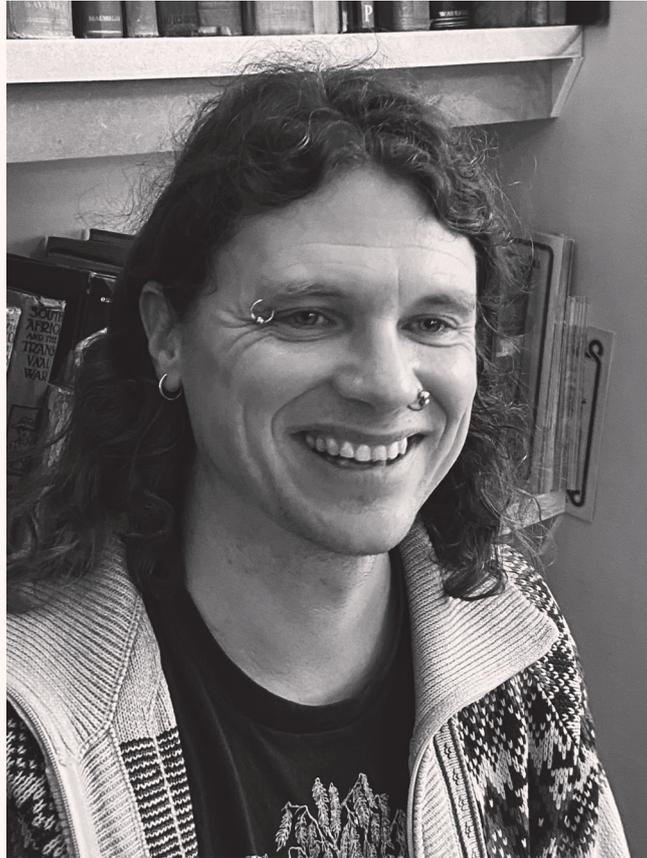
10. As an author you are very close to your characters. Reflecting back on the book, which of your characters would you like to meet in real life and why?

I'm close to my characters, but they are also close to me. Each one is an amalgam of 2-3 people I've known, and I do this because that's how you get interesting characters. They are a little more intense and clear than your average person. So I've met them all in real life, at least to some extent.



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ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Craig Jordan-Baker is a Senior Lecturer in Creative Writing at The University of Brighton. He has published fiction in *New Writing*, *Text*, *Firefly Magazine* and the *époque press* é-zine, among others.

His drama has been widely performed, including his adaptation of *Beowulf* and he has had dramatic work commissioned from organisations such as The New Forest National Park, The National Archives and The Booth Museum of Natural History.

He is contributing co-editor of *Writing Landscape and Setting in the Anthropocene- Britain and Beyond* and regularly runs nature-based writing events and courses.

Craig is the author two novels, *The Nacullians* and *Brick Dust*, and co-author of *If the River is Hidden*.