



NEWSLETTER

JESSIE STREET NATIONAL WOMEN'S LIBRARY

Vol 21 No 1
February 2010

GPO Box 2656 Sydney NSW 2001
Tel (02) 9571 5359 Fax (02) 9571 5714

Ultimo Community Centre
523-525 Harris St, Ultimo

Email info@nationalwomenslibrary.org.au
Website www.nationalwomenslibrary.org.au

WOMEN PLAYWRIGHTS OUR COLLECTION OF PLAYS

This is one of an occasional series we present to highlight a particular part of the Library collection. This time the focus is on plays and playwrights. The collection is not large but it has a wide sweep from Restoration playwrights like Aphra Behn and Katherine Philips (the first woman to have a play professionally produced on the London stage) to contemporary play-scripts by Australian writers such as Hilary Bell, Debra Oswald and Hannie Rayson. The following eight plays demonstrate a range of themes and subject matter.

Virginia Woolf, in *A Room of One's Own*, declared 'For now that Aphra Behn had done it, girls could say ... I can make money from my pen'. Aphra Behn (1640-1688) lived in tumultuous times. Make money she had to, for the English government, having persuaded her to spying in Holland during the Dutch wars, failed to pay her expenses and she was forced to borrow money in order to survive. Unable to pay what was owing, she spent time in a debtors' prison. A brief marriage to Mr Behn (thought to have died in the Great Plague) meant she had to support herself. She began her writing career in 1670 when her first play, *The Forced Marriage*, was performed. Over the next two decades she wrote about 20, four of which were produced at Court. Most were comedies, most depicted strong, witty women asserting their independence. Her most celebrated play, regularly revived into the late 18th century, was *The Rover* (1677). Here Behn dealt with the problems of arranged marriages and exposed the callousness of society during the reign of Charles II.

The Library holds a copy of Behn's play *The Lucky Chance*, or *An Alderman's Bargain*, first performed at Drury Lane

Theatre in 1686. It is in *The Female Wits – Women Playwrights of the Restoration*, by Fidelis Morgan.

In Australia, before World War II, there were few plays published and many that were published often went out of print. The Library is, therefore, pleased to acknowledge the contribution of Currency Press. They have reprinted many plays that would otherwise have permanently disappeared from our cultural landscape. Furthermore, over recent years they have generously donated to the Library nearly 100 scripts by Australian women playwrights.

One such donation is *The Touch of Silk*, by Betty Roland, first performed at the Playhouse, Melbourne, in 1928.



This play, Roland's first, and written in just four weeks, is a naturalistic drama about a French war-bride and her shell-shocked husband battling the hardship and prejudices of an isolated farming community.

The play is a forerunner of many later works in novels, films, television and theatre that dissect the role of immigrants from the Old World who fled from war and other disasters, some to stumble and fall, many to enrich and change the Australian colonial culture.

Betty Roland (1903-1996), married at 20 to a man of 41, feared being trapped in suburbia. Although already working as a journalist she had accrued debts through her love of expensive clothes and married to gain an inheritance from her grandfather—marriage being a condition of his bequest.

By 1933 Roland had saved sufficient money from writing radio plays and film scripts to leave her husband and sail for

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JSNWL FUNCTIONS

Lunch-Hour Talks

Venue: Seminar Room 2, Ultimo Community Centre, Bulwara Road, Ultimo

Date and Time: Third Thursday in the month from 12 noon to 1.30 pm

Entry: \$15 (JSNWL members) \$20 (non-members)

To Book: Phone (02) 9571 5359 or email info@nationalwomenslibrary.org.au
Light refreshments served

FEBRUARY—Thursday 18th

Mahboba Rawi—Mahboba's Promise: A Journey of Hope

Mahboba had to flee Afghanistan in 1984, living for two years in a Pakistani refugee camp, before coming to Australia to settle. Afghanistan is a poverty-stricken country where huge numbers of the children suffer from malnutrition, are orphans, and do not go to school; it has the highest proportion of widows in the world. In Australia, Mahboba founded Mahboba's Promise, an organisation dedicated to raising money to help the women and children of Afghanistan. She talks about her life and about the work she is doing.

MARCH—Thursday 18th

Aleit Woodward—From Poznan to Pymble: A Forced and a Voluntary Migration

Aleit tells us about leaving her birth city of Poznan, Poland, in 1945 with her mother and two brothers to flee the approaching fighting at the end of WWII. After finding Dresden, the city of their destination, destroyed by fire bombs, they tried to walk back to Poland. She talks about the family's meanderings through East and then West Germany, which included a secret night-time crossing of the East German border, and her later voluntary migration to Australia.

APRIL—Thursday 15th

Marjorie Deasey—Never Say I Can't

Marjorie and her husband were missionaries in Balimo, Papua, living with the Gogodala tribe. Retiring from Balimo in 1974, they spent another ten years in Port Moresby, working for the Evangelical Church of Papua. Marjorie's self-published book *Never Say I Can't* provides insights into the lives of the Gogodalas from a woman's perspective.

GET IN EARLY WITH YOUR 2010 SUBSCRIPTION
and
PLEASE MAKE A GENEROUS DONATION
to our
CAPITAL INVESTMENT FUND
(Donation form enclosed)

JESSIE STREET NATIONAL WOMEN'S LIBRARY

The Library is open to the public
Monday to Friday, 10 am to 3 pm

Australia's national women's library is a specialist library with its focus on collecting and preserving the literary and cultural heritage of women from all ethnic, religious and socio-economic backgrounds.

Aims

- to heighten awareness of women's issues
- to preserve documents on women's lives and activities
- to support the field of women's history
- to highlight women's contribution to this country's development

Borrowing Policy

The public may borrow items on interlibrary loan. A loan collection is available to financial members.

Location: Ultimo Community Centre
523-525 Harris Street, Ultimo

Public Transport Services

Trains Central Station or Town Hall Station

Buses No. 501 from Railway Square (Central Station) or from George Street (opp Town Hall Station)

GETTING TO THE LIBRARY

Location We are situated in the Ultimo Community Centre on the corner of Harris Street and William Henry Street, directly opposite the new Ian Thorpe Aquatic Centre.

Entry Main entrance is at 523-525 Harris Street (just beyond convenience store). Ring the bell for admittance. The Library is up a flight of stairs. The other entrance is in Bulwara Road. We are on the level, directly across the courtyard.

How to Reach Us

By Bus from the city

Catch the No 501 bus in George Street opposite the Cathedral or at Railway Square near Central Station. It runs every 20 minutes and it's a 5 minute trip to the Library. The stop for the Library is opposite the Powerhouse Museum in Harris Street.

By Train

Get off at Central Station. To catch the bus at Railway Square, walk through the Devonshire Tunnel and up the escalator on the left.

By Foot from Central Station

From Railway Square, walk along Broadway, turn right into Harris Street and continue to William Henry (takes about 15-20 minutes). For a slightly shorter route, walk to the end of the Devonshire Tunnel, along the open space with the tram lines, down the lane beside the ABC building, left along Ultimo Road, and right into Harris Street.

continued from page 1

Europe where she spent a year in the Soviet Union. This, and her membership of the Communist Party on her return to Australia in 1935, ensured that ASIO would keep a file on her. During the 1940s Roland wrote mainly for radio: full-length plays, soap operas and adaptations of plays and novels. During these years *The Touch of Silk* was kept before the public, not only with stage productions in Sydney and Melbourne, but also as radio drama. The ABC broadcast at least 15 separate productions. Philip Parsons, theatre critic, described her plays as being about 'disruptive femininity in an ordered man's world'.

Mona Brand (1915-2007) was also a member of the Communist Party. She wrote that she joined 'not so much because I agreed with Karl Marx (of whom I had read little) as because I felt he and his followers agreed with me.' Her membership continued into the 1970s, undeterred by activities of the Comintern that caused many of her peers to leave the Party. Her communism was part of her belief system, not an ideological response to political events. This is borne out by the subject matter of the 25 plays she wrote: all political and dealing with race, poverty, gender, injustice. Many of Brand's plays were performed at the New Theatres, established by the New Theatre League in the 1930s. The League had the support of trade unions and actively sought plays promoting 'causes'. It filled the gap between the commercial theatres and local repertory companies and, from the outset, provided enhanced opportunities for women in theatre.

Brand's play *Strangers in the Land*, is set in Malaya in 1952 and explores the British colonial plantation system. The newly-arrived English fiancée of one of the rubber planters is given the voice of criticism and exposure of British policies during this period. At a New Theatre national conference, Brand was forced to defend her use of a 'petit bourgeois' character to lay bare the prejudices and racism of the British middle class. Brand argued that New Theatre was working class and should recognise that workers are exploited in every country, particularly where there is no union movement; besides she, as the author, is working class and making a working class judgement on the situation in Malaya.

The Library holds *Strangers in the Land*, in *Plays, Progress Publications* (Moscow, 1965). The introduction and notes are in Russian. The copy is inscribed 'For Joan and Jon [Clarke] in friendship—Mona Brand'.

Kylie Tennant (1891-1988) and Dymphna Cusack (1902-1981) are both well known writers. Tennant was a

journalist, historian, literary critic, and wrote short stories as well as plays. In 1951 Tennant won 1st prize in the Commonwealth Jubilee Stage Play Competition with her play *Tether a Dragon*. It tells the story of Alfred Deakin, the man many consider responsible for welding six self-governing states into a Commonwealth. The title comes from a faux Chinese proverb: 'To tether a dragon with a thread of silk'. Tennant postulates that 'democracy needs a special type of man to lead it, and that man is ... devoured by the democracy he serves. The strain of harnessing the dragon is too much'. Women are on the periphery in this reconstruction of an historic event—an example of how often women are written out of history. The play says as much about the conservatism of the 1950s as about Federation.

Cusack wrote novels, travel and children's books and non-fiction as well as plays. Her 1945 play *Shoulder the Sky* was a special prize-winner in the Playwrights' Advisory Board Competition. The PAB had been formed in 1938 to promote Australian drama and through its competitions provided a modest financial windfall and, some-times, opportunities for the winning play to be staged.

Cusack's experience as a teacher is well used in her play *Morning Sacrifice*. It was first presented by Western Australian Drama Festivals (Inc.) at the Repertory Theatre, Perth, in October 1942. It continues to appear and was seen as part of the Sydney Theatre Company season in 2001 with Sandy Gore in the role of the Deputy Head Mistress, Portia Kingsbury. I am assured by my daughter, a secondary school teacher, that staff room relations today are little different from the 1940s. It is doubtful, however, that a repressed and bullied young teacher would, today, throw herself off the Sydney Harbour Bridge rather than seeking help from her union or transferring to another school.

The Library copy of this play is the 1943 First Edition, inscribed 'To Walter [Stone], my sincerest regards, Dymphna Cusack, 9/6/68'.

The 1970s saw the rise of second wave feminism and renewed struggles by women to address ongoing issues like abortion, contraception, rape, childcare, educational opportunities, and wage parity. *Crossfire* is a play by Jennifer Compton that was staged for International Women's Year (1975) at La Boite, Brisbane. It had originally premiered at Nimrod Theatre, Sydney in the same year.

The action of the play takes place in Sydney in 1910 and 1975 with doubling

continued on page 8

LIBRARY MATTERS

LIBRARY NEWS

The closure of the Library between 14 December and 8 January has meant that little activity has taken place since the November newsletter was published. Volunteer staff, who work very hard during the year, have been glad of the break and are bracing themselves for the hard work ahead of them in 2010.

Grant Applications

We are very disappointed that the two grants we applied for during 2009, one from Arts NSW and other for a small equipment grant, were both unsuccessful.

Arts NSW As a cultural and educational organisation, we applied to this body for funding for two part-time professional staff—an archivist and an administrator.

We must now find the means to fund an archival position. We are fortunate that our honorary archivist, Beverley Sodbinow, now a valued member of the Board, is so committed to the Library that she comes in regularly each week and is attending to archival matters. Obviously, however, this cannot be a permanent solution.

FAHCSIA In September we submitted a grant application to the NSW Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs for money to buy a heavy duty shredder and flat screen monitors. Disappointingly, this application was also rejected.

Meeting of the Library Operations Committee

Because our application for funding for a Library administrator was rejected, we are having to reorganise our administrative arm.

A meeting of the Library Operations Committee was held on 28 January to discuss the future management of the Library. This was a most successful meeting and everybody present contributed ideas and suggestions for carrying out the many operational tasks. Special sub-committees are being set up to ensure that volunteers, with back-ups, are available to carry out all the necessary tasks.

OUR WISH LIST REQUEST

In the November 2009 newsletter we printed a wish list of books by Marilyn French that the Library hoped members might donate.

We have in our Research Collection a copy of *Beyond Power*, thanks to an anonymous donor.

The Feminist Bookshop had donated a voucher for \$50 as a prize in our raffle at our 2009 Annual Fundraising Luncheon.

WE NEED YOUR HELP

It appears that in the future we will be relying more than ever on the generosity of members, donors and benefactors to help us finance the increasing needs of the Library.

Jessie Street National Women's Library, with its focus on preserving women's history, has become of such importance that we cannot let it fail.

DONATIONS TO NATIONAL FILM AND SOUND ARCHIVE

Chase Livingstone, our very supportive member in San Francisco has, over the years, sent us many interesting donations. Among these was a set of twelve 16 inch LP records. They were recordings of speeches given by members of the UN Commission for the Status of Women. One of the speeches was by Jessie Street.

On Wednesday, 9 December, Jane Pollard and I drove to Canberra for an arranged meeting with Graham McDonald of the National Film and Sound Archive (NFSA). He was most impressed by the collection, especially since the Archive has no recordings of Jessie's voice. The NFSA will preserve these old LPs and keep the set in its entirety. He has now sent us Jessie's speech on CD.

We also offered the NFSA an LP that was among Meta Maclean's archival material, deposited earlier with the Library. Beverley Sodbinow had asked us to take this, with information about its provenance. Graham was delighted to accept it and we now have a CD of the recording among Meta's papers. The Archive will acknowledge JSNWL as the donor of both lots of material.

The visit was a most profitable one and we feel that JSNWL has made a lasting connection with NFSA. We have been asked to contact the organisation again if we acquire any further material we feel might be of interest to them.

Shirley Jones
Public Relations Officer

Jill Cartwright, a Tasmanian resident who won the voucher, has very generously donated it to the Library. With it we have bought from the Feminist Bookshop two volumes of the four-volume series *From Eve to Dawn: Women, Men and Morals*. We are hoping someone will buy and donate volumes three and four so that we have the complete series.

You can contact the Bookshop by phoning them on (02) 9810 2660 for information or emailing them on feministbookshop@iprimus.com.au



ARCHIVES NEWS

AFTERMATH of the PINE GAP EXHIBITION

We are grateful to the many people who donated material to our very successful exhibition 'Remembering Pine Gap' held in the Fountain Foyer, Parliament House in September 2009. Items donated by Lee Rhiannon and Bar Finch contributed greatly to this impressive exhibition, as did all the other items we received from so many people.

The exhibition has drawn attention to the existence of Jessie Street National Women's Library and made people aware of the wealth of Pine Gap material it holds in its archives. Because of this, women who went to the Pine Gap Peace Camp have rescued forgotten items from cupboards and drawers, and donated them, pleased that they will be valued additions to the material we already hold. This emphasises the importance of our archives. Without it, much material dealing with women's historical events would be thrown out and lost. It bears out Mary Beard's words 'No Archives, No History.'

Recent Donations

Last November, Anne Ferguson, internationally-renowned Sydney sculptor, donated material to our archives. The donation consists of a wonderful collection of papers, photographs and drawings. These will be a great asset to JSNWL.

Anne has had solo and group exhibitions and we are lucky in Sydney to be able to see so many of her sculptures. These include commissioned works such as: the granite garden sculpture 'The Waterfall' at the University of New South Wales; the bronze gates at St Peters Church, Cremorne; and the sculpture on a Celtic theme, in Mosman Square, Mosman. Anne was winner of the Sydney 2007 'Sculpture by the Sea' award. In Canberra her works include the Australian Service Women's Memorial and the Australian War Memorial, as well as the marble finials on the Grand Staircase and the RSL Memorial in Parliament House. Anne's sculptures are in private and corporate collections in Australia, UK, USA, Italy, The Netherlands and Japan.

Anne will be guest speaker at our June lunch-hour talk. She will be talking about her life, her career and her works.

Beverley Sodbinow, Honorary Archivist

CO-OPERATIVE FUNCTIONS

'WEAVING WOMEN'S STORIES' FIRST PRIZE AWARD

On Thursday 12 November Michelle Brock came to the library to be presented with the first prize in the 'Weaving Women's Stories' competition. She and her partner drove from Queanbeyan on the Wednesday morning and spent the afternoon wandering round the Ultimo Pymont area. They were very impressed with the tree-lined streets, the beautifully balanced mixture of old dwellings and new apartments, the parks and open playing spaces and the restaurants and coffee shops.

To welcome Michelle and her partner Ken to the Library on the Thursday morning were Chris Kirby (now a life member of the Library), and Lesley Hackshall, representing Inner Wheel District 51, and Shirley Jones and Kris Clarke representing JSNWL. Lesley presented Michelle with her prize, a book token for \$500 donated by The Constant Reader Bookshop in Crows Nest.



L - R Chris Kirby, Shirley Jones
Michelle Brock, Lesley Hackshall

After this, came morning tea, with much discussion about Michelle's writings and her pleasure at the thought that her winning entry will not just disappear into oblivion, but will gain readership when it is posted on the website. Michelle was then shown over the library and was most impressed by the scope of the Research Collection.

MONETARY DONATIONS

We are grateful to all those who have made generous financial donations to JSNWL. These help pay for the day-to-day running costs of the Library.

Eve Abbey
Marie Andrews
Denise Bradley
Baiba Berzins
Jill Cahn
Meg Dalkin
Janet Fingleton
Liz Fitzgerald
Patti Kendall
Audrey McDonald
Ruth Robinson
Eileen Short
Eve Stenning
Patricia Sutton
Wendy Joyce Young

WOMEN'S EDUCATION WORLDWIDE CONFERENCE

The Women's Education Worldwide (WEW) Conference on Empowering Women: The Economic Imperative was held 6-8 January at Women's College in the University of Sydney. In the gracious but informal surroundings of the college and with the warm welcome from the principal, Jane Williamson, it more than achieved its objectives of bringing together presidents and academic officers of women's colleges from around the world. They were here to discuss the continuing needs of women for higher education to assist them in reaching a leadership level and making women's voices heard in the boardroom and the top echelons of administration and government. Among the nearly 100 participants were women from the USA, Bangladesh, Italy, Dubai, France South Korea, Saudi Arabi, Pakistan, China, Japan, the Philippines, Kenya, Zimbabwe and Australia. A welcome number of young women, assisted by grants from different places mingled, asked questions and gave papers.

Networking was the name of the game as participants interacted in the intervals of the formal sessions and during tours of the university and of significant women's sites in downtown Sydney, led by members of the Board of Jessie Street National Women's Library. Women's Education Worldwide was founded in 2003 at the instigation of Mount Holyoke and Smith Colleges in the USA to bring together leaders in women's education, to share best practices, to collect and disseminate data and to be a voice for women's education worldwide. Kristen Renn from Michigan shared her research on the very different backgrounds and experiences of women's colleges in four different regions of the world. There were other papers discussing strategies for improving women's position through mentoring, linking, encouraging and promoting women to seek support from others of like background and ambitions.

It was heartening to learn of regional initiatives such as ASHEWA (the Association for Strengthening Higher Education for Women in Africa) founded in 2004 and registered in Swaziland.

Sybil Jack, Board Member



'SKIRTING SYDNEY' PUTTING WOMEN ON THE MAP

After over 18 months of work and research undertaken by Lisa Murray, and especially Emma Grahame, historians at the City of Sydney, and Bev Kingston, Sybil Jack and especially Jane Pollard, members of Jessie Street National Women's Library, the historical walking tours guide 'Skirting Sydney' is in print and looks fabulous. It marks some of the most significant sites for women around the inner city that the energetic could reasonably reach on foot. These are just a selection of what might be included and we hope it will stimulate people to discover all those sites that we were not able to include. It will be available free to all interested people and we are hoping to be able to distribute it widely to schools and associations.

'Skirting Sydney' was launched by Councillor Marcelle Hoff of the City of Sydney on the Circular Quay Terrace at the Museum of Contemporary Art at 6.30 pm on 6 January 2010. The audience included 100 delegates of principals and senior women advisers from nearly 20 different nations around the globe, who were in Sydney to attend the WEW Conference on 'empowering women'. Councillor Hoff admitted to her inability to read a map as she never knew which way up it should be held, but looked forward to seeking out the sites.

Included in the program for the delegates was a walking tour of some women's sites in the University of Sydney, led by Sybil Jack, and short bus tours to see some of the marked sites, conducted by Jane Pollard, Bev Kingston and Marilyn Bryce. Judging from the comments at the conference dinner all tours were very much appreciated.

Sybil Jack, Board Member



*Cr Marcelle Hoff
launches the
Women's Map,
Skirting Sydney*

NOTES & QUOTES

The quotes below all come from the pen of Aphra Behn (1640-1689) the English playwright and poet.

Variety is the soul of pleasure.

Money speaks sense in a language all nations understand.

Marriage is as certain a bane to love as lending money is to friendship.

Love's a thin diet nor will keep out a cold.

Faith, Sir, we are here to-day, and gone tomorrow.

OCTOBER LUNCH-HOUR TALK

SPEAKER: DR CAROLYN LOWRY OAM

Doris Fitton: An Independent Woman

On Thursday 15 October, Dr Carolyn Lowry OAM, gave an extended talk on Dame Doris Fitton and the Independent Theatre, which she founded.

What prompted me to get involved with the Independent Theatre and to study the life of its founding director, Doris Fitton? Dr Rodney Seaborn, a retired psychiatrist, theatre lover and arts benefactor, had decided to buy and restore the dilapidated Independent Theatre. I met him at a theatre function in the early 1990s and, learning that I was an active supporter of the performing arts, he invited me for coffee and a chat. I took my husband along and by the end of coffee my husband was Chairman of the Friends of the Independent Theatre (yet to be constituted) and I was Honorary Secretary.

The 1990s were a happy blur of hard-working volunteerism. We forged wonderful friendships with the volunteers and actors who responded to our call for help. We ran fundraising functions, organised publicity and co-ordinated the restoration project. Actors produced play readings and generously donated proceeds to the restoration.

The Independent Theatre is a heritage building in North Sydney. My research revealed that there was a cable tram depot on this site, opened in 1886. In 1911 it was converted into a vaudeville hall, the Coliseum, with a cinema next door. The Coliseum was renamed the Independent Theatre in 1939 and the cinema is now a block of units. Jane Pollard, who is present today, moved into one of these units during our restoration. Some of her furniture even ended up on the stage for play readings. This is very much what happened in Doris Fitton's days. Because resources were scarce, people would often make their own costumes, or wear their own clothes and bring along props. In her autobiography, she records that even in 1948 with the company very short of both money and clothing coupons, she had to make her own costume out of a pair of curtains!

I started researching Doris Fitton's role at the Independent and her place in Sydney theatre when I discovered that she was the most highly decorated woman of Australian theatre in the 20th century. She was made a Dame of the British Empire in 1982. Her wide-ranging, lengthy but underfunded contribution to the performing arts, is frequently marginalised or overlooked.

Doris Fitton was born in the Philippines in 1897 and was brought to Australia at the age of five for her education. When the ship docked in Sydney her father took her to see a musical production, which

she found so overwhelming that she knew she wanted to make theatre her career. She attended school in St Mary's Mount Convent in Ballarat where the nuns encouraged acting, but this was an unusual career choice for a young girl. Her now-widowed mother told her that she must have a career to fall back on. So she learned shorthand and typing. With her mind set on acting, she took lessons with Gregan McMahon at the repertory company he had founded in Melbourne. She was spotted in a McMahon production by a J.C. Williamson's producer and before long was being given small roles in commercial theatre.

In 1920, she married a young legal clerk, Norbert (Tug) Mason, from Sydney, where the couple went to live with her in-laws. Just as she felt that maybe her career had come to an end, McMahon started a repertory company in Sydney and she was soon cast in professional roles. In 1929, after the birth of her second son, she was asked to join the little Turret Theatre in North Sydney where her secretarial and acting skills were both utilised. Her experiences to date had taught her how to run a little theatre, a drama school, classes for children, and how to send productions on tour. She also learned how to obtain the rights to modern plays. She read widely about theatres overseas and was ready to run her own show.

Her opportunity finally came when the Turret Theatre foundered financially in 1930. She invited a group of the actors to join her new group, called the Independent Theatre. She organised Club Rooms in Sydney and booked the St James Hall for performances. This was 1930, the beginning of the depression, and she was a married woman with a family. The depression had dramatically reduced the number of live theatres, many of which were converted to cinemas showing sound film. This threw a lot of actors and musicians out of work.

Doris Fitton wasn't a wealthy woman and her husband's salary wasn't great but, although she couldn't always pay their wages, she provided work for actors, writers, directors, designers and theatre technicians. She used her wits and her knowledge and started a drama school where aspiring actors would pay to learn. This generated income, and her audiences also generated income. She mentored young talented actors such as Peter Finch, Sumner Locke Elliott (who arrived as a teenager with a portfolio of his own plays), John Alden (a teacher from the country) and Madge Ryan from Queensland. By using little orchestras in her plays, she even gave work to musicians and composers

From the 1930s to the '50s, the main roles in commercial theatre went primarily to overseas stars. Our own actors had subsidiary roles. Doris Fitton regularly attended these performances and invited leading players to lunch with her own actors and supporters at the Independent Club Rooms, which became a centre for discussion and exchange of theatrical ideas. Because she understood that our own drama had to be encouraged and was looking for local writing talent, play readings were also held.

During the 1930s, Doris Fitton also produced plays at the Savoy Theatre and the Conservatorium (on Thursday, Friday and Saturday evenings), but had to share these venues with other organisations. By 1939 she decided it was time to secure a theatre of her own. She negotiated to take over the Coliseum in North Sydney at a rental of £5 per week and renamed it the 'Independent Theatre'.

The first production in the new venue, Terence Rattigan's *French without Tears*, opened on 2nd September 1939—the weekend war broke out! After the gala performance, some members of the cast left to enlist. Doris Fitton rather sadly started looking for plays with all-women casts. Among the Australian playwrights whose works she produced was Gwen Meredith, author of *Blue Hills* and *The Lawsons*. Sumner Locke Elliott's comic plays and sketches were also well received. At the same time, she was making sure that her Independent Theatre put on plays by Shakespeare, modern European plays in translation, and plays by modern English and American playwrights such as George Bernard Shaw and Eugene O'Neill.

After the war, Doris Fitton recruited a young Englishman, Robert Quentin, to direct Eugene O'Neill's powerful new play, *Mourning Become Electra*. This production attracted the attention of commercial entrepreneurs who enabled Doris and her company to embark on a professional interstate tour. During the second tour of this production in 1948, she met Sir Laurence Olivier and Vivien Leigh. The British Council had sent the Old Vic Company with the crème-de-la-crème of British acting talent to the colonies to thank them for their war effort. The Oliviers arrived in Adelaide at the same time as the Independent was performing there, and the two companies were both mentioned favourably in the same review, which would have thrilled Doris Fitton!

The brief for the Oliviers while they were here was to attend some of the little theatres to see what the Australians were doing and to search for young actors who might be encouraged to go to England for further experience. When they came to Sydney, Doris invited the whole

continued on page 10

NOVEMBER LUNCH-HOUR TALK

SPEAKER: DR JENNIFER BYRNE

The Road Less Travelled: Career Paths for Women in Science

Dr Jennifer Byrne was inundated with questions and comments at the end of her extremely informative talk. She spoke of how her childhood in the country had given her the independence needed for a career in science, the problems women face balancing a research career with family life and went deeply into the often unasked or ignored questions of why so few women reach the top of the science professions compared with men.

This is quite a different experience for me as a researcher to talk to a group about my own career, what it's like to be a woman working in science, and combining that and a family. I think being a female academic is very much like a duck swimming—on the surface of the water you see the duck gliding, but underneath the legs are going like crazy.

I grew up in the country and spent my early years on a property in Queensland. That sets me apart from most Australians. Life in the country was hard for us, living on a property that was too small. The area had been subdivided at the end of World War II to give returning soldiers a plot of land and the plots were too little. My parents were often very stressed. If it rained prices went down, because everybody was selling and when the drought was on, prices were great, but we had nothing to sell. It was a tough time in some ways, but it was a wonderful way to grow up, because we were surrounded by nature. Our house was in the middle of nowhere and when I was small I spent most of my time with our own animals—dogs, chickens and ducks—and beyond that we had the bush. As I grew older I spent a lot of time on my own, roaming around in the bush and fossicking.

Growing up in the country fostered independence, a trait my parents valued and encouraged, because your ability to rely on yourself could actually save your life. For example if you got lost and you knew how to navigate and read the signs, you could find water eventually. If you didn't know that and panicked, that could be the end of you. Another important trait was your power of observation. Your ability to see that snake in the grass might mean you avoided being bitten. When there's no hospital nearby, snake-bite could be fatal. I also learned to be observant, because without that there was really nothing to see. The country we lived in was flat and dry and to the untrained eye appeared very monotonous. But for the inhabitants it was a fascinating place. I think the experiences of living in a very sparse environment, being on my own a lot and having to be self-reliant, travelling long distances to

school and back, and running wild, taught me to value and enjoy the experience of being independent. That feeling has transferred over to my own career, where intellectual independence and the ability to withstand some of the difficulties in scientific life are characteristics that have served me well.

My primary schooling was in state schools in the country. My parents couldn't afford to send me to a high school in Brisbane, so when I was in Year 7 I sat a scholarship exam and I won scholarships to every school that I applied for. We finally decided on St. Margaret's School in Brisbane. There I had marvellous teachers. Biology was my favourite subject and my biology teacher impressed me because she emphasised that, even girls like us from a privileged group, needed to have a career. She had married young and her husband had died soon after, so she'd had to work.

At the end of my schooling, I wanted to be a scientist. I didn't want to do medicine, but I did have an interest in human biology. I enrolled in a science degree at the University of Queensland and studied lots of different subjects. The one I most enjoyed was physiology—the science of the body and how all the different systems work together to produce the individuals that we are, sitting down, breathing and thinking. I became particularly interested in the brain. Before I did further study, however, I went overseas backpacking around. When I came back I did an honours degree studying the brain's ability to recover from injury such as loss of fingers and toes.

After my honours degree I applied for research jobs and was accepted for a position in a childhood cancer laboratory and that's what led me to study cancer for a PhD. Working in the field of childhood cancer is very rewarding. Few things that seem more unfair than children dying of cancer. When I was looking for my post-doctoral position, I decided to work on adult cancer. I ended up obtaining an overseas fellowship and working in a French laboratory that studied breast cancer. It was here I identified a number of genes not known before and that was a project that really suited me. I wanted to make discoveries. I think that was something embedded in me from my childhood when I was always in the bush, looking for—I don't really know what!

I met my husband in France and we got married. He decided that he would be happy to come to Australia so we packed up and moved to Sydney and that's where we've been ever since. We decided to



have a family quite quickly. My daughter was born in 1997 and my son in 1999.

I'll tell you a little bit about the research into cancer that my oncology research unit is carrying out. I found some genes that we think are important in cancer. Cancer cells start as normal cells and at some point change dramatically. My group is interested in how that process occurs. Cancer is a complex and multi-step process, perhaps less so in children than adults. When we identified the first gene that we realised was probably important in cancer, I decided to see whether it was also significant in other cancers. In collaboration with a number of other colleagues, we showed that it was significant in both prostate and ovarian cancer. Last year we realised that this gene was involved in testicular tumours, which occur in babies and adolescent boys through to young men. Currently we're doing some work on melanoma and childhood sarcomas, because these sarcomas also show gain of this same chromosomal region that occurs in breast cancer.

A lot of my work is really looking for parallels between adult cancers and childhood cancers. Childhood cancers are a very rare disorder; only 0.5% of all cancer patients are children. This makes it very hard for those who are trying to find treatments. Most cancer treatments are driven by drug companies who make medicines to make a profit. But no drug company can make a profit by developing a drug to treat a cancer that occurs in such a small percentage of the population. Their money comes from making drugs to treat prostate, breast and ovarian cancers and leukaemia. So we are trying to derive what we hope will be a medicine that can be used in both children and adults and which will target one of the genes I've discovered. I now have a team of seven people working with me—a post-doctoral fellow, several students and a research assistant and we're all working very hard towards this overall aim.

Before marrying and having children I would usually roll up to work about 7.30 and stay until 6 or 6.30 and then I'd go home. I didn't have to worry about anybody else's needs. An integral part of scientific life is going to conferences. As long as the department could afford to send me, I'd just jump on the plane and go! When I had my first child, so many things changed. I now arrive at work

continued on page 9

CANBERRA LUNCH-HOUR TALK SEPTEMBER 2009

SPEAKER: MARLENA JEFFERY
Two Weddings and a Funeral

On Thursday 24 September, Marlena Jeffery gave us some fascinating insights into a number of her special experiences as the wife of the Governor-General of Australia.

My husband Michael was coming to the end of his military career in 1993 when he received an unexpected call from the Premier's Department in Western Australia asking if he would have his name considered for the position of State Governor. Some time later a call came asking us to fly to Perth to meet with the Premier, and soon after that, Michael's appointment was announced.

There is no textbook to lay out the duties of a State Governor, apart from the responsibility of ensuring that the government acts in accordance with the Constitution; that you carry out ceremonial commitments; and that you support a wide range of community endeavours. It was working with the community that I loved best. I got to meet fabulous women following in the footsteps of Jessie Street, and other strong female role models working for social justice across the board, for more women in politics and for better conditions for our indigenous and rural communities. I was grateful to have had the Vice-Regal experience under my belt when Michael was asked to become the 24th Governor-General of the Commonwealth of Australia in 2003. I foolishly thought that I wouldn't be as busy as I'd been in Perth, but life in Canberra was even busier. Today I'm going to share with you some memories of Two Weddings and a Funeral.

In May 2004, Michael and I represented Australia at the first of our two royal weddings—that fairytale marriage of Mary Elizabeth Donaldson, now HRH Princess Mary of Denmark, to her charming Prince Frederik. As the official representatives of what the Danes were calling their 'country-in-law', it fell upon us to stage the first of the official functions, a dinner for the Royal family to formally meet the Donaldson family.

Because we were to entertain at least 50 people, we had to find a suitable venue. Luckily, just 200 metres from the palace where the wedding reception would be held, there is a famous old inn, once a hunting lodge. Once we confirmed that the owners were willing to facilitate the use of Australian wines and key ingredients for the dinner and wouldn't mind an Australian chef overseeing the preparations, the venue was booked. Late in March, we heard that the Australian Government was sending chef, Luke Mangan, to Denmark to showcase

Australian food. It was a wonderful decision and Luke produced the most impressive five-course menu.

With the hunting lodge decorated with over 50 kilograms of native flowers from Australia and the Tank Stream Quartet from Sydney providing the music, the venue just glowed a welcome and there was a very happy and comfortable feeling to the evening. Michael had made a short but amusing speech of welcome, grace was said, the first of five different Australian wines was poured, and the first of our five courses arrived. It was a wonderful evening and got the week's activities off to a great start.

We knew we would need white tie outfits for a Royal Gala Concert and black tie for our special dinner, but when we received our official invitation, it included the words, 'Long Evening Dress (Tiara recommended)'.

The Royal Gala Concert was the first of the 'Tiara recommended' functions but I hadn't anticipated how magnificent the gowns would be. It wasn't until we boarded the coach to take us to the Royal Theatre that I realised I might be a little underdone. We were literally bedazzled by the outfits, the tiaras and the jewels of our fellow-passengers, most of them European royals. My immediate thought was 'if this is what people are wearing to the concert, what will it be like at the wedding?'

We arrived at the Royal Theatre at about 6.30 pm and were shepherded into a beautifully decorated reception room, drank a little champagne, watched an incredible procession of guests arrive, and introduced ourselves to the Aga Khan, the Crown Prince of Japan, the Earl of Wessex and some of the Queen's cousins. The concert was a stunning affair. The program was a combination of Danish and Australian performances and when we stood for the Danish National Anthem, to our delight we could hear strains of *Advance Australia Fair* interwoven into the arrangement.

The next day was the big day and we had been invited by HRH Princess Benedikte to lunch on the Royal Yacht. She greeted us and asked us to sign the Visitors' Book. We helped ourselves to a buffet of herring, cold meats, mashed potato and salads and lunched under a white awning on the deck at tables of eight. Throughout all these celebrations, Crown Prince Naruhito of Japan, who was attending without his princess, had become quite a good friend and I found myself helping him to serve himself to the unfamiliar

food on the buffet table.

Lunch over, we dressed for the big event, and at 3.25 pm departed for the Cathedral of Our Lady in the coach. I'll skip over the ceremony, which most of you will have seen on TV, and go on to the reception. We gathered in the reception room before going into a large garden room where we all lined up to get ourselves drinks—and it didn't matter who you were—king, princess, yachtie or Aussie rugby footballer. Lots of lovely mingling with the most diverse collection of people and then into a huge marquee with masses of flowers, fabulous Scandinavian crockery, gold cutlery on the head table. The courses came fast and furiously because tradition held that the Royal couple had to dance the bridal waltz before the clock struck midnight and despite the massive organisation of the evening, I know a number of guests missed out on courses. Queen Margarethe continued the lovely theme of a marriage of two countries throughout the wedding breakfast and in between the Bach and the Mozart, the Naval Band would periodically break into *Skippy the Bush Kangaroo* or *Tie Me Kangaroo Down Sport*.

When Prince Charles visited Australia in 2004 and stayed with us in Canberra, we had no idea that we would be invited to his wedding—which, after all, had been mooted as a very private affair. Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth had invited us to lunch at Buckingham Palace on the Wednesday before the wedding, but that week Pope John Paul died and the Prime Minister asked that we represent Australia at the Vatican for the funeral ceremonies. These were to take place on the same day as Prince Charles' wedding.

We arrived in Rome on the Wednesday, having apologised to the Queen for not being able to lunch with her, and drove in a motorcade, escorted by very handsome Carabinieri, from the airport, which was a hub of activity with Heads of State and world leaders all arriving. The streets of Rome were overflowing with pilgrims already arriving in their thousands. Many of you will have watched the funeral of the Pope and know what an incredibly moving ceremony it was.

Prince Charles had delayed his wedding to attend and had kindly offered us a ride back to London on his RAF plane. Our luggage indeed was already on it. We had been warned that we would have to leave the funeral ceremony at the same time as Prince Charles if we were to make the flight. As the great motorcade of vehicles carrying dignitaries was supposed to leave the Vatican in alphabetical order, as a country that started with 'A' we should rightly have been right up the front. Alas, that was not the case. President Bush and

continued on page 10

of characters as the two dramas intertwine. This forces a consideration of the similarities and differences in the two households that are separated by time and changing social convention. The play confronts the double pressures that are placed on women in relation to feminism and who continue to want marriage and children.

Reviews were mixed, partly because it could not be judged as a polemic but tried to explore the contradictions felt by women in the middle, torn by vague and conflicting ideas. The play's original title was *No Man's Land*.

Noelle Janaczewska (b. 1955) is an



English migrant who came to Australia in 1986 after attending Oxford University and gaining a Masters in Social Sciences at the London School of Economics. Over the last twenty years she has

written over 30 plays, radio scripts, libretti and essays, while also working as a lecturer at the University of Technology Sydney.

Her play *History of Water/Huyen Thoi Mot Giong Nuoc* uses the symbolism of water to shift between the dreams and memories of Kate, an Australian photographer with an English background, and Ha, a Vietnamese migrant who works as an interpreter. The play explores the difference between floating on the surface of a culture and being able to plumb its depths. Australia as a country without water and Vietnam as a country defined by water come together in this poetic duet as the two women try to redefine preconceptions of culture and country. The play won the 1994 London New Play Festival.



The final play in this selection is *Stolen*, by Jane Harrison, a Muruwari descendant. It was commissioned by Ilbijerri Theatre Co-operative in

1992 with the aim of creating a contemporary piece of theatre that was important to the community. Harrison responded to the co-operative's ad for a 'writer/researcher' although she had never before written for theatre. The

original title was *The Lost Children* until it was argued the children were never lost, they were stolen. *Stolen* tells of five children who were taken from their families, brought up in repressive children's homes and trained for domestic service or other menial work. The pain and desperation of their lives is seen through the children's accounts as they struggle to make sense of a world where they have been told to forget their families, their homes and their culture.

This play premiered in Melbourne in 1998 and since has toured the world and been translated into other languages. In 2000 when then Minister for Aboriginal Affairs, Senator Herron, provoked public outrage by saying that only 10% of Aboriginal children were ever taken from their families, the Sydney season of the play sold out in three days. *Stolen* has been on the VCE English syllabus and the New South Wales HSC syllabus. Harrison has gone on to write more plays; *Blakvelvet*, her most recent, won the 2006 Theatrelab Indigenous Award.

In the 1908 edition of the Sydney-based journal, *The Lone Hand*, Leon Brodsky wrote: 'Many of us are almost in despair when we see how little relation the theatre in Australia has to the national life of the country'. I hope this small selection demonstrates theatre's developing relevance to 'the national life of the country', from Federation to feminism, migrant stories and indigenous expression. There are still productions from the West End and Broadway appearing on our stages, but it is possible today for a theatre to be successful putting on nothing but Australian plays. That women still have a way to go in theatre in Australia, however, is evident from the recent furore at Belvoir Theatre where there have been protests over the lack of women represented in the 2010 season.

The Library is proud of the number of women playwrights that contribute to our national self-expression, writing on an enormous range of topics from a distinctly female/feminist perspective and creating a vibrant dramatic tradition. We are pleased to hold so much of their work in our collection.

*Jane Pollard
Honorary Librarian*

Editor's Note: *Aphra Behn's best-known play, The Rover, was superbly produced by the Adelaide Theatre Company in Adelaide in the 1990s. The Company later brought it to Sydney, where it played to packed houses at the old Wharf Theatre.*

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING, 2010

The Annual General Meeting will be held on Saturday 10 April in Seminar Room 1 at the Ultimo Community Centre, corner of Harris Street and William Henry Street.

We would like to see some new faces on the Board, so please consider nominating

or suggesting this to one of your friends. Remember that only financial members may be nominated.

Board meetings are held on the second Tuesday of each month from 12.30 pm till approximately 2.30 pm in the Ultimo Community Centre.

COMMUNITY EVENTS

OPEN DAY AT ULTIMO COMMUNITY CENTRE

Jessie Street National Women's Library joined in the Open Day festivities at the Ultimo Community Centre on Sunday 22 November. The City of Sydney's eight libraries were having a sale of books culled from their collections. JSNWL also had a stall, selling books recently culled from the Loan Collection.

November 22 was one of the hottest days ever for this time of year, the temperature reaching a searing 41°C. Our stall was conveniently placed in the courtyard immediately beyond the door from the foyer and was shaded by an enormous awning.

Over 300 people attended the Open Day, many of them families with young children, and nobody seemed to mind the heat. The Community Centre supplied free bottles of cold water, and put on a much appreciated sausage barbecue. Judging by the happy cries of the children and the happy faces of the adults, everyone was enjoying the event.

TALK TO THE CHINESE GROUP

Elizabeth Mooney, a long-time JSNWL volunteer, gave her second talk to the Chinese Group at the Ultimo Community Centre, on Tuesday 1 December 2009. She described her trip to Pakistan, illustrating her talk with photos from the 1000 her friend had taken. Here is a summary of her talk.

Late 2007, my friend Pat Clark and I did an autumn trip in the Hunza Valley in Pakistan, advertised as 'autumn foliage, mountain settings, glacier streams, remote villages and friendly people'. Our first setdown was the leafy city of Lahore. We found everyone spoke English without a noticeable accent and were very curious about Australia. We had to field a lot of questions about cricket! We enjoyed a visit to a friend's home, meeting the family and guests; we noted that only the older women wore head coverings.

In a group of four we did a day trip of over 300 km, with guide and driver, over a mountain highway to the capital, Islamabad. From here we took a flight to Skardu through huge, snow-covered mountain ranges, the plane landing on what appeared to be mountain top. Then we began our long road trip to Gilgit, Karimbad, Gulmit, Sost (Pakistan's border with China), the Khunjerab Pass, and the village of Misgar, then back to Gilgit and Islamabad. At each stopover we were welcomed into homes, schools, women's workshops, carpet factories and were even guests at a wedding. We found the food delicious, fresh and spicy, and the scenery stunning.

once I've got the family sorted, and I leave work to suit the needs of others. Work becomes an oasis of relative calm, within a sea of seething insanity at times. My time is no longer my own. Attending conferences is now a nightmare, because of the family reorganisation it involves.

I have worked out that looking after children is a generation of commitment. Your children are toddlers for five years, primary students for seven years and high school students for seven years. By the time women get their children through high school, their own parents are needing support. This 'caring' period exactly coincides with how women go through the academic promotion process. Usually that's a five-step process and if each of those steps takes three to five years, it takes about 15 to 25 years of your life to rise through the promotional stages. So it's not surprising that women experience issues in science that other people who don't have significant caring roles don't experience.

Then there are the problems arising from motherhood. Combining breastfeeding with work can be daunting and then there is the added exhaustion of sleeplessness. When your children go to day care and get sick they pass the germs around. I found I got sick also and then it would pass round the whole family. That means you have to take time off and it's challenging to try and fit this in with deadlines and the demands at work.

I might start talking here about women in science. From the fact that people talk about 'women in science', you have to suspect that there is some kind of problem, and there certainly is. Time has brought many improvements, but the fact remains that women are very significantly under-represented the higher you go up the university ladder. It really doesn't matter what university or research organisations you survey or what country these are in, the results are astonishingly similar. They are shown in what is called a 'scissor diagram'. Basically, it's two plots showing the number of men and women at the different points of the career ladder. The numbers of men and women entering university are pretty similar, as are the numbers doing a PhD, so the plot curves are the same. By the post-doctoral level, those curves start to separate—the women's curve starts to go down and the men's curve starts to go up and this is maintained right through to the professorial level. At almost any university in Australia, approximately 10% of women are professors, and 90% are men. This is a very striking, reproducible finding in almost any discipline..

Why do these scissor curves exist? The two schools of thought can be described as nature versus nurture. Some think that

women are innately less fit for a career in science, but this is not backed up by the facts. Extensive testing of girls versus boys in schools, show that their academic performances are very similar. Basically there isn't any gender-based difference in intellect that would give rise to something as dramatic as 90% of men becoming professors and only 10% of women.

For a long time people thought it was a supply problem and that all you had to do was get more women into the system and more would progress along the pipeline to the higher positions. But, although there are now similar numbers of women and men doing science at university, the end result is always the same. For the women the pipe leaks. So women are coming out of the pipe at different stages and the men are staying in.

This loss of women represents a tremendous loss of talent. The corollary of that, you could argue, is selective retention of men, regardless of talent. So why is this happening? One hypothesis is that women choose not to compete, and there may be some degree of truth in that. Some areas of science are intensely competitive, with everybody competing for a limited amount of money and you really have to fight hard for what you think you deserve. If women choose not to compete, then you have to ask why. They obviously are making that choice because they think the path is difficult and they are right. So the system is probably, without any intention, actively discriminating against women. I think also the fact that science has been male-dominated for so long, means that the world of science has been created by men for men. There are very subtle pressures that discriminate against women at many different stages of their careers. I tend to think that those big differences in the scissor curves are due to all kinds of small factors each playing a role along the way.

How are we going to improve the situation and end up with greater than 10% of our women as professors? I think the most important thing is to keep talking about the issue. Women are very reluctant to request any kind of special treatment. They want to be judged on their own merits; at times that thinking results in the problem being suppressed and people pretending that it doesn't exist.

Removing areas of bias can improve outcomes for women. An interesting example is related to orchestra participation. To get selected for an orchestra you must be auditioned. A researcher in the US, a musician herself, carried out blind auditions where, rather than performing in front of the conductor or the panel, the performer was behind a screen. They found that using this

process, the number of women selected increased significantly and the number of men dropped! Now many orchestras around the world are using blind auditions. It's been shown in science with grant applications as well. If applications are considered without names attached, more women than before are chosen.

Clearly, another major factor is having more women in leadership positions, across all spheres of life. At the moment we have few female politicians, few women on boards, few women CEOs. Women are not playing the role at the higher levels that they should. When people accept women as being appropriate in positions of power, I think we'll start to see those scissor curves alter.

*Transcription by Helen Ruby
Abbreviated version by Shirley Jones*

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We thank the following people and organisations who have so generously donated material both to the various Library collections and the archives.

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NEW MEMBERS

A warm welcome to our new members

Angela Badger
Denise Bradley
Anne Bedwin
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company on their day off, to attend a special performance of *Mourning Becomes Electra*, one of the longest plays ever written. The Oliviers themselves were unfortunately delayed. It says much for Doris that she managed to hold the curtain for a whole hour until they arrived. The visitors stayed for the whole performance, and particularly commended a young talented Diana Perryman for her role as Lavinia.

At the end of 1948 Doris Fitton decided to direct Sumner Locke Elliott's new play, *Rusty Bugles*. It had 16 men in the cast, and depicted men's army experiences in an ordnance depot in Mataranka in the Northern Territory. Written with a sense of humour, it contained language that was much coarser than people had heard on the stage before. This caught the attention of the Chief Secretary's Department and police were sent to the opening to count the rude words—and the play was banned. The controversy prompted an important debate on censorship, with letters appearing in the *Sydney Morning Herald* and various journals. Some decried the whole thing as nonsense and others argued that we had to keep up standards. As a result, the cast got together with Doris Fitton and the offending words were changed. The play was the biggest box office success the Independent Theatre had ever had and became the forerunner of a whole new era of locally-written plays.

It was after this success that Doris Fitton went to England and Paris—her first trip overseas. She met the Oliviers again, saw many productions, made a lot of valuable theatrical contacts and obtained the rights to scores of new plays. Unfortunately the debate on the need for a National Theatre intensified while she was away. Tyrone Guthrie, a theatrical luminary from England, was appointed to advise the Government. To get an overview of Australian theatre, he reportedly attended a lot of cocktail parties and met a lot of people during a two-month tour around the country. But he missed *Rusty Bugles*, and he missed Doris Fitton's 'golden' year. The patronising model he favoured involved training Australia's best actors in England and then returning them. The opposing view, closer to Doris Fitton's own, held that a National Theatre should grow from its own soil. But alas, Doris wasn't here to participate! However, she returned with many new plays which she successfully presented. A generation of new faces appeared at the Independent in the 1950s and '60s including Bud Tingwell, Leonard Teale, Jacqueline Kott, Ruth Cracknell, Tania Halesworth and Helen Morse. In 1956 the young Jacki Weaver was in a production of *Peter Pan*. The Children's Theatre flourished and the Independent managed

MARY DALY (1928 - 2010)

Mary Daly, author, theologian and radical thinker died on 3 January. After obtaining an MA from the Catholic University of Washington and a PhD from the University of Fribourg, Switzerland, she spent much of her life as professor of theology at Boston College, Mass.

Mary's analysis of church and society challenged Roman Catholic conservatism towards women. Her first book *The Church and the Second Sex* (1968) dealt with the status of women within the church. In *Beyond God the Father* (1973) she began structuring a new language, replacing nouns that paralyse female spirituality by positive verbs. In

Gyn/Ecology: The Metaethics of Radical Feminism (1978) she claims that women have had the power of naming stolen from them by patriarchy and demands a revision of the language. *Pure Lust* (1984) proposes new 'metamorphospheres' peopled by 'wild women'. In 1987, with co-author Jane Caputi, she published *Webster's First New Intergalactic Wickedary of the English Language*. New definitions include: 'fembot (noun) female robot; archetypal role model forced upon women'.

Mary's biography *Outercourse: The Be-Dazzling Voyage* is still in print and available from Australia's Spinifex Press.

Information adapted from *The Feminist Companion to Literature in English* by Virginia Blain, Patricia Clements & Isobel Grundy.

Note: Jessie Street National Women's Library has in its Research Collection all Mary Daly's books except the *Wickedary*. If you have read some of her writings and would like to explore further, or if you would like to become acquainted with them, come in and browse.

to survive the era of television, despite lack of government funding.

The Independent Theatre operated as an amateur theatre, a semi-professional theatre, and sometimes as a fully professional theatre. But Doris Fitton's standards were always professional. For almost 50 years she ensured that the Independent produced approximately twelve plays a year, with a good representation of Australian playwrights at a time when locally-written work had little support. I feel she would have been delighted that Hayes Gordon came to the Independent Theatre with his repertory company for a while and finally, when it looked as though the theatre itself would have to be abandoned, Dr Rodney Seaborn arrived and the restoration began.

*Transcription by Helen Ruby
Abbreviated version by Shirley Jones
Revised by Dr Carolyn Lowry OAM*

Jeffery - continued from page 7

Prince Charles were whisked away very quickly and when we eventually made our way to the appointed gate for our cars to arrive, we discovered that instead of being the first cabs off the rank, our cars were at the very end of a long line of limos. Getting out of the Vatican was going to be a much slower business than coming in.

When we actually arrived at the airport, we were told that Prince Charles had already left. If his plane had lost the take-off spot, it would have meant a delay of 3-4 hours. After the emotional and exciting events of the morning, our luggage safely on its way to London, and seats on an evening flight confirmed, we sat down to a leisurely lunch and enjoyed a few more

hours breathing in the spectacular scenery of Rome from our roof top restaurant at the Hotel Eden.

We arrived in London about 10 pm that evening (I still in the black silk suit that I had worn to the funeral) to begin another special adventure—the wedding at Windsor of His Royal Highness the Prince of Wales to Camilla Parker-Bowles. That's another story but I will share one lovely moment during the very happy reception that followed.

We were crowded into the Waterloo Chamber of Windsor Castle with about 400 guests. We had just listened to the Queen's very funny speech when Her Majesty gestured for us to join her after the other speeches. We were pressed in like Emperor penguins and had to shuffle our way over to her. The first thing the Queen said was how sad she'd been to learn of the Sea King Helicopter accident that had claimed the lives of nine young Australians the week before, and that, although she was disappointed we hadn't been able to lunch with her at Buckingham Palace, she was delighted we were able to attend the wedding. On every occasion we have met Her Majesty we have been overwhelmed by her deep affection for the people of Australia.

Life in retirement is a little less hectic, although there still seems to be lots to keep us both busy. Michael has an office, big enough to accommodate the memorabilia of 50 years. The National Archives will eventually catalogue all the paperwork, photographs and files but before that starts I hope I'll be able to settle down to recording some of my memories.

*Abbreviated by Shirley Jones
from Marlena Jeffery's notes.*

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- I would like to help the Library by becoming a volunteer
 (You will be contacted so that an interview can be arranged.)

The membership year runs from January to December.
 Members joining after 1st October are financial until December of the following year.

Please forward the completed form to:
 Jessie Street National Women's Library GPO Box 2656 Sydney NSW 2001

**Jessie Street National Women's Library
GPO Box 2656 Sydney NSW 2001**

ABN 42 276 162 418

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To keep women's words, women's works, alive and powerful -- Ursula Le Guin