



# THE EDITORS

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Neutral Bay Junction 2089

JUNE 1982

NEXT MEETING. . .NEXT MEETING. . .NEXT MEETING. . .NEXT MEETING. . .

Date: Wednesday, 23 June 1982.  
Place: Kirribilli Neighbourhood Centre, Fitzroy St, Kirribilli.  
Time: 6.30 for 7 p.m.  
Subject: Book Reviews.  
Speakers: Lesley McKay of McKay's Bookshops, Double Bay and Bondi Junction, and Michele Field, Literary Editor, Sydney Morning Herald.

Dinner is \$8.00. Please RSVP by Monday, 21 June. Narelle Konte. 888 2733

LAST MEETING - Australian Women Writers in the 1930s

Drusilla Modjeska discussed her recently published book, Exiles at Home (A. & R., 1981). Drusilla developed an interest in Australian women writers of the 1930s while studying Australian literature at ANU. This interest became a fascination when she found that this group of writers had been largely overlooked in records and academic studies of Australian literature.

By the early thirties, small Australian publishers were beginning to compete successfully with the major publishers in the UK and USA, and local publishing took on a new, assertive, nationalist tone.

At this stage, almost all the established women writers were having their work published overseas, with the exception of Miles Franklin who published with Angus and Robertson. For those women poets and novelists just starting, finding a publisher was not easy. They were often hindered by a lack of funds, and by the general attitude that their work was likely to be unintellectual romance and therefore not "serious writing".

These women were constantly aware of the contradiction between their

serious, professional attitude to their work and the pressures imposed on time and loyalties by their domestic situations. Even for those few who chose not to marry and have children, social pressures militated against their setting up independent households and careers.

Beatrice Davis was one of the few people in publishing respected by the women writers of the time, who perceived most other publishers to be lacking in moral fibre and susceptible to the economic lures of publishing cheap fiction. This was another pressure these writers had to withstand, and generally did.

Only one woman writer was able to live on the income from her writing - Nettie Palmer (wife of Vance Palmer and mother of two children). Christina Stead was the only woman writer of that time to write for film, a relatively new medium generally considered to be threatening competition to serious writing.

Despite all this, there was a sustained public demand for the work of women writers during the twenties, thirties and forties, probably in recognition of the fact that they tended to deal with the perennial conflict between the need for love and security and the equally strong need for assertive independence. Interestingly enough, although the work of these women has never really been accepted in an academic sense into the body of Australian literature, a reasonable level of sales has been maintained.

The writers themselves tended to be reticent about their work and the conflicts involved, and there are scant records of their personal letters and correspondence with publishers. Nevertheless, Drusilla's talk was enlivened by numerous anecdotes about the personal lives and experiences of these women. Most of those present probably rushed out to get a copy of her book in order to explore this material more fully.

Before the meeting was opened for questions, Daphne Rawling delighted those present with a reading from the memoirs of Enid Moon, who started proofreading in 1922. Extracts from this will be included in the notes for The Editors training seminar on proofreading to be held later this year.

TRAINING SEMINARS

The first of these was held on Wednesday, 26 May and was a great success. Jenny Rowe from Angus and Robertson spoke of "What you should expect from your authors". Judging by the response - number of people present and discussion afterwards - these sessions will prove very popular.

Four have been set down for the remainder of this year. Make a note of them now:

14 July      25 August      6 October      17 November

The next two are tentatively planned to deal with "the exacting art of copyediting".