Entry type: Person
Entry ID: AWE4415

Greer, Germaine

(1939 -)

Born	19390129, Melbourne Victoria Australia
Occupation	Academic, Environmentalist, Feminist, Writer

Summary

Germaine Greer established her international reputation as a feminist through the publication of *The Female Eunuch* in 1970. As an academic her expertise was in English Literature, having completed a MA thesis on Byron at Sydney University and a PhD on Shakespeare at Cambridge University in 1967. While in London, she wrote for the radical paper *Oz*, espousing controversial views on the nature of feminism in that period. She has continued to contribute to the feminist debate from a libertarian perspective, but it is difficult to categorise her feminist position.

In 2003, Professor Greer received an Honorary Doctor of Laws from the University of Melbourne. She received a Doctor of Letters (honoris causa) from the University of Sydney in 2005.

Details

Germain Greer was born in Melbourne, Australia on January 29, 1939. She was educated in Gardenvale at Star of the Sea College, a private convent school. In 1956, she was awarded a scholarship to enrol at the University of Melbourne where she graduated with a bachelor's degree in English and French literature and language.

After finishing university in Melbourne, Greer relocated to Sydney where she eventually received a Master's degree in Romantic Poetry from the University of Sydney. Arguably, her experiences beyond university were just as important to the development of her thinking. She joined the bohemian Sydney Push movement and drifted into a series of beliefs that were anarchic and communist, identifying with each as a variant Marxist.

Germaine Greer's Master's thesis *The Development of Byron's Satiric Mode* would earn her a Commonwealth Scholarship, which she used to pay for her doctoral studies at the University of Cambridge. While in England, she joined the all-women Newnham College. She also joined the amateur acting group, the Cambridge Footlights. This group helped connect Germaine Greer to the world of art and media production in London.

Greer began writing under the pseudonym Rose Blight for *Private Eye*, a satirical magazine. She also wrote under the pseudonym Dr. G. for the magazine *Oz*.

In 1970, she published *The Female Eunuch* a call to arms that condemned gender-encoded norms and society's expectations that women should live vicariously through men. It caused a sensation in Britain, the United States and Australia, and thereafter was forever being reprinted and translated. She is a vehement opponent of women who ape men and join their hierarchies to become 'sisters in suits'. 'If women can see no future apart from joining the masculine elite on its own terms, our civilization will become more destructive than ever'.

Greer has written prolifically about the obstacles placed in front of women writers and artists, as they have attempted to pursue their careers. She chronicles the minor role of women poets in *Slip-shod Sybils. Recognition, Rejection and The Woman Poet* and offers an anthology of female artists in *The Obstacle Race.* She continued to publish in the popular press about things that matter, and in recent years, she has become very outspoken about environmental matters. In her address to open Perth Writer's Festival in 2012, entitled 'Eco-Feminism Then and Now', she issued an environmental call to arms to women everywhere, to act to 'stem the tide of eco-side'. Women, she said, had historically been at the forefront of the environmental movement but Greer called for the women of today to do more and follow the unlikely example of the growing activism of the Country Women's Association against coal seam gas projects in Queensland and New South Wales.

In 2001 Greer purchased a property in the Gold Coast hinterland in Southern Queensland and founded the Friends of Gondwana Rainforest charity which manages the Cave Creek Rainforest Rehabilitation Scheme in Southern Queensland. In 2013 Greer sold her archive to the University of Melbourne, with proceeds to benefit Friends of Gondwana.
Since acquiring the collection, The University of Melbourne has invested significant resources into cataloguing and preserving the Germaine Greer Archive. In mid-2014 the then University Archivist, Dr Katrina Dean, went to Professor Greer's house in Essex, England, to pack the carefully conserved collection up. This task took three weeks. Since then, additional deposits were made in 2016 and 2017. By March 2018, the entire archive had been catalogued.

Events

2001 - 2001
Inducted into the Victorian Honour Roll of Women

Published resources

Resource
Trove, National Library of Australia, 2009

Professor Germaine Greer, University of Sydney, 2005,
http://sydney.edu.au/senate/HonGreer.shtml

Edited Book
Australian Feminism: A Companion, Caine, Barbara, Gatens, Moira et al., 1998

Book
The female eunuch, Greer, Germaine, 1970

Sex and destiny : the politics of human fertility, Greer, Germaine, 1984

The obstacle race: the fortunes of women painters and their work, Greer, Germaine, 1979

The change: women, aging and the menopause, Greer, Germaine, 1991

Resource Section
Publication of Germaine Greer's The Female Eunuch, 2012,
http://www.abc.net.au/archives/80days/stories/2012/01/19/3411580.htm

Germaine Greer Biography, 2012,
http://www.egs.edu/library/germaine-greer/biography/

Article
The Liberating of Germaine Greer, Keavney, Kay, 1972,
http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-page4887572

Germaine Greer: A Portrait, Quilty, Ben, 2013,
http://meanjin.com.au/articles/post/germaine-greer-a-portrait/

Greer Kicks Off Writers Festival, Bevis, Stephen, 2012,
http://au.news.yahoo.com/thewest/a/-/breaking/13002256/greer-kicks-off-writers-festival/

Site Exhibition
The Encyclopedia of Women and Leadership in Twentieth-Century Australia, Smart, Judith and Swain, Shurlee (eds.), 2014,
http://www.womenaustralia.info/leaders

Archival resources

The University of Melbourne Archives
Women's Electoral Lobby

The Germaine Greer Archive

National Library of Australia
[Biographical cuttings on Germaine Greer, containing one or more cuttings from newspapers or journals]

State Library of New South Wales
Dale Spender - papers, 1972-1995

Mitchell and Dixson Libraries Manuscripts Collection
Julia Trubridge-Freebury further papers, 1960s-2004

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