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Transcript of a seminar "In search of the past: fictionalising oral & written memories"

ELIZABETH HUTCHINS & JILL GOLDEN

on 05 May 2007

For the Oral History Association of South Australia (SA Branch)

Recording available on CD

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In search of the past: fictionalising oral and written memories. A seminar presented by the Oral History Association of Australia, South Australian Branch, introduced by President, June Edwards, and featuring novelists Elizabeth Hutchins and Jill Golden. Recorded on 5 May 2007 at the SA Writers Centre

DISK 1

I'd just like to welcome you all here today. It's nice to see you all come and participate on a Saturday afternoon – shows commitment.

This seminar's run by the South Australian Branch of the Oral History Association and I'm the President of the South Australian Branch, and we usually do oral history workshops where we train people how to do oral history. But we thought this year it might be nice to actually do a seminar on the use of oral history.

This was reinforced when this *Quarterly Essay* came out called 'The history question – who owns the past?' in 2006, and Inge Clendinnen wrote a wonderful essay analysing the importance of history in the development of moral sensibility, and as part of her essay she criticised Kate Grenville's novel, *The secret river*. She was particularly annoyed that Grenville used an historical episode of Governor Arthur Phillip meeting an Aboriginal man on Hawkesbury, but in the novel she shifted the event thirty kilometres upriver, set it twenty-five years later and made the protagonist the ex-convict settler, William Thornbull, who was her main character.

And Clendinnen was also unhappy with Grenville's claim that she was producing a new kind of history. So this was on the radio quite a bit and lots of different historians talked about it, and so it created a bit of discussion, which was good.

So in this context we thought it would be interesting to ask two novelists who have used oral history in archives to write fiction to talk about their work and the issues which have arisen in fictionalising historical events and events in members of their family.

So the seminar 'In search of the past: fictionalising oral and written memories' was born. And I have to thank Catherine Murphy for organising the event and for Elizabeth Hutchins and Jill Golden for accepting the task, because it has taken a bit of work to get it to this point.

So today we'll have Elizabeth's presentation first and some discussion and then afternoon tea, and then Jill will do her presentation, and then we'll just have a sort of wind-up at the end of the day.

So I'll introduce Elizabeth Hutchins. One thing Elizabeth told me the other day was how important the State Library was to her because she had a few books when she was a youngster and she read them all, and then her mother took her to the lending library on North Terrace and this whole world of books opened up to her. So it's where – that's right, isn't it, Elizabeth?

ELIZABETH HUTCHINS: Yes. It was actually a teacher, but that's fine.

Oh, was it? A teacher, sorry. And I've heard that story from many people, so that library must have opened doors to many young ones. So Elizabeth is a widely-published children's author, she's co-authored several school histories and is now writing historical fiction. Her work in progress is called *One for sorrow*. It's the story of a feisty grandmother, Isabella Marshall, who emigrated to Adelaide from Ireland in 1855 to escape an arranged marriage.

Her first non-fiction biography of her great-grandparents, *The china dogs*, was published in 1988.

***One for sorrow* draws on childhood memories of tales that have been passed down for a hundred and fifty years, interviews with family members and subsequent research. But where the facts end, imagination takes over. So Elizabeth's presentation will outline the process by which she turns fact into fiction. It's an approach that gives rise to challenges, since often a writer has to deal with flawed, incomplete and contradictory accounts, not to mention facts that have been deliberately concealed. And, moreover, combatants in the history wars are probably in pursuit. So that was Elizabeth's really good summary, so I'll hand over to Elizabeth now.**

Thank you very much. Right. Well, I'm here today with the 'story' bit of the word 'history' in mind. I am by nature a raconteur, everybody says that I have an anecdote for any occasion. I believe that story can inform, it can inspire, sometimes it can actually change lives.

Now, we all have stories to tell, but very few of us relatively collect them, actively collect them, and even fewer write them down; I could add that even fewer manage to get them published. So we all have our own agendas when we write – that's something we might take up later – because our writing says a lot about who we are, and my stories reflect my interest in people, in places that I know and love and in environmental and social issues.

A couple of my books I'll mention very briefly: *Bring back the songs* is about a girl rediscovering her Aboriginal heritage, and so it would say quite a bit about the Aboriginal sense of story, importance of story in their culture and their lives; *A*

matter of cats is the environmental one, my little bit for the environment, being a cat lover who sees what they do to wildlife; *Operation Teddy* is a child going to hospital. So several of my books feature disability. Those are just some examples, and you can see my books afterwards.

But now my focus has turned to my Australian heritage and to bringing the past to life. Perhaps the reason why so many of us feel a need to discover our roots might be something for question time. I'm currently rewriting a novel, *One for sorrow*, and there is the rhyme which gave rise to it – particularly 'Seven for a secret never to be told' could be quite relevant today, I think – and it's based on what I know and what is still a mystery about my mother's grandparents, Isabella and William Small. I've also completed a novel called *Troop train*, which is about women of South Australia, a saga of women during World War II. That isn't published yet. Now, that has more of an oral history component, in fact: I taped a dairy farmer and an elderly former farmer, getting the stories for the basis for that novel. So I like to think I've got a balance here between my own search for the past and a wider fascination for my country's history.

Neither novel is designed to teach or preach; but somehow, somewhere in my motivation there's the premise – Karl Marx put it very succinctly: 'The past influences our present and it inspires our future.'

My presentation will be in four parts. Firstly, there are the facts that inspire the writing of my novel. I'll share just a bit of the story of William and Isabella that I heard when I was a child. And then I need to mention the subsequent research that I made into their lives. Then I'll read you an excerpt from *One for sorrow* so that you can see what became of some of that raw material when my imagination took over. The South Australian author Robin Haines at Writers' Week said, 'Imagination is the key to interpreting the past', and I think she was certainly right. Thirdly, I'll examine – it's probably only secondly, I'm not sure – the problems in fictionalising history. Now, there are the difficulties that I experienced and also, as has already been mentioned, the disapproval expressed by many historians about various approaches. And finally – it could take a whole afternoon workshop but it can't –

I'll very, very briefly list some of the process by which I turn this raw material into fiction, just in case some of you are writing or might feel that you'd like to do so.

How many of you are actually writing? Are any of you writing historical fiction? Well, that's terrific, okay. Or are any of you writing slightly more factual memories – we'll get to the bit about facts later, won't we? That's great. One of the things that I read recently from a winner of the *Age* Short Story Contest, he said he was given the advice, 'Write the story that you tell everyone', and I think that's probably very good advice. I think it's what I'm doing.

Now, there are all sorts of types of historical fiction and I won't stop to write them all down, but I once went to a workshop by Ann Clancy, another South Australian writer of historical fiction. It was a very, very good workshop. She referred to somebody whose surname was Dunnett, and I haven't found out exactly who, who said there were eight sub-genres in writing for history. They begin with, number one, 'heavy', they go through fictionalised characters, a blockbuster, macho adventure, myth, funnies, history/fantasy. You can see we're working downwards a bit, because number eight is 'four bare legs in the four-poster bed'. (laughter) So she gave us a talk, she made us think about the amount of history we were putting into our novel – 'How much truth do you think there is in it?' – and you were asked to draw a line. Well, I thought possibly a fair bit. 'Is your story going to be very, very popular? Is it going to be four legs and a four-poster bed, or very heavily literary?' I think I ended up putting my effort possibly about there. (indicates) And she also said you could do a different one if you're writing for males or females, so that's something you might be interested in thinking regarding your own writing or your own stories.

And so on to my story. I've often heard it said, 'You're not dead while someone remembers you.' And my great-grandmother, Isabella Marshall, has certainly lodged herself in my thoughts and my being. The novelist Gail Jones at Writers' Week last year suggested that every memory, every photo, is a sort of haunting. That's an interesting idea, isn't it? But I don't see myself as writing a ghost story.

I was brought up in a family dominated by strong-minded women, and the feisty Isabella's always been part of their lives and mine. First time I recall hearing of her

is when I was only about four, and my Auntie Beryl found me sitting on the floor by the fire in her lounge room cradling one of her china dogs. And here they are. (displays china dogs) There is a significance in them being wrapped in an old rug, and that will come out when I do a reading for you later, so I brought my friends today and they do sit by my fireplace to this day. They nearly didn't, I nearly got cut out of her will at one stage, and I'll tell you about that later. (laughter)

Now, I thought Auntie would be cross with me, because she was very strict and particular and she had no children, but to my surprise she smiled and told me she'd also talked to those dogs and played with them when she was a little girl and so had her mother before her. She said, 'They belonged to your great-grandmother Marshall. She brought them with her when she came out from Ireland. They'll be yours some day.' They were as closely as I can get to the exact words that she used. So as I grew up I was fed more stories about Isabella. My mother and her sisters were obviously proud of her spirited nature as a young woman; they were in awe of her stoic struggle against adversity in middle age; and they were very critical about her downhill spiral to a bleak and lonely death. I can't tell you the whole story, obviously, today. But they all had differing memories and sometimes they argued with each other about their grandparents. 'No, no, he didn't.' 'Yes, he did. He did this.' And so on. So the way in which memories vary, and particularly what people don't tell you, is to me as fascinating as the stories that they told.

Even when they were pressed, my family had very little to say, and none of it good, about William. I should have smelt a rat at that stage. Growing curiosity led me to interview these three matriarchs in the late '80s, so childhood memories moved to an adult curiosity and I wanted to know more – luckily, because of course they're all long gone now. 'Oh, there's not much to tell', they'd say, guardedly; but it only took a glass of wine over a Sunday roast and I'd get some new information every time. I never taped those sporadic chats, but I always rushed home to write down every word I could recall, and so I will show you one of my first notes that I wrote – these were a bit of additional information. (turns on projector) I'm sorry it's a bit faint but that's just the way it was, and it's just to show you. I'd just write down, '1, 2, 3, 4, yes it was this, yes it was that.' The diagonal cross through it just

was I never knew I'd be using those notes again. That was 'Oh, yes, I've recorded that somewhere else' when I did more serious research later. So I got the children and she said Isabella came from Drumcovitt and that Auntie had sent someone who was going to Ireland to have a look for the house, little things like that.

So some weeks later, after one of these lunches, one of them would always ring me or meet me and have another chat, and it always began, 'Oh, by the way', as they'd gradually remember more things, and they'd share another memory. For example, 'Grandmother Marshall was a Scot, you know. She spoke the Gaelic.' Well, she came from Ireland. I did some research: Irish and Scottish Gaelic diverged in the seventeenth century, so why were they ashamed to say that she was Irish? I know she had Scottish heritage and of course I had to do a whole lot of research which will never actually get into the novel to find out why the Scots became so important in Northern Ireland at that time. So the result of all this was a jigsaw puzzle with loads of gaps, some of which I've filled in gradually with research over the last twenty years. Some irregular pieces simply don't fit.

Now, what would you do in the middle of a novel with a yarn about your heroine sleepwalking, going and digging up her neighbour's prized grapevine in the middle of the night, waking up in the morning with mud on the hem of her nightdress, a spade by the bed and a plant by the front door? (laughter) That was just one of the stories that was a 'by the way' addition at one stage. Research has to be selective, and you have to make it fit.

Now, I'd like to invite you now to come on a journey with me to meet Isabella and take a peep into her life. I like the analogy of a journey. It could go on and on and I've cut out about half a page of my analogy (laughs) about swamps and hillsides, *et cetera*. But fellow travellers need to trust each other, and I think it's very important that a reader should trust a writer. Every time you read you have to trust that writer or you won't enjoy the book, will you? Now, there are always some minor tracks to explore off a roadside, too. One of my early detours was a factual account. This is Kensington and Norwood Writers' Group anthology in which I had my story, *The china dogs*, which was more or less what I've told you so far, and I learnt a great deal in later years. A bit of a hotch-potch, but it got me started and I was really

pleased that I'd done it. You're welcome to look at all the stuff later that I'm showing you now.

Another thing is I hope I'm on the right road now, because my first attempt at a historical novel, *One for sorrow*, was as a young adult novel where I had alternating strands. I had a current family, contemporary family, where the teenage children doing history are looking back into the family history and interviewing people, trying to find out all they can. And then after each chapter of that is a vignette from the past which is a story, in which the readers actually find out a whole lot more than that family every know. And I really like the concept but it hasn't got a publisher, so unfortunately present-day Izzy and Bill who are descendants of Isabella and William have been put in the bin and I'm now fleshing out the stories from the past into a novel.

So these are the facts that I gleaned over the years – or are they? And I put some doubts in your mind already. In the 1840s the Marshalls were a well-off Protestant family in County Derry, Northern Ireland, living in a fine house with marble steps that led down to a green slope near a railway siding outside the village of Drumcovitt. The only problem with this description, as I've just shown you, is that there is absolutely no evidence, not even one Google reference, to a place of that name. Now, I want you to think of Isabella first as a lively child, so I won't show you her photo yet. There's one little tale that's come down by word of mouth through six generations of my family, and I have already passed it on to another one and there's a few more on the way. It comes from the 1840s, because I know when Isabella was born. Isabella often told how she reluctantly sewed frills on her father's shirts from when she was as young as eight years old. Such a shirt would take days to make and an hour to iron, she said. One day, she said, they had to hurry to complete a new shirt for her father to wear in the Orange Day Parade. If you don't know about the Orange people, well, ask me afterwards; but as a child I always thought the family must have owned a citrus orchard. (laughter)

Well, obviously the father, whose name was William – there are so many Williams in this story I'll have to change it in the fictionalised version – he must have taunted the Catholics lining the route, because in no time he was home again and the fine

white linen was spattered with his blood. Now, there's a ring of truth about this tale, especially since it was used over several generations to encourage the less-skilled young seamstresses in the family, which always prided itself on fine embroidery and dressmaking, until I failed utterly to pass on that enthusiasm to my daughters, (laughter) one of whom I think can't sew a button on. Now, this has a bit of a feel of a fable about it from now on, because in 1855 Isabella's father arranged her marriage to someone she described as 'an old man twice her age'. Well, she up and left. She packed her carpet bags, presumably with the china dogs in them, and ran away from home – according to my aunt, to follow her childhood sweetheart, William Small, to Australia. Now, who was William? Why had he left Ireland? More of that later, maybe.

I'm told that this wilful little miss never made contact with her family again, her parents. Think about it. She booked an assisted passage, which cost a pound, on a three-masted sailing ship, the *Agincourt*, which left Plymouth on September 4 1855 and reached Adelaide on December 15. Now, I was so excited to find that shipping list with her name on it in the Mortlock Library that I said, 'I've found her!' And about twenty people looked up. (laughs) I'm sure they're used to that, though. She was described as 'servant, accepted from County Derry'. She put her age up to nineteen but I now know that she was born in 1840 and was in fact barely fifteen. Fourteen when she worked this out. Think about it. And so her 'old' suitor was probably under thirty. (laughter) If only she'd left diaries or letters. Using other writers' accounts from those years I've had to fill in the story of her journey to and departure from Plymouth, the voyage, her arrival at Port Adelaide and her early years living in Kensington. These are chapters I've already written and am pleased with. Fortunately, there's a wealth of material – perhaps there's too much, and that's another pitfall I'll talk about later. And then there's William.

Auntie Beryl, who was by far my best informant, was reticent about him. 'We don't talk about him much', she said. But she was sure Isabella had known him in Ireland before she migrated. She said he was of 'high birth' and had titled relations: Lady Milne in Adelaide – now, Sir William Milne was a very eminent early citizen and one of our early politicians; and Lady Walker in Tasmania. He was a waster and

a gambler who'd gone through three fortunes. Although he was listed in the directories for some years as a shoemaker in Light Square and Hindley Street, I never found any evidence of his arrival, his marriage to Isabella or his death, which are absolutely basic bits of information, as you would know, despite months of research both here and in Hobart. I was given a generous Arts SA grant to do the research for this in Hobart. Auntie Beryl thought he first went to Lady Walker, who, according to my Hobart archivist who helped me a great deal, Margaret Glover, she simply doesn't seem to have existed. She said, 'I would know if there'd ever been a Lady Walker.' And it was to Van Diemen's Land that he returned in May 1871 – so we're talking 1855 to 1871 with Isabella – purportedly as an explorer, never to be heard of again. He left Isabella with four young children, two others had died as babies and another was on the way. That baby was my grandmother, Rose, Rosetta Adelaide Knight, and she was born in October 1871. The locket that I've got on – you can stare at me closely at afternoon teatime – is of my Grandma Rose, and I have her photo. I have the photo from which that locket picture was taken. The little girl in it is me on my fourth birthday, with my wartime basket of lollies made from a half a tea packet covered round with crêpe paper. So that's Grandma Rose, who passed on most of these stories, and I loved her very dearly.

There must have been some link to the Milne family, because Sir William owned the cottage in Kensington – I've had lots of help on this sort of thing – where William and Isabella lived. Legend has it – family again – that after William's untimely death – and I have to change his name, because *Sir* William, which is Sir William Milne, apparently sent a carriage with food and clothing in it but Isabella turned the driver away. Are you starting to get a feel for her as a person? I certainly did. Lady Milne then wanted to adopt the baby, Rose. That was quite a common thing when anyone was in great need. And that offer was also refused. And yet there is no apparent kinship to be found in many of the records that I searched, and another of my aunts said that she met one of the Milne children in the street one day and said, 'Oh, I'm a relation', and was given very short shrift. So it's all a big mystery.

Now, of course, it was downhill for poor Isabella all the way from here, if not from the moment she left home in Drumcovitt. The stories are of her years of barely surviving by taking in sewing and washing; marriage through desperation to a German, but they called him 'Prussian', refugee called Ernst; the births and deaths of triplets, the first in the colony – and I love the stories about the baby triplets but I don't think I'll stop on them now, do ask me afterwards; a stint as a pioneer mallee farmer's wife, they went up to Cornamon[?], Teal Flat, in about 1880; and – this is the sad bit – a life tied to a husband who turned out to be a paedophile and who abused Rose. So I won't mention his surname on tape.

Although Isabella had previously been portrayed as a very caring and unofficial sort of district nurse – there are stories of her saving lives and so on in the village – Auntie Beryl said she became a hard woman. And so I will show you her photo at last – there she is – I didn't want you to see as a little girl. How old do you think she might be there? (guesses from audience) No, she's quite a bit older. Because if she was born in 1840, came here in 1855 – – –. There are very good books in the State Library, if it interests you, on identifying photos and costumes, and I could spend a long time talking about particular things which were current. I've dated that in the late 1870s to 1880, maybe just before they set off for the farming life, so I think after she had married Ernst. One of those chains is still in my family; I've given it to my daughter. So that's Isabella.

And, sadly, Isabella 'took to the sherry', again in inverted commas, in her last years, with the family – she was lonely, her family were scattered round three States, and she died in 1909. That's where I nearly got cut out of the will, because I did mention this fact in the story, *The china dogs*, and my aunt, who I thought would be very proud of me, wasn't. (laughs) She was deeply ashamed that I should mention something, even though it was a hundred years ago.

Now, why was William such a mystery figure? From the day I came home from the Mortlock Library and announced jubilantly that he was a Catholic – I found that out – blanket of disapproval (laughter) settled over my mother and aunts that I should be unearthing another such scandal. No more information was ever forthcoming from any of them, except that I was reminded periodically that William

had a head of black curls just like mine, and there was one of them in every generation. (laughter)

Then an elderly cousin of mine, years later, recalled that he was a ‘remittance man’. Again, I won’t stop: if you don’t know what that is, do ask later. My curiosity was rekindled. How many lies had I been told about William? What facts had been covered up, probably by Isabella herself – because I do believe my mother and aunts, although they differed a bit, thought they were telling the truth – in order to save face? I may have found part of the answer in the Hobart archives because, wait for it, no less than four men by the name of William Small were transported to that colony. One of the entries could certainly have been my grandfather. It’s not an exact match. Convict number 26040, William Small. The big thing that doesn’t match is that he was from Dundee; but then perhaps he was. The description is wonderful: it goes through age; which is only eighteen; height, five foot three and three-quarters, tiny; ‘large head, but dark brown hair, no whiskers, oval visage’ and all the other things, black eyebrows, dark eyes, a ‘medium pugged nose’ – (laughter) I like that bit – and the mouth and the chin are also ‘medium’. The dates more or less fit, except that he was reconvicted for another offence some years later. Now, Auntie Beryl said he went back to Tasmania quite a lot, point one; point two, I have the dates of births and there were no births in the family between 1862 and 1865. So it is possible. Who knows? But it fits what I’d like to do. Now, finally, what did happen to him in 1871 when he must have said to Isabella, ‘I’m going back, I’m going exploring’? I had a look, and the only exploration going on at the time, except for a little bit of gold mining in the far north-west, was looking for stands of Huon pine down in the south-west wilderness, so that’s what I’ve made him do in my novel. Easy to come to a sticky end down there, and there were family stories.

Now I’m going to challenge you: how would you get rid of him in a story? (laughter) He’s not allowed to come home again. What do you think might have happened to him? Nobody’s venturing an opinion. (suggestions) Right, one aunt said he was drowned, one said he was ‘speared by blacks’, one said he died of frostbite – that’s three aunts. (further suggestions) It could have been a logging accident, yes, that’s possible too. They might have died falling off horses. Anyway,

I was given three different explanations from my mother and two aunts, which is very interesting. I actually wondered whether he wanted to face a growing family any longer – he'd gone through all his fortune and life was a bit miserable back in Kensington – whether he just started up a new dynasty over there, because communications were so sparse that a Hobart friend of mine talks of a man who had another complete wife and family just over the hills from Hobart, and I found lots of people by the name of Small in a little country town when we went visiting. So who knows? But really, the whole thing just begs me to fictionalise it, doesn't it, and to fill in the gaps and turn these ancestors of mine into real people? And that's what I'm trying to do.

So it's time to read you a little bit from *One for sorrow*. I've chosen to follow the story of the china dogs, which is why I brought them. So I've invented a young servant, Bridget, to share the voyage to Australia with Isabella, otherwise how do we get to know all the things that happen to .... You need more characters, don't you. Now, creating characters is one of the most satisfying aspects of being a fiction writer. There's an actual feeling of power that you created this person, even though he or she is really only a group of words. So on the dock at Plymouth, Isabella wishes Bridget a happy life and offers to buy her a memento from a pedlar who's set up a stall. Bridge chooses the largest objects there, a pair of Staffordshire dogs. This is how I get them into the story:

> 'What a handsome pair', said Isabella as she slipped a coin from her shoe to pay for them. And the pedlar added that Gog and Megog brought good luck to a family that kept them by their fireplace.
>
> 'Who knows when I'll have a family or a fireplace', Bridget mused wistfully.
>
> 'Nor me either', Isabella agreed. The two girls returned in sober mood to wait in the queue.

That's just the first little introduction. Quoting author Robin Haines again, she says, 'There's a tragedy that underlies each coming', and of course migration, leaving, starting in a new place are very big, is a very big theme in literature, isn't it. So on arrival Isabella goes to stay with rich relations – they were the Marshalls, who actually had Marshalls Emporium which became the big Myer empire; none of that

wealth came down to me, sadly – while Bridget gets a job in a home at North Adelaide. It's some months before they meet again and so several chapters later Isabella finds that her former servant is pregnant and obviously ill. And here's just another page or so.

> When all too soon it was time to part, Bridget wept uncontrollably.
>
> 'I'll come to your house as soon as I can', Isabella promised. 'I will do something for you.'
>
> 'You're my best friend you know, Miss Izzy. You're my only friend', sobbed Bridget.
>
> 'Friends for life, Biddy, I promised you and I won't let you down.'
>
> A few days later, Isabella put on her new sprigged muslin frock and her best green bonnet, made her way to the address in O'Connell Street that Bridget had given her. She'd collected a little money and some warm clothes and made three small flannel gowns for the babe, uncomfortably aware that none of these could solve Bridget's problem. But she had a forceful speech prepared for the lady of the house and if necessary she would beg. She boldly rang the front doorbell.
>
> 'She's not here', said the sharp-faced housekeeper.
>
> 'Then give her these when she comes back, please.' Isabella spoke with the authority of one born to give orders. The housekeeper hesitated, but invited her into the drawing room.
>
> 'I'm afraid the mistress has thrown her out', she said, looking anxiously over her shoulder. 'Young hussy's with child, you know.'
>
> 'But how will I find her, then?'
>
> 'Try Mrs Cawley's lodging house in Victoria Street. I told her Mrs Cawley's a kind woman.'
>
> Aghast, Isabella left immediately, armed with instructions for finding a lodging house, but also with a well-meant warning that it was not the sort of place for a lady to visit. As she entered the dim hallway, Isabella forced herself to shut out the pitiful crying of a hungry infant, a sick woman's moans, the screeching of an elderly man who was obviously demented and the din created by a small horde of ragged and wild children. The smells she couldn't block out, but then she'd survived months of them on the *Agincourt.*
>
> Nor, on reaching the back room, could she ignore the fact that her friend was dying. Lying in a dark corner on a filthy mattress, Bridget drifted in and out of consciousness, her body now white and limp, and her once-lovely auburn hair dank and unkempt.

> 'They say my baby's dead inside me', she whispered once. Isabella could only nod and squeeze her hand, her eyes filling with tears. 'And I'll be going soon, I can feel it, Miss Izzy.'
>
> 'Nonsense, Biddy, we'll get you better.' But neither of them believed her words.
>
> Bridget rallied only once after that and seemed to want something. She kept pointing to a lumpy bundle by her feet until Isabella reached for it. She sighed and looked contented. The bundle was surprisingly heavy.
>
> 'Undo it. It's for you', gasped Bridget. Wrapped in a ragged shawl were two china dogs that Isabella had bought her in Plymouth. 'For a happy life', Bridget smiled at her and grasped her hand again. She closed her eyes then and Isabella sat by her with the awkward package on her knee for a long time.

So that's what I have done with those. (housekeeping interruption) Okay. So the china dogs feature again in the novel from time to time. Apparently, Isabella used to hide pound notes up in the little hole inside, ready for anyone in the family – (examines underside of china dog) oh, that has a very small hole, yes – for anyone in the family who was in need, in her later years, and I would think that she might have hidden a few away from William, too, if he was a gambler. It's okay, I have checked a number of times, (laughter) there's definitely nothing in there, to my disappointment. And I'm going to finish my talk a bit later with the dogs again.

Now, here's a few of the issues that I faced. In very simplistic terms, historians don't approve of amateurs meddling with the facts and especially fictionalising them – this is really repeating what has been said in the introduction – and so those history wars might be a topic for panel discussion at the end. Briefly, beginning in the 1930s, history that had always belonged to academics, and of course nearly all male, started to be popularised. Everyone wanted to catch their memories and record them. And some decades later, the '60s, the feminists began to stake their portion of history. Many historians are still unhappy about our turning fact into fiction and they moan about the 'slipperiness' of history: after all, what is a fact? Is it just a memory that happened to get written down? Anyway, most of us were lured into loving history by reading fiction, and for me it was the novels of E.V. Tibbs[?] – you might venture some suggestions later about novels that led you into loving history.

My stance on use of the generally-accepted big facts is that I don't knowingly change major dates or places, unlike Kate Grenville, I guess, she did. For example, because William was apparently an explorer, maybe, possibly, I got a bit interested in the journeys of McDouall Stewart. One of them was in 1861. Now, I wouldn't alter that date just to fit my story, that's an example. I personally like to know if a book has a basis in truth. Do you like to know or not know? I've got, I think, two extremes here. Alex Castles was a wonderful friend and mentor to my daughter, who's just finished her Legal History PhD and loved to chat to me about my writing as well. He said to me in writing *Ned Kelly's last days* he would not put Ned Kelly on the 6:10 train from Benalla unless he'd seen a timetable and *knew* that there was a train at 6:10 from Benalla. So he has written this in as accessible way as he can, but it is in his mind totally based on the facts that he knows as a historian.

Has anyone read *The Stone diaries* by Carol Shields? Lovely book. She's Canadian, it's a biography, and it's very, very believable. I enjoyed it so much. Even got a whole lot of photos in it, which I love and I'd love to see in my novel when it's finished. I got to the end and found out it is totally fictitious. (laughter) And I felt actually very cheated and a bit angry. Maybe I shouldn't have, but those are the extremes, and so I think every writer has to decide where they stand in all of this.

Now, how am I going for time? Have I got a bit longer? Right. There are the personal issues for me, now. Those are the big history issues. Now, in the flyer I referred to 'flawed, incomplete and contradictory accounts', and I've told you about those. For example, how William died. Well, what about the things they didn't tell me? They possibly mean a whole lot more than the ones where they did have some sort of explanation, don't they? And so this is something that I have to address, I don't have answers. And again the many facts that don't fit in, as I've already hinted, I either leave them out or I tweak them. That was a word that came up on Friday, when one of the Writers' Centre members, James Ogilvy, was talking to me and he said, 'Oh! I just tweak the facts all the time.'

Now, too many facts can get in the way of a good story, there's no doubt about that. Take, for example, Isabella and her costume. I could give you a five-minute

description of how long sleeves were, how much lace was used at that time, what the collars were like. Catherine, my daughter whom I just mentioned, was reading a historical novel just before she left home to get married and I said to her, 'Are you enjoying it?' And she said, 'Well, you know, Mum, I am to a point but it's one of those novels where you keep thinking "Oh-oh, I can feel a fact coming on".' And she said that the writer had to say that in the 1870s skirts were this wide and this long and that blue velvet was in fashion. And so you've got to know all these facts but just not overload it. It's no good having a list of facts and thinking, 'Ooh! I haven't got that into the story yet', is it? Some writers suggest that you actually begin by telling your story and then go to the facts. That's harder if you're writing about a real person, as I am about Isabella. And I think, I'm pretty sure, William was real, too. Also that reading, Mrs Cawley and the boarding house: there was a Mrs Cawley who had a boarding house in Victoria Street. I did all that, lots and lots and lots more research than ever gets used has to be just mentioned in passing.

I've got a book review here. I feel very sad for this person. She's a young academic who's written her first novel and I happen to know her; doesn't live in Adelaide; and the headline of the review is 'Lovers bogged down in writer's research', and it talks about 'plodding prose' and I won't go on about it. But it's such a shame, isn't it, if you've got a good story and if your critics just think, 'Okay, this is just overloaded with all the facts.'

My next problem is: 'How on earth do I get an inspiring ending?' Where's my whiteboard marker? This will do. Now, a novel – (attempts to write, pen squeaks) no, it won't do. I wonder what I've done with my black one. Here it is. A novel has to have its ups and downs. If it doesn't, very, very boring. And so usually start somewhere – may start with a disaster but usually something reasonably positive, maybe your heroine gets married and everything seems wonderful, but typically you'll have a series of things that go wrong, maybe some total disaster, but you will eventually, hopefully, rise to a fairly satisfying conclusion. And that's not very easy when it's the story of Isabella, is it? And so I have to decide on that. If you've all got great ideas for me, please tell me over afternoon tea. Because it doesn't have to be a happy ending, but I always feel it has to be satisfying. You have to think, 'Ah,

yes. That's the way it should have been.' Maybe a ray of hope. Maybe I should go on to the 'Two for joy' bit, because Rose came through huge difficulties, as I've hinted, but did eventually have a very, very happy marriage and an extremely interesting life.

I've got two of my books of notes I made – I've made three notebooks full of research by now, and for example here is George and Rose's wedding certificate, one of the little triplets's birth certificate and so on – and you're very welcome to have a look at all of those things. So that's something that I have to resolve. Maybe I can go on a bit into that generation in my novel to make it end a bit better. I'm not sure.

'Will my story upset anyone?' Well, it already has. (laughter) But I do have to be careful, and in particular when I mentioned Ernst and said I won't be mentioning his surname, but you would find it here very easily. I seem to have left it in another basket, but I have an old prayerbook which I'll put out later which says, 'To George' – it was a present to her son-in-law, George – 'from Mrs –' whatever her name is, and it was maybe a wedding present, very modest little one. Now, objects like that can really inspire you to think she touched this, she wrote that. Have you all got some old family treasures? I find them very powerful. Of course, they're incredibly random, aren't they. I don't have the lovely letters and diaries. I don't know if they're lovely, but the letters and diaries that Jill has.

And there's one or two more things. Anachronisms. Putting in a fact that's out of time. I very nearly – I probably have fallen for it, but in particular when I wanted to write the story of Bridget's death, I quite reasonably set it in the Destitute Asylum, which was a very, very interesting part of Adelaide's history, and I did write it set there, not in that awful boarding house; except that I found out, fortunately in time, that the Destitute Asylum actually opened a year later. (laughter) Didn't exist right then. So that's another thing just to watch for.

Now, not much more, but I've had some advice which I hope is good, and that is to put myself into the story, because I think the best historical writing occurs when you are personally involved with something. Not just if you think, 'I'll write about Helen of Troy for kids', you know, but if you have a real emotional connection with

a story it's going to be a much better one. And, as I've said, to me the facts behind the facts, stories behind the stories, and the gaps in the stories, are as fascinating to me as the real stories. My current thinking is to write it as a novel but to have either several sections where there's a preface, explaining a bit of how I got to know all this, or maybe just a little section at the top of each chapter and hopefully a few photos as well. Do I have just a couple of minutes to read an example of that? Nearly out of time, I guess. And then some questions, yes.

So I am almost there: 'Put yourself in it.' This is the way I began. I've had it looked at by Professor Tom Shapcott who was here till recently, and he really liked the idea.

> My first ambition was to be a fairy. Not just any fairy, but one of the simpering, wand-waving little girls with long ringlets who got to ride Nipper or Nimble on a float at the John Martin's Christmas Pageant. Everyone cheered them loudly, knowing that Father Christmas would follow the two dappled rocking horses. I knew I should have been up there. No amount of explanation that you could only be chosen if you had a parent who worked for the department store could dull the pangs of envy that I felt every November.
>
> I hadn't actually been denied opportunities to dress up and perform to an adoring public. By the time I was six I'd been a crêpe-paper-clad daffodil in the kindergarten concert; a Dutch doll in the junior school play about the toys who came alive at midnight; a waterbaby in a massive production at the Theatre Royal, a play based on Charles Kingsley's story; even a mannequin in a fashion parade run by a shop named Prissy Pringle.

(shows picture) Here's the little girl who was a mannequin, can you see that? I don't want to put the next one up just yet.

> But never a fairy.

And it does lead on to my story.

> One year, when I was about eight, my mother's three sisters all gathered at our place for her birthday, which fell on Pageant Day. Peeved that I couldn't go to the Pageant I again dolefully raised the topic of my failure in the fairy department.
>
> 'You'd even be too big for Nimble now', my Auntie Claudia reminded me bluntly. 'Anyway, you've got the wrong hair to be a fairy. Did you know you've inherited your great-grandfather William's lovely black,

> curly hair and olive skin?' I hated my curls. 'Why did I have to be born into the wrong family?' I grumbled. But of course they told me that was a very fine family indeed, with titled ancestors, didn't they?

I'm thinking of doing a few little sections like that to tell my bit of the story. And just very, very briefly, 'Getting started yourself': I can't tell you too much about it, but you've got to tell your story in your unique voice. Nobody else has your voice or your story to tell, which is, I think, quite an exciting thing. No-one else in the whole world can tell your story.

'To create a character': I won't stop to read a page that I have from a book called *Mr Pip*. Has anyone read *Mr Pip*? No? It's wonderful, but I'll talk about it later. He says to the children – imagine yourself, you can do it now, very, very briefly. He says to them, 'Close your eyes and say your own name.' And the little girl says to herself, 'Matilda. Matilda. Matilda.' And she starts to get a feel for who she is, for her uniqueness. Once you can do that, it's a sort of creative visualisation, you can do that with any character. I can think myself, hopefully well, into William or Bridget or any of the other characters. You have to imagine a setting, and photos and documents and objects might help you. As I said, they're random. You use all your senses, the sounds and the sights and the smells, if you think back to the boarding house scene. Kate Grenville said you've got to go out there and experience, and she actually went on a very hairy, scary boat ride in writing her story. I tried to get to the Tasmanian wilderness, but sadly the weather was against me and my flight was cancelled.

And I'd like to finish, again, just by focusing on those china dogs in my family, because this is Abigail Isabella, she's two years old and the love of my life. Just ten days ago, my daughter was sitting in my lounge room with me and with her two little girls – this is the older of them – and Abby went up and picked up one of the china dogs and started talking to it. Now, what did I say? (laughter) I said, 'Ah! They belonged to your great-great-great-grandmother Isabella. I hope they'll be yours one day.' And so I want to finish my story for her and for my family, as well as just for myself, and hopefully for the public.

So thank you very much, and if you would like to ask questions – I guess briefly now, and the bigger issues later in the afternoon, is that the idea?

Yes, we'll just have a few questions now.

Just if you have a couple of quick questions now.

Then we'll have a panel session at the end.

Okay. Does anyone want to ask me anything?

QUESTION: Have you ever considered that if your family story had been based more in fact and you'd been able to back that up with research, have you ever considered whether you would have turned to fiction, or whether you would have actually written a history?

I possibly wouldn't have. And yet, as I said at the start, I am a story writer.

There's a sad sort of ambiguity, isn't there –

Yes.

– about the real facts –

Yes.

– it's taken you to create – – –?

Yes. I would never have delved into it so far, probably. But because I don't know I've actually written out these scenes of Isabella standing at her gate watching William disappear and having a feeling that that was it, he'd never be back in her life, and that sort of thing. If I'd really known, you're quite right: maybe I would never have written it in this way. Yes, that's interesting.

Have you considered that yourself, though?

No, I hadn't actually thought of it from that aspect. But I think that's very interesting, yes.

QUESTION: China dogs come into the first chapter of my story.

Oh, do they? (laughter) We're both correct, then, aren't we! That's great. Is this a family story, too?

My story? Yes. When I was seven we were sent away and the family we stayed with had two china dogs like that, which they treasured. And for half an hour on a Sunday afternoon I was allowed to put them on the carpet in the best room and talk to them.

Oh, good. That's lovely.

And when we left, one of them was given to me.

So you've got one?

I don't know what happened to it. It's a long time ago.

I thought you were going to tell me it got broken or something.

No. I don't know what happened – – –.

If you really look, these are not an exact pair, which I find interesting, and I'm not sure why. But I don't even want to know about that. That's really interesting, yes. Does anyone else want to ask me anything now? If not, you can always ask over a cuppa, I guess.

QUESTION: I'm kind of interested in what you think when you hear historians criticising writers such as Kate Grenville, whose novel is really based on her great-grandfather.

Well, I think she had a very powerful story to tell and I think she did it very well. And that's *her* story; this is *my* story. Jill's got *her* story. You know, we have a very good right to tell those stories, don't we? Where I do draw the line maybe, just myself, is in altering, as I said, facts that are fairly well established; I try not to do that.

So would you say yours is fiction or historical?

It's fiction with a historical basis, I guess, isn't it? It's definitely fiction. But, as you can see from my books of stuff, I've done huge amounts of research before I ever even got started, because I do want to get a feel for the times and not just have the beautiful ladies in crinolines having adventures. I want it to be as genuine as I can. So that's where this comes in: (indicates) where do you think you are on this scale, I guess.

Anybody else who's been too shy so far to ask me anything, or tell me anything?

QUESTION: I loved your presentation, thank you –

Oh, thank you.

– and I think your granddaughter is very lucky to have a storyteller such as you as her grandmother.

Yes. I've got two more little ones who've gone to Hong Kong and they keep saying, 'Go home see Gran?' So it is a real treasure to have children and to know that my daughter in particular really loves this story and is very concerned, and that's why, out of my three children, she will be the one who'll take an interest in the china dogs and in fact has given her daughter the second name of Isabella. The only reason it's not her first name, because it's quite popular again now, is that Catherine is hearing-impaired and she's afraid that if she doesn't say her 'S' absolutely correctly that Abi might grow up not saying her name properly. So there are always stories behind stories. (applause, housekeeping remarks)

END OF DISK 1: DISK 2

JUNE EDWARDS: Now come and listen to Jill Golden. Jill Golden grew up in post-War Sydney, she's a graduate of Sydney University and moved to Canada where she taught English in secondary schools for five years. She returned to Australia in 1970 to raise her two daughters and now teaches English Literature at Flinders University.

Her first collection of stories, *Jess*, was published in 1987. Her new novel, *Inventing Beatrice*, is based on letters and diaries discovered in 1994 after her mother's death. So Jill will talk about the dilemmas, legal and ethical, that unfolded as she thought about how she might use this treasure trove.

Subsequent conversations with elderly friends and relatives who knew and remembered the people and events she wanted to write about added a new level of complexity. So Jill will discuss her decision to write a book that combines fictional sections that draw heavily on factual material with first-person factual narrative to produce a story that is a product both of imagination and of history.

JILL GOLDEN: That says it all! Well, fictionalising oral and written memories has in fact taken up a good deal of the past ten years of my life, and it did culminate in the publication of *Inventing Beatrice* last August by Wakefield Press. So I want to talk about all of the both oral and written sources that went into the writing of this

book and some of the dilemmas that arose in that process, some of the – as I said – the ethical issues and so on that came up.

I want to start by talking about this hoard of family letters and diaries from the 1930s and the 1940s that were the beginning of this process, because we didn't find any of these until after our mother died, my sisters and I found them then. And we didn't get them all in one big lump; they were sort of passed on to us over a period of a couple of years.

As I read these letters and my sister in Sydney and I used to have long phone conversations about the content of these letters, I realised that I wanted very much to write about my mother. In the process, in this long process, I did, in addition to reading all of these materials, catch up with a lot of – or meet for the first time in many cases – a lot of my mother's old friends and with our relatives who knew and remembered the people and events that I wanted to write about. In fact, *Inventing Beatrice* does combine fictional sections, but they're all heavily-reliant on factual material, along with straightforwardly factual material presented in my own first-person narrative voice, as I tell my story about this ten-year journey of finding out about my mother and getting to the point where I could have the book published.

A series of dilemmas arose along the way. I'll talk about probably about half a dozen of these. The first one was really very easily resolved because I realised right from the start if I was going to write anything at all about my mother I had to change the names of everybody in the story, just simply from a point of view of privacy but also for a range of other reasons as well. So Beatrice is in fact the name of a fictional character, it's not the actual name of my mother, although I would have to think, 'Yes, the photo is a genuine historical item.' So Beatrice – and she's often known as 'Bea' in the book – Beatrice; Tom, who's her husband, or becomes her husband partway through: these are fictional names, but talking today I'll just use those names as a less-confusing way of talking about the real ones and the imagined ones.

I found as part of this naming process that I actually had to choose names that were not only believable for the particular period that I was writing about, the '30s and '40s, but also names that had a genuine connection with the actual historical names, I

couldn't just pluck any name out of the air. So I chose the name 'Beatrice', for example, partly because it is commonly shortened to 'Bea' – spelt either B-E-A or just the single letter B as a nickname – and because in fact that's what my mother did with her own name, it was shortened to a nickname which was just a single letter.

So I changed names partly because of privacy reasons, fears of lawsuits at the extreme, but mainly because to do so gave me the freedom to invent the kind of detail that would bring characters to life. So changing the names was the very first step that gave me freedom of imagination.

But before I say anything much more about the book, I just want to say something about the structure of it because it's really quite complicated. And I'll say, as I go along, more about the materials, the letters and diaries and the oral sources that I drew on. So *Inventing Beatrice* is the title of the whole thing. Part I, 'Mob', is the first half of the book and it has two strands: one strand is in the first person, that's me, myself in search of my mother – not the actual physical person who lived to be eighty-five and who was part of our lives right up until her death, but the self that she kept hidden from us, her children, all of our lives. And this was the amazing thing at finding these materials, to discover that there was a person there that we really did not know and to discover who she was and who her friends were, and she went to university, to Melbourne University, she was a very talented academic woman, but this was never part of her subsequent life. So there was so much about her that we didn't know that this was really one big motivation for my journey.

The second strand in this first section, called 'Mob', is a fictionalised story about Beatrice and Mob. Mob in fact were her friends, a small group of gifted intellectual women at Melbourne University, which they called 'the shop' – apparently everybody did; I'm not a Melbourne University graduate but apparently that's what they call it over there – so Mob were a small group of friends who became passionate friends, very close, intimate friends. Some of the names that will crop up – and they're all fictionalised names, of course, but I'll be talking about them later so just so that you know who they are – Ruth, Nettie, Delia, Florrie, Pearl and Jem are the names that I've given to Mob. This section is also about Beatrice's parents, and in particular her invalid clergyman father who thought that he had a right to

dominate all of her spare time and energy, so there's a whole strand there about her relations with her family. And this part one, this strand of part one, covers the years from 1928 to 1933.

There's a short section then followed, which I've called 'Reprise', which spans the gap between 1933 and 1945 and it's just my own first-person voice narrating fairly concisely a whole set of events.

Part two, 'Beatrice speaking', takes up the story in 1945 when Beatrice is married with three young children and a husband, Tom, who is absent in Europe. It's also the story of Tom's lover, Heidi, who is Beatrice's best friend. (murmurs from audience) This is history, this is not fiction. This section of the book is told, is written, in the first-person voice of Beatrice, and I'll say why I made that choice a little bit further on when I come to talk about it. But it's obviously a very significant choice when we're talking about history and fiction what voice you choose for the narrating voice.

An epilogue ties up the loose ends of the story and basically tells what happened next in the lives of all the various characters, and there again I speak in my own voice. And then the book finishes with what I've called the 'Coda', which is also in my own voice, and this reflects on the story that has been told and on Beatrice's death. So that's the sort of conclusion.

So let me say some more now about the materials that I drew on – as I said, discovered and given to me and my sisters over a period of a couple of years. For part one, 'Mob', I have an absolute wealth of material, an absolute wealth. I have Beatrice's diaries from 1928 to 1932, carefully preserved in a little plastic bag that was just the right size and with her own writing there, the wobbly writing of her old age, and very, very tiny writing on that page there. And in some ways this one particular little diary is the most precious of all of them, because parts of what she's written have been pasted over or crossed out – obviously she's gone back and re-read them, probably many times; some of her friends in Mob have added little comments along the way from time to time. And we found these in her bedside table, in her own room, the room in which she died at home. So she'd obviously

been re-reading them, I would say many times over her life she re-read these diaries and thought about that period of her life.

And in fact I'll read you – part of what I want to do is just to read you little bits, to talk about how I've put those historical documents into this rather complicated book. So the very first lines at the top of that first page:

> Easter Monday
>
> Perfect day, with a cool northerly breeze. We left early for the hills but Springvale Road, which is in the worst possible state, shook Pa up considerably. He drove to Sherbrooke, where we had morning tea, boiling the billy, which I got filled up at the second house by a lady with two tiny girls and a little boy, in the fireplace with bark wood[?], which is coming off by the dozen yards.

So at the beginning of the diary that's really what it sounds like, and it seemed to me very clear that I needed to do something with that, rather than just put big chunks of it on the page. And I go on to in fact fictionalise that very first outing with her parents in the buggy, driving up to Allinda in the Dandenongs, and then I comment on that process and I say:

> I have pages and pages of Beatrice's tiny faded writing to see and touch. I can read her words, though they are often brief and opaque. But how can I imagine Bea's life, knowing that my understandings are deeply-shaped, flawed by my own memories. My love is ragged, my memories often painful, defensive, guilty. How can I write as if I know what Bea meant?
>
> These words are like the grains of crystal in the kit I once gave my daughter. They can blossom into unpredictable fascinating shapes. But I must use the third-person pronoun, 'she', to remind myself with every sentence that what I write here can only be fiction. The Beatrice, 'Bea', of this story is an invention; not my mother.

So rather than taking her diaries, written as they are in the first person, and working in the first person, in this first half of the book I felt that I absolutely had to make her a fictional character in the third person and that gave me a certain amount of freedom.

Okay. For this part one, 'Mob', I also have voluminous diaries from Ruth, who was one of Mob, from the period 1930 to 1933, and interfolded in the pages of that diary were three rather intimate letters that Beatrice wrote to Ruth in 1929. Ruth

wrote diaries all of her life. She has now died. At this stage she was living in the United States, in Maryland. I only made contact with her after my mother's death, when we told her in fact that Mum had died, and she wrote back the most wonderful letters, and so I went and visited her. In total I went and visited her four times in Maryland. She gave me her diaries, not to keep but to bring back to Australia to use them as I wanted, and then on the next visit I took them back to her. She really wanted the story of Mob to be told, and especially the story of Delia, who was probably the main person in Mob. And in fact I was really pleased that she was able to read parts of the draft of my book before she died. So I have lots and lots of stuff from Ruth. And whereas Beatrice's diaries are often quite cryptic and very precise, tantalisingly brief sometimes, Ruth's are voluminous. Every emotion, in particular, is what she puts down.

Okay. And just a short piece here. What I had in Ruth's diaries were those three letters, which she herself had forgotten that were there in her diaries, and because her eyesight was failing I was reading out large parts of her diaries to her, and when I found these three letters I read those to her. And she put her hand on her heart and she said, 'They're just like love letters.' And in fact what I did, what I've had to do in the book – and this was my problem all the way through – three letters was too many to include in the book, so I put in what is basically a composite of the three letters, so I sort of was a bit selective and I took parts. This was an aspect of my mother, as you'll perhaps realise when I read it to you, that was totally a revelation to me. And I'm only going to read you a little bit, but she says:

> It's eleven o'clock. Come to bed, Ruthie, there isn't much room but that's all the better. We'll watch the big white shadows on the white ceiling and then we'll put the candle out and talk in a whisper about difficult things and nice things, and we'll think of our *bien aimée* and pour blessings on her head and fall asleep.
>
> My Ruthie, let me snuggle up into your arms and weep, and in the morning let me wake and watch you with your hair spread on the pillow and you looking beautiful. After a day walking let's sit together in the dark and talk and draw still nearer to each other.
>
> I've a feeling it's mighty rash of me to talk to you like this. Suppose you strongly disapprove. I'm in bed now, with a candle on a chair beside me. Burn this letter.

Well, (laughter) of course Ruth didn't. But the expression of emotion, the expression of feeling that's there in that letter, is something that my mother seldom displayed, certainly to her children, and it was really quite wonderful to find it.

Okay. Third, still in part one, 'Mob', I have many, again voluminous, letters from Nettie, who is another member of Mob, to Beatrice between 1929 and 1931. For less than a year, eight months of that time, Beatrice was in England very unwillingly with her parents. Her father was one of these people who could never stay in one place and be happy; he was constantly having to move – and still not be happy. But Nettie's letters are exuberant and unreserved. And again, what I tried to do with Nettie's letters was – because there were a lot of – to choose, to be very selective. And so in fact I've put in basically two letters. And I won't read the letters, but I'll read what follows, because what I'm doing in this first half of the book is not strictly alternating but mixing parts of the fictionalised, where I've got them there as characters going to university, writing essays, talking to each other, all that kind of stuff, and then the parts in my own first-person voice as narrator, where I talk about the documents, the letters and what I've done with them. And at the end of one of Nettie's letters, which finishes up with about six kisses, little crosses at the bottom:

> I read and dwell on these letters from Nettie to Beatrice, deeply moved by their loving warmth and tender imagination. When I put them back into their worn, brown envelope, I pause and for the first time look closely at it. It has been addressed to Samuel Jabour, the firm for whom I've discovered Bea worked for a typist in 1934. That's probably when Bea put the letters in it for safekeeping. Now I notice a small, firm 'G.N.', two letters, printed above Jabour's address. When I come across this word in the early diaries I had no idea who it referred to. Now I do. It makes me smile. Another piece of this jigsaw is in place.
>
> In shaky figures beside the 'G.N.' on the enveloped, Bea has written the date '1964'. The significance of that, too, is unclear until months later when I read a 1964 letter from Nettie's sister, Dolly. Dolly asks Beatrice did she know that Nettie had died, 'the youngest of us and the first to go'. Dolly does not tell Beatrice in this letter what Ruth writes to me in 1995, that Nettie committed suicide.

And I'll skip a little bit there, but she says:

> Nettie later became a communist and married a working-class man. She committed suicide, and I think one aspect was her terrible

> disillusionment when they, the communists, treated Hungary so badly. Never had any children.
>
> All the rest of my reading is coloured by this sad knowledge and by the trace of class difference that I recognise as part of a more subtle dynamic amongst Mob.
>
> Did Bea weep when she re-read these letters when Nettie died? For read them again I'm sure she did. I've learned enough about her to know that much. She too was bitterly hurt and disillusioned in 1964. That was the year after her marriage of twenty-eight years had ended. Did Bea ever think of suicide?
>
> That unthinkable thought is like a slap in my face, brings stinging tears to my eyes, because I would not know.

Okay. Still with part one, I've got a diary that I found quite late in the piece and through a very remarkable set of circumstances, but it's a diary which is now in the National Library in Canberra, and it's a diary for 1932. And this is the young woman that I've called 'Pearl', and once again I won't go into Pearl's story; suffice to say that she came rather late to Mob when the others had already graduated and she got to know them over a period of time, and in her diary she writes in great detail about this process of uncovering, discovering the other members of Mob. But I just want to read a little bit at the last of what she says. This is me speaking:

> Pearl's friendship with Beatrice is complex. She berates herself later for a lack of sensitivity, for banal and clumsy phrases.

And then I quote from the diary:

> 'Apart from a brief time at the back of the empty house together I didn't feel that I got any nearer to Bea yesterday. It was a strange, dead day, with no wind and leaden clouds filling the sky.'

And then my voice again:

> A sombre note runs through the golden days of Pearl's diary.

Her voice:

> 'We discussed why even the Immortals –' which was their sort of nickname for themselves, '– are not quite happy.'
>
> Pearl mentions past miseries but also, without elaboration, deep mood swings, and she says 'I have been coming back to life as I write this. There can be no escape; I must remain and live.'

> I think again of Beatrice and her family and I think of what Mob meant for these young women, and I join in Pearl's jubilant 'Attagirl!' on the last page of her diary.

And of course the 'Attagirl!' – I mean, all the parts that I quote from the diary are quoted precisely accurately, including 'Attagirl!', with my comments in between. So I found it quote impossible to separate fact and fiction in many ways in this book.

All right. What else have I got? Well, I have intermittent diaries from Tom, who, as I said, became my father, he married Beatrice. His diaries start from when he was sixteen years old in 1927, they too are intermittent but they're pretty interesting. I've got many letters written from Tom to Delia, who was a member of Mob, because Tom and Delia knew each other before Beatrice did. His letters are written on – he was travelling in Italy; his letters are scrappy and eccentric and very colourful, very interesting; and also letters from Delia to Tom – she was still in Melbourne and hers are rather thoughtful and somewhat literary – and these are between 1930 and 1932. I've also got letters from Tom to his mother, (laughs) for that same period, '30–32, because he was a loving son and he wrote every week to his mother, and she wrote back to him, and I've seen those letters as well. She signed off rather formally as 'F. Scott' – her name was Floyd. It's just one of those things that strikes me as so odd, a mother writing to her son in this loving but very formal way. And then of course I have letters between Beatrice and Tom between 1932 and 1935.

In addition to all of those personal letters there's actually another historical and factual element, and that is that when Beatrice was at Melbourne University she did an honours thesis in English Literature and she wrote about Katherine Mansfield, who at that time was only fairly recently dead and a somewhat controversial but interesting kind of modern writer, and she got permission to write that thesis. And so she wrote off to anyone she could think of, like John Middleton Murray, Katherine Mansfield's husband, and Dorothy Brett, who was a good friend of Katherine Mansfield, and she got back a few answers and in particular she got back a number of answers – she started a correspondence with Dorothy Brett, so that there are probably eight or nine letters. Only one of hers to Brett, that she kept a copy of.

But what we've got here – so there's this other historical element. And this is, again I had to really make those letters into one composite letter, just by being very selective and by in fact putting this into a fictional chapter where Beatrice is reading the letters and showing it to her friends and they're all talking about it and getting terribly excited because this was such a wonderful, cutting-edge thing for these honours students to be doing. And Brett writes:

> Let me try and show you the Katherine of 1915 and of 1922: a girl of extraordinary courage and venturesomeness, one who had met the misfortune of an early, unfortunate marriage –

I don't know whether you know, but she was married for one day, and then she left her husband. (laughter) One day. Bit careless.

> – released herself from it and met and married the man who, till she died, was her first and last thought.

And then there's a bit of interruption, and then:

> Among the intellectual set she was cold and reserved. She had a way of folding up like a flower and sitting, unapproachable. She would never give herself out to people; she felt that her inner self was too precious to be handed out to the world in general.

And then a bit more interruption, and then again Brett:

> But to her friends she was life itself: brilliant, gay, daring, loyal. She sought out life. She poked about in all the queer corners. She was wild to a point that might distress you. And then, like a bolt from the blue, came her illness and the slow, inevitable cutting off of all life.

And she goes on to talk about Katherine Mansfield dying and a lot more sort of detailed information about her. So there's all of that historical material as well, and what I've tried to do with that material, as I said, is to include it into a fictional chapter where young Beatrice is about twenty or twenty-one and her feelings as she talks to all her friends about that are part of her story.

I've also got many objects, of course, and I won't say too much about those, but little things like a little collection of Shakespeares, which were always there on the shelf but, hey, suddenly they've got a fantastic history because that was so important to them and they talked about it so much; similarly with Chaucer; and photographs

and so on. I think I said already the photograph on the cover of the book is the real one of my mother; the image on the bottom of the book has nothing to do with her at all, that's entirely fictional.

So there's a lot of material. It wasn't all plain sailing, I didn't get everything that I wanted. One member of Mob whom I contacted didn't want to talk to me – this was Florrie. She wrote and told me that she'd destroyed all of her diaries twenty-five years before because she didn't want her children ever to read them, and I thought that was really terribly sad.

In addition to my visits and conversations with Ruth that I've already talked about, I spent a day with another member of Mob called Jem, who was then aged eighty-eight and who was living in Canberra, and this visit with her confirmed some very important details for me but she wasn't prepared to go any further. She didn't want to have any further conversation – she has subsequently died – and of course that was as far as I could go with her. On the other hand, I met Delia's daughter here in Adelaide and she gave me some more photos and another important letter, and of course I had aunties and cousins on my father's side of the family who could also add to that story.

So this brings me to my second dilemma. It's taken me a while to get there. But my father's second wife embargoed the use of my father's letters, Tom's letters. And of course at the time I was absolutely furious about this, because she arrived on the scene many, many years after any of these letters had been written, from my father, to my mother, and she could say 'No way.' And I learned at that point that the legal ownership of letters remains with the writer and then his estate, not with the recipient and her estate, regardless of circumstances, end of story. In fact, I realised fairly soon afterwards that this made my task simpler by confining me to telling only Beatrice's story and not Tom's story as well. Originally I was thinking to be fair I have to tell the whole story of both of them, and when I couldn't that made things easier. It also limited, thank goodness, the middle book of what was rapidly developing into a trilogy. (laughter)

The materials for part two, looking down here now, the materials for part two, 'Beatrice speaking', are also substantial. As I said earlier, Tom is away in Europe in

this period. It starts in the second half of 1945. He goes to post-War Italy with UNRRA[1] to work there. So I've got letters. I've got letters from Tom to Beatrice and I've got letters from Beatrice to Tom, both of those only to be expected, I guess. They were usually written weekly, at least on her side. But I've also got letters from Tom to Heidi, who I mentioned earlier was his lover and Beatrice's best friend, and I've got letters from Heidi to Tom. Fantastic. I've made four or five visits to Heidi in Paris – Heidi is still alive; she's in her late eighties now – and we've had long conversations about the past. She read and commented on a draft of this section, the 'Beatrice speaking' section, and she's read the whole book since it's been published, I've sent it to her, and she was pretty thrilled with it. I think she felt that I'd got it pretty well right, and in fact she was astonished at how I'd managed to get so much detail that was correct. No anachronisms, as far as I can work out. So that was very gratifying. So all of these were my sources. These were the facts, if you like, both oral and written, and these resources determined the process by which I then started writing.

So how did I begin? Well, I dithered a lot. I had a hard time beginning. But one day a friend from Townsville phoned and we were chatting about this, and she said, 'Just write.' So I did – I always do what I'm told – I began just writing what I thought would be a short essay about my mother. And I think perhaps I need to say at this point, because this is the other reason why it was so urgent and compelling for me to keep on with this, is that one of the things that I discovered or my sisters and I discovered in these letters was that at a very young age, when my younger sister was six months old and I was two and my older sister was four, we were sent away. We were sent out to a foster family on the outskirts of Sydney. And in fact we were in that foster home for two years, and then we were sent to boarding school, and we were in boarding school until I was eight. So, as you can imagine, without me elaborating on any of that now, there were huge questions for me because my younger sister and I had no recollection of being fostered. We all remembered boarding school, but we didn't remember – – –. My older sister did, but it was never

[1] UNRRA – United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration.

talked about until the 1990s. So part of the compelling nature of my motivation was to find out what on earth did they think they were doing. Why did they send us away? Because they were loving, modern, intelligent, well-educated parents.

Okay. So my short essay became a trilogy. Then I began transcribing all of these materials, which was an immense task but for which, thank goodness, I did have some help from Flinders University. The temptation then was to leave all of these transcribed words undigested on the page, or semi-digested on the page, and to try to let it all speak for itself. In fact, one reviewer commented in his review that maybe I should have just published all the letters and diaries and left it at that. But my answer would have been, if we had spoken, first of all that no-one would have published such a book, let alone would have read it; but also that my purpose was different, because my purpose was to try to understand the meanings of what these two people thought they were doing. How did they understand their actions? And that of course was going to be different from how I would understand them.

So I finished up in fact with three books' worth of material, which brings me to my third dilemma: how to turn this bulky manuscript into a book that was readable and interesting. And hugely important was how and why to cut, and how to transform. And I've given you some examples of how I tried to cut and condense some of the letters, at least.

The blurring of any hard line between fact and fiction was, I think, inevitable. I had to use the facts that I was given, but I had to invent a context and dialogue and details of setting. I had to turn the facts into believable characters doing believable things.

So the next part of the process was to travel to the places mentioned in the letters, so to go to Melbourne – I knew Melbourne a little bit, but not very well – to go to Melbourne University where they'd been, to walk the streets where they had walked, to go to Sorrento where they spent some memorable holidays, to go to the archives of the Education Department to look at dates and correspondence and so on connected to teaching. And I read sociology texts to try and understand more about post-War attitudes towards the raising of children.

And as I began to use the diaries I faced a fourth dilemma, and I've partly referred to this already: that is that this was not my mother, I can't claim that this person I'm writing about is in fact my mother. I had to fictionalise her in order to get some proper distance, I suppose. To turn her into a character meant that I could give her a range of attributes which I hadn't necessarily experienced in her as her child, as her daughter. So the young woman I found as a university student at Melbourne Uni was an absolute revelation. And I needed to be able to include all of those aspects into my portrayal of who she was.

During this period, by the way – this ten-year period – I gave my sisters, in particular, ongoing drafts of the book to read if they wished, because I was very concerned about family responses. One sister read everything that I sent her and did get upset at different places and we had long, long talks about all of that; and the other sister read nothing at all until the book was finally published, (laughter) and then she read it.

I sent the manuscript off to publishers far too soon and had many rejections, and it was just as well because it wasn't digested, it was not ready; and at times I put it aside for months at a time just to get on with my life. And one of those long pauses – it was about six months, in fact – happened when I wanted to start writing the 'Beatrice speaking' part, the part where she's in Sydney with the three young children. And I've often been asked why I wrote this section in her first-person voice when in the first part of the book I'd made her a character and written about her in the third person. And everything that happens, *everything* that happens in that second section of the book, is based on intimate, detailed facts that are drawn from all of those letters. And of course this was my fifth dilemma: how was I going to move ahead?

I wrote in her first-person voice because that was the only way I could write. Any other way that I tried to approach this material I just got stuck, I just couldn't move forward. Because I wanted to give a voice to what I thought she thought – fundamentally, why she made or agreed to this choice to send the children away – I wanted her voice to be there talking about it, experiencing it, living it, and not for my opinions to be coming up all the time. I hope, I expect, that all my intelligent readers

will realise that I don’t agree with many of the choices that Beatrice made, but I want that comprehension to be reached through subtle means, through I suppose storytelling, literary means, not being polemical, not being judgmental. I could see no point at all in writing an angry, judgmental sort of book. So this was the only way I could find a voice that I felt confident and happy with.

Finally, at the point of publication, I did have another dilemma, my sixth one I think I’m up to: I was actually threatened with a lawsuit if I published, once again by my father’s second wife. My sisters also – in particular the one sister who’d read everything, she’d been very supportive; not so much, she wasn’t in wholehearted agreement with what I was trying to do, but she was very supportive of my need to do it; but when it came to publication she was quite unhappy about that possibility. She felt it was an invasion of her privacy and that it was not fair on our parents. And I must say that at this point I was really tempted to give up, I really wasn’t sure whether I had the stamina, as it were, to go through with it and possibly face family rifts. It hasn’t happened, so that’s all right.

I gave a lot of thought to this ethical issue. The legal one was easier to settle: I just didn’t quote his letters. There was nothing to stop me using the content as part of the story, as long as I didn’t actually quote the documents. So that was okay. But my sister I think felt that, okay, I needed to write the story, it was cathartic, it was healing – yes, she could see that that was the case – but, hey, that was enough, surely? Don’t publish. Well, obviously, as you know, I did proceed with publication, and I just want to say a little bit why and I’ll finish up on this note.

Obviously my ego was involved; obviously, having put all this work into it I wanted it to go the next step, and I’m profoundly glad that I did. But I think the more important aspect was that I believed then and I still do that it’s a story that needs to be told. It’s a story for modern women about the choices and the pressures and the difficulties that they – and I think I would have to say ‘we’ because I think it’s no different, really, for modern young women – as educated, independent persons who are nevertheless wives and mothers. The answers might be different but the questions, the dilemmas, the pressures, the arguments, are very, very similar. So that’s in fact why in the end I was committed to publish it if I possibly could.

On the whole I would say that readers' responses to the book, both those published in reviews and those been given personally to me, have vindicated my decision because a number of people have written to me or emailed me and said how involved and how moved and interested and so on they were in this story. So I've turned historical fact into fiction as a way of searching for a particular past and trying to bring it to life in a way that allows me to understand what it might have been like. I would never say that I understand how it was, but I can understand how it *might* have been for my mother, whose story this is.

Okay, that's it. (applause) So if anyone has any questions?

QUESTION: Do you write diaries and keep them?

I have intermittently and I've never thrown them out. I guess (laughs) they'll be there, yes.

QUESTION: Have you ever thought about why people write diaries?

Oh, I have, yes, a lot. And I think for Mob and for .... and so on, probably for me as well, it's really to express thoughts and feelings that seem overwhelming or unmanageable or there's no outlet, there's nobody you can actually talk to about those things. They tend to be very emotional rather than intellectual diaries.

QUESTION: And of the journey, Jill, that you took to find your mother in that particular way and get to know a woman who was unknown to you, and then have that fulfilling ending in publication: what has that given you in your personal and professional development, that process? Or knowledge, or I'm not quite sure exactly what I'm asking.

Initially, it was incredibly distressing to find out some of the things that we found out, and as I say my sister in Sydney and I had long, very emotional, tearful phone calls. Then the process of writing and the process of thinking and the process of weighing up and bringing in all sorts of things – I mean, it is in the end a healing process and it does bring you to a different point in terms of your own understanding of yourself and where you came from and so on.

Professionally, well, I'm due to retire at the end of this year. I'm really delighted that I was able to publish this before I retired because it's good, feels good.

QUESTION: [Did you mention that] you have your own daughters?

Do I mention them?

QUESTION: Did you mention that you've had children?

I have two daughters, yes.

QUESTION: So how does your being a mother affectthat, has that made – your discovery of your mother in a different light? Has that made any difference to your relationship with your daughters?

It's an interesting question. Most of the time that I was writing the book they were already grown up and in both cases they were overseas for about eight years, one in England, one in America, and now they're back in Australia. They of course have read it and they knew about the process all the way along. I think it has made a difference. It would be very hard to put your finger on exactly what it was, but I think we all understand each other better, perhaps, than we did before. They have very different memories of their grandmother than I have of my mother, but they also now both have very small children and I think the thought of sending their three year-old or their six month-old off to foster care really strikes home. I think it's been good for all of us.

QUESTION: Jill, I thought the section after you – now, I can't quite remember if it's in the fictional part of not; this is my problem because I don't have your book on me – where you showed the anger: 'I could spit her out'.

Yes.

I thought that was incredibly powerful. I'm not quite sure what my question is, but I thought that was incredibly effective.

One of the advantages of keeping my own speaking voice in the story was that I could – I find things out: I mean, the story opens on the very first pages with my mother's death, and so then the process of discovery is one of the threads that goes right through the whole first section. And I can express the emotion that we felt – as I said, a lot of it was terribly distressing and it uncovered all sorts of buried rage; you know, the rage of a two year-old, the rage of a three year-old that had never had a

chance to be let out. And so that's there on the page. Sometimes – well, I mean, I did things with it.

QUESTION: How will that influence any further writing you do, like have you got your next project lined up?

I have got something lined up; it's probably not ready to be talked about yet.

But has that influenced how you've approached it?

I think it will. Yes, yes. I don't think I would do the same again because I don't have the same wonderful access, store of documentary material, but it would certainly influence the way I approached telling a story.

QUESTION: Could you just remind me again of the time deciding to write the book and completing it?

Ten years.

Ten years.

Ten years to get it published.

Yes, it's just it seems so long.

Yes, it was.

But you were a busy person with your professional life – – –.

Fairly busy. Fairly busy, yes. And, as I said, sometimes having to put this aside because I didn't know which way to go next.

QUESTION: Can you say a little bit about the decision that you had to make with the publishers?

Oh, okay.

I think people might be interested and you mentioned it.

It was an interesting process, because I first showed Julia Bevan at Wakefield Press the first part, which was 'Mob'. No, I didn't, I'm sorry; back to front. I showed her 'Beatrice speaking'. I'd almost given up on getting 'Mob' published. I showed her 'Beatrice speaking', which is the whole second half, and she said, 'This is really interesting. I like it,' she said, 'but the characters seem a bit thin. Is there anything

else you've got that you could sort of bring into the story?' (laughter) 'Yes, yes,' I said, 'indeed I have.' And so what I then did, and this took me another at least six months, probably longer, I took the 'Mob' section and the 'Beatrice speaking' section and I wove them together. They couldn't just go side-by-side; I had to cut a lot out of the previous version, the previous draft of 'Mob', but I also in the 'Beatrice speaking' section gave her many memories that went back to her times with 'Mob', so I was able to weave them together that way. And then I put in those extra bits, the reprise and the epilogue and the coda and so on. Yes, and then I was very, very pleased with Wakefield Press, I thought they did an excellent job taking me through the editorial process and the copy editing and the cover design and I'm really very pleased with it.

QUESTION: Was it an issue about whether to publish as history or as fiction?

It was, yes.

That's sort of what I was referring to.

Oh, sorry. Okay. Well, I felt that I had to publish it as fiction. I think they would have been quite interested in publishing it as memoir. And certainly there's a lot of memoir in it; but for reasons that I've already mentioned along the way I felt it had to be fiction.

It's interesting the fact that commercial publishers now are asking for memoir and –

Memoir, autobiography.

– autobiography to publish, and just ten years ago they didn't want to know about it.

Yes. And it was as simple as the fact as which shelf in the bookshop should it be put on.

And how to promote it.

And – much harder, yes. But I didn't feel at all – well, I couldn't publish it as memoir; it had to be fiction. As I said, even though it's based in the most minute detail on historical fact.

QUESTION: I haven't got a question, but if I could just make a comment? Just listening to you I'm incredibly moved by what you've got to say –

Thank you.

– on a couple of counts: one is .... schoolgirl diary..... –

(general laughter) Oh, no!

– and I had this vision of your mother with hers in her bedside table and I ....

Yes.

I have my grandmother's diaries in my bedroom table drawer.

Right.

But the other thing is that I think that you've really, as a mother sitting here, I feel that you have found a way to honour the complexity of your mother's life in a way that touches me deeply ....

Thank you very much, thank you. Yes. My sister – the one that I had the long conversations with – felt I was being too hard on her, but I thought it was much more valuable and honouring her, as you say, to tell the truth as I saw it and to tell it in a way that showed understanding and compassion and comprehension, rather than trying to sort of fudge the story. Thank you. (applause)

JUNE EDWARDS: So do people want to ask questions, or – – –. (sundry comments, panel discussion opens)

QUESTION: It's wonderful that Elizabeth's presentation was so much about the beginning of that process and how she's starting on a process and Jill's presentation was so much about how you complete it. It was great to have you side-by-side like that.

JILL: I think we made a good team.

ELIZABETH: I'm very grateful to have the chance to do this. That particular book is not published yet and I'm not sure if and when it will be.

QUESTION: And every time you talk about something you go another step.

ELIZABETH: Yes. In fact, I have a writing fellowship, I'm going to Brisbane for almost all of June, and I've decided while writing this that that's the project I will

work on. So I'm actually grateful to you people for inviting me, because it's got it back in my mind and I've actually decided to continue with it.

QUESTION: I feel it's really interesting ..... two writers as I've heard you reading your narrative of the fictional story, I was getting really sucked into that story because it's such a powerful one, and I'm thinking, 'How can you write .... story and this is your mum's story?' I'm thinking that's worked so well as a piece of fiction .... story, sorry, the .... But then the contrast with that is to see where you can incorporate it, though, and I've actually seen your book in the shops and I picked it up and I thought, 'This looks really interesting', and then I saw all the .... writing and thought, 'Oh, that's really complex.' But now that you have explained the complexity of the story, I've now really got a better understanding how you constructed your book in that way.

JILL: Yes. Even though it's complex, I don't think it's difficult to read.

No, it's not; but when you love books you've got .... (laughter) But now that I've heard you kind of talking about it, yes, it just makes the book one that I have to read. And the other one when it's published.

ELIZABETH: I'll have to let you know.

QUESTION: Actually having the constraint of your father's second wife saying, 'You can't use that material', compared to the constraint that you're working with where you don't have *any* of that resource, it's quite astounding, really, that ....

QUESTION: Actually, it's really good to have the contrast of the two, sort of like you having a lot of documentary evidence, people that you can go and speak to, whether they speak to you or not – which is a story in itself; it sort of says a lot in one way – and then sort of you with such sketchy details in a way, it's just so tantalising. It's really good through being a member of an audience to have that sort of contrast.

ELIZABETH: In a way, we each have a story within the story –

JILL: Yes.

ELIZABETH: – when we're each making decisions on what value we give to each part, but they are totally different as well. I'm interested in what you had to say about the marketing aspect of what Wakefield thought you should do with it and so on –

JILL: Right.

ELIZABETH: – because after mine didn't get published as a young adult novel – and I might say that they say about one in five thousand books gets published, so for every five thousand people that think they might write a story – – –. (laughter) About one in a hundred of them actually starts, another one in a hundred – I don't really have the maths of it, but a few of them finish it, and of those just a very, very small proportion get published; and so for mine to be a quite solid and complex teenage, young adult novel, I was simply told, 'Australia's not big enough', and because it's very Australian, which is what I value a lot, it wasn't going to translate into world markets very much. And so I had for example Julie Watts at Penguin ringing or getting her secretary to ring and say, 'This is absolutely fascinating; when can I have the rest of it?' and I got terribly excited, but after about ten and a half months the marketing people decided, 'No, no, it's not a goer.'

END OF RECORDING.