

Dorothy Rowe (17 December 1930–25 March 2019)

Few, if any, clinical psychologists have touched as many lives as Dr Dorothy Rowe of London, Sheffield and Sydney, who has died in Sydney aged 88. Author of 16 books, countless magazine and newspaper articles, and a regular contributor to radio and television programmes, she was also a fierce friend, ardent defender of people's—particularly women's—right to choose a more fulfilling life, and a constant critic of psychiatric orthodoxy. In March 2002 she appeared on Radio Four's *Desert Island Discs*. The following year she wrote for the *Guardian*, the *Mail*, the *Express*, the *Daily Telegraph*, *Sunday Telegraph* and *Observer*, on everything from happiness to the Dunkirk landings. She had a column on parenting in *Chat* before it was fashionable to cover the pages of popular magazines with the comments of psychologists, was an agony aunt to the agony aunts and appeared in *Openmind* as a regular columnist. These columns say much about what is wrong with our society, what hurts people and what is destroying hope for our children. Her views on the inscription of Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder are summarised in her chapter title: *ADHD: Adults' fear of frightened children*. She always promoted the idea that what most people need, apart from money, is the power of education and knowledge.

She found it both flattering and hilarious when, in the 1990s, Fay Weldon declared her the “closest thing we have to a saint.” In 2010 Dorothy was included in the *Daily Telegraph's* list of the 100 most powerful women in Britain in Business, Academia and Politics. She is listed in *Who's Who* and *The Who's Who of Australian Women*. She published in journals of philosophy, psychology and psychiatry and was an Emeritus Associate of the Royal College of Psychiatrists. Her books were published in a dozen languages—who knows what South Koreans made of *Living with the Bomb*, a volume that Dorothy herself thought could be summed up in a couple of Polly Simmonds cartoons.

She could be funny, stern, wise, embarrassed and aware that her terrible night-time coughing could keep the host household awake; she used a nebulizer for many years having first contracted bronchiectasis at the age of four. She was always delighted to be included in family celebrations like Thanksgiving and Burns night, though the publicity-shy needed to be aware she was taking close note of proceedings. Various members of my family appear in her books, two of which are dedicated to us, and she asked me to contribute a page of text to *My Dearest Enemy, My Dangerous Friend*—the book that came closest to making public her life-time's separation from her sister.

She was born Dorothy Conn in Newcastle, NSW, Australia, in 1930. She was educated at Newcastle Girls' High and Sydney University where she obtained a degree in psychology and a Diploma of Education. She taught for three years, married in 1956 and her son Edward was born in 1957. She returned to teaching when he was two, but was offered the opportunity to train as a school counsellor (educational psychologist) and went on to become specialist for emotionally disturbed children. At the same time, she completed her Diploma in Clinical Psychology.

In 1968 Dorothy separated from her husband, embarking with Edward to England where she took a National Health Service post at Whiteley Wood Clinic in Sheffield. Alec Jenner, Professor of Psychiatry at Sheffield University, suggested to Dorothy that her research PhD topic should be “Psychological aspects of regular mood change.” Not far away, Don Bannister was bringing personal construct theory into something approaching the limelight, and Dorothy worked with Patrick Slater at the Institute of Psychiatry in developing computer software for analysing Kellyan repertory grids.

In 1972, the year after completing her degree, she was appointed to set up the Lincolnshire Department of Clinical Psychology at St John's Psychiatric Hospital, Lincoln. The battles with the cadre of (all male) psychiatrists probably began an hour after she first arrived. Her approach to recruitment was creative and eclectic, establishing positions for probationer clinical psychologists alongside existing posts held by clinical psychologists with backgrounds in psychoanalysis, behavioural constructivism and rational emotive therapy—again, all men. I cannot begin to estimate the impact she had on my life by appointing me as a probationer in 1978. I had been working in a Kleinian analytic clinic for self-harming adolescents. When asked by Dorothy at interview what my approach was to the teenagers, I had replied that I tried to keep them calm and teach them guitar. Apparently the reply, along with the fact I was the only applicant to have read Freud's *Studies in Hysteria* (don't ask), secured the position. It also secured a lifetime of friendship with Kevin Sullivan and Ron Cattrall, a divorce and meeting the future mum of my daughter Harriet. Without Dorothy I would have gone back to the more lucrative art of ceiling tiling, wouldn't have met and loved Pat Carney, David Smail and Miller Mair, joined the Psychology and Psychotherapy Association, eventually become the editor of its journal—*Changes*, now *The Critical Journal of Psychology, Counselling and Psychotherapy*—and discovered that it's not writing books but publicising them that counts (she also saw a book's dedication as the ultimate lasting accolade). It was her reference that enabled me to work in New England—she was the only UK-based clinical psychologist that any of my employers had heard of. Without her faith in me as a prospective clinical psychologist, I wouldn't have met and loved members of the early *Clinical Psychology Forum* Collective (a special issue from 2007 is dedicated to her). The list goes on . . .

A research grant enabled Dorothy to go on writing and researching. A good deal of this research involved chatting to patients for hours on end; an approach the more analytically minded amongst us found confusing. It was common to hear laughter issuing from Dorothy's room as the sun was setting. Her first book, *The Experience of Depression*, now called *Choosing Not Losing*, appeared in 1978. Her second, *The Construction of Life and Death (The Courage to Live)* was published in 1982. But it was *Depression: The Way Out of Your Prison*, winner of the Mind Book of the Year Award in 1984 and now in its third edition, that put her on the map.

Dorothy was unstinting in her loyalty and generosity to friends. She had enormous respect for Lucy Johnstone's *Uses and Abuses of Psychiatry* and introduced Jeff Masson to her publicist at Harper Collins—*Against Therapy* shook the Psy world a year later. She wrote a stunning tribute to David Smail in a special issue of *Clinical Psychology Forum* dedicated to him. She never hesitated to appear alongside Peter Breggin and others at various Shropshire events and was a staunch supporter and speaker at psychiatric survivor events in the Midlands and beyond. Her audiences could be vast—she once spoke to well over a thousand people in Westminster, a throng that was spread over two floors and who watched her via video link. In Perth in 2006, thousands more were turned away from a conference featuring Dorothy and organised by Mark Rapley. Her sagacity is legendary: on being asked about toilet training, her answer was, "They'll let you know when they're ready". Or a child's propensity for sleeping between parents, "It's a phase."

In 1986 Dorothy moved to Sheffield, leaving the NHS to become self-employed. Nine years later she moved to a basement flat in Islington where she continued to write and inspire. Despite extraordinary sales, she saw her writing as a "hobby." At the thirtieth anniversary of our first meeting, held in a much-changed Lincoln, Kevin and I noticed a certain frailty and only one whisky after dinner. Four years ago, Dorothy returned to Australia. She described herself as semi-retired.

Books by Dorothy Rowe

Living with the Bomb (Routledge, 1985)

Beyond Fear (HarperCollins, 1987)

The Courage to Live (Fontana, 1991)

Breaking the Bonds: Understanding Depression, Finding Freedom (HarperCollins, 1991)

Wanting Everything: The Art of Happiness (HarperCollins, 1991)

The Successful Self (HarperCollins, 1993)

Time on our side: Growing in Wisdom, Not Growing Old (HarperCollins, 1994)

Choosing Not Losing: The Experience of Depression (HarperCollins, 1996)
Dorothy Rowe's Guide to Life (HarperCollins, 1996)
The Real Meaning of Money (Collins, 1997)
Friends & Enemies: Our Need to Love and Hate (HarperCollins, 2000)
Depression: The Way Out of Your Prison (Routledge, 2003)
My Dearest Enemy, My Dangerous Friend: Making and Breaking Sibling Bonds (2007)
What Should I Believe? (Routledge, 2008)
Why We Lie (Fourth Estate, 2011)

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Craig Newnes is a Consulting Critical Psychologist, editor, musician and author. He has published numerous book chapters and academic articles and is editor of *The Journal of Critical Psychology, Counselling and Psychotherapy*. For 19 years he was the editor of *Clinical Psychology Forum*, the in-house practice journal of the Division of Clinical Psychology of the British Psychological Society, and director of Psychological Therapies for Shropshire's Community and Mental Health Services Trust. He has edited six books and is commissioning editor for six volumes in the Critical Psychology Division from PCCS Books. His latest books are *Clinical Psychology: A Critical Examination* (PCCS Books, 2014), *Children in Society: Politics, Policies and Interventions* (PCCS Books, 2015), *Inscription, Diagnosis, Deception and the Mental Health Industry: How Psy Governs Us All* (Palgrave, 2016), and, with Laura Golding, he edited *Teaching Critical Psychology* (Routledge, 2018). He has been an honorary professor at Murdoch University and an honorary lecturer at seven UK universities. In 2005, he received the CCHR Award in Human Rights for twenty years of speaking out about the PSY Complex. With his dad he has written a history of the Malaysian Emergency. Hidden on his computer he has an illustrated children's book, *Finnledoo*. His latest books are *A Critical A-Z of Electroshock* and *The Billy and Bonzo Stories*, both from Real Press. He is a dad and gardener and does his best to be a good Jewish boy.