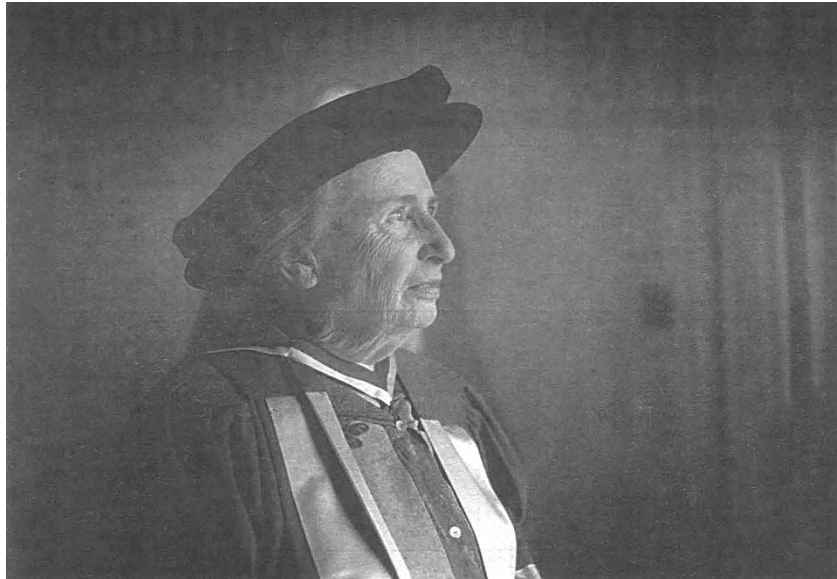


## Ms Rosemary Dobson AO

The degree of Doctor of Letters (*honoris causa*) was conferred upon Australian poet Rosemary Dobson AO at the Arts ceremony held at 4.00pm on 28 February 1996. She gave the occasional address at the ceremony.



Novelists Helen Garner (left) and David Malouf (right) were among a large audience for the awarding of the honorary doctorate to the renowned poet, photo, Tracey Schramm, 'The University of Sydney News', 7 March 1996.



Rosemary Dobson AO, photo, Tracey Schramm, 'The University of Sydney News', 14 March 1996.

### Citation

*Presented by the Acting Vice-Chancellor and Principal Professor D J Anderson*

Chancellor

I have the honour to present Ms Rosemary Dobson, AO for admission to the degree of Doctor of Letters (*honoris causa*).

Rosemary Dobson, a graduate of this University, published her first book of poems, *In a Convex Mirror* in 1944; her second, *The Ship of Ice*, published 3 years later when she was 27, won the Sydney Morning Herald prize for poetry. This was the first of the many awards and honours she has received for her work - among them the Robert Frost prize (now known as the Christopher Brennan Award), the Patrick White Literary Award and the Grace Leven prize for poetry.

After WWII she joined Angus & Robertson as a member of its distinguished editorial team. From 1966 -1971 when her husband Alex Bolton was London editor for A & R, she had the opportunity to visit the galleries of England and Europe, and to immerse herself in the paintings which so strongly influence her poetry. She is herself an accomplished illustrator, editor and anthologist, known and admired here and abroad.

But today we honour her as a poet. The study of poetry has proved daunting to generations of students. Rosemary Dobson's work is an exception to this general rule. She writes about human experience with great insight and compassion. Her poetic voice is quiet and compelling, inviting the reader to pause and reflect, and also to enjoy her whimsical humour.

She brings the wisdom of the past to bear on the present. Her Australian landscape is host to figures and scenes from classical antiquity and European paintings, and she readily associates real landscapes with those seen through the artist's eye. For her, painting can capture moments which in real life vanish all too quickly; and her poetry can do the same.

In many poems she examines personal experience as a wife and mother who is also a gifted individual and a poet, conscious of the competing demands of both selves and anxious to hold both in equilibrium.

In collaboration with David Campbell and the translator Natalie Staples she produced two anthologies of Russian poets. She has drawn on the perceptions of the Greek traveller Pausanias for her own traveller's observations; and on classical Chinese poetry to celebrate the patterns of daily living. She believes and demonstrates that poetry of all times and places can speak to us today.

Her contributions to Australian writing are many and manifest, and through her poetic gift hitherto unexplored depths of Australian experience have found a voice.

Chancellor, I have great pleasure in presenting Rosemary Dobson AO for admission to the degree of Doctor of Letters (honoris causa).