

Travelling Art Scholarship and Portrait Prize and the Helena Rubinstein Women in Science Award.

Whilst Trumble's version of Rubinstein's life highlights occasional nuggets, it is unfortunately one of my least favourite readings of a truly remarkable woman. This is because of its complicated structure and failure to ensure that this story flows so that it is easily readable.

Ruth Lilian

Endnotes

- 1 'Helena Rubinstein was a makeup mogul with a flair for the dramatic', <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9Svke4gmAAA>. Accessed 5 June 2024.
- 2 See for example: Patrick O'Higgins, *Madame: An Intimate Biography of Helena Rubinstein*, London, Vintage Books, 1971.
- 3 *Financial Times*, May 1988.

THE ANGEL OF KING'S CROSS: THE LIFE AND TIMES OF FANNY READING

By Anne Sarzin

North Melbourne, Australian Scholarly Publishing Pty Ltd,

2023, viii + 357pp.

notes, bibliography, index, illus.

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Anne Sarzin has produced a wonderfully detailed and illustrated book about Fanny Reading, a woman of worth whose name is synonymous with the National Council of Jewish Women in Australia (NCJW). An indefatigable worker for women both as a doctor and community leader, 'Dr Fanny', as she was known, was a force to be reckoned with.

Sarzin has done extensive research for this history using a large number of primary and secondary publications, as evidenced by her notes and bibliography, and has also interviewed family members and acquaintances to provide an intimate portrait of this amazing woman. A striking cover illustration of Fanny, from the collection of Leigh and Lynne Reading, gazes confidently at the reader.

For long-time members of NCJW who know of Dr Fanny, this is a lovely tribute with personal reminiscences from family members. As well, for members of the Australian Jewish Historical Society who regularly read our *Journal* and know of Anne Andgel's and the late Morris Ochert's articles about Fanny, this will remind them of her wonderful work. For readers unfamiliar with her story, who will be transported back in time to Sydney in the 1920s and 1930s, especially to King's Cross, and to the antisemitism of *Smith's Weekly*, these will be new experiences.

One weakness of the book is that there is a lot of repetition about Dr. Fanny's personal life, as if it were expected that a reader would choose to read only certain parts of the book and not the whole. However, there are many new details provided by family members which embellish this intimate portrait of a woman whose untiring advocacy set an example which has encouraged others to give selflessly to the causes of women and Judaism, including members of her own family, such as Fanny's brother Hyman whose contributions are discussed in an appendix.

The book follows Fanny's long life from her childhood to her career, to her volunteer work both before and after World War Two. Sarzin also delves into the 1947 trial of *Smith's Weekly* vs Youth Aliyah, where Fanny agreed to be the plaintiff in a case against National Press Pty. Ltd. which had maligned Youth Aliyah (a cause dear to Fanny's heart) by suggesting that funds collected on its behalf in Sydney were used for terrorism against the British in Palestine. Dr Fanny lost the case because the law did not allow for group libel and she personally had not been a victim, but the judge deferred payment of costs, a most unusual move, indicating his sympathy with the position of the Youth Aliyah libel claim. This was a moral victory for Dr Fanny, with the trial being a *cause célèbre* for her stand against entrenched antisemitism. In current times, with the rise in antisemitism worldwide, it is a reminder of how the courage of one person can inspire others.

Sydney in the 1920s and 1930s was a world apart from today, but the lovingkindness which Fanny showed to others has stood the test of time and the memory of her self-sacrifice and good deeds shines as a beacon still. Anne Sarzin is to be commended for undertaking this research and for the engaging biography which has resulted from it.

Helen Bersten