

## Selected Reviews and Major Citations:

### *Crime Queen: Dame Ngaio Marsh (2010):*

"The Lounge: Murder, she wrote", *NZ Listener*, February 2011, 1pp. 2-18 by Fiona Rae.  
"He meets Marsh biographer Joanne Drayton, who as a child met Marsh after a theatre performance. Drayton's mother described the great dame as "one of those sort of women", and Drayton thought she was referring to her theatricality. Later, she discovered that Marsh was "rather more difficult to define than I originally thought."

Citation in "Chronicle: UC University of Canterbury, Volume 45, No. 17. Article entitled "Documentary on Dame Ngaio Marsh mines UC connections". The excerpt reads: "UC alumna Dr Joanne Drayton, who wrote the 2008 biography, "Ngaio Marsh: Her Life in Crime" . . . provided assistance and appears on screen with Dr Harding. Both receive credits for their input into the film, which has been designed for film festival and arts channels in the UK and US, where Marsh's crime novels sold well."

### *Ngaio Marsh: Her Life in Crime (2008 NZ/2009 UK):*

"Best crime books for Christmas" *The Independent*, London, 11 December 2009, by Rebecca Armstrong.

"It's a crying shame that one of the best crime books of the year is also the last from its author. The Girl Who Kicked the Hornets' . . . is the final instalment of Stieg Larsson's captivating trilogy . . . Larsson's untimely death has left crime fiction fans without one of the genre's great new voices. As one of the original queens of crime, Ngaio Marsh created classic detective stories that have stood the test of time. In *Ngaio Marsh: Her Life in Crime* (HarperCollins, £7.99), Joanne Drayton explores the life of woman who gave us the gentlemanly sleuth Roderick Alleyn and looks at how her talent as a director and her love of theatre shaped her writing."

"Alternative art histories", *Art News*, Winter 2008, pp. 110-15, by Virginia Were.  
"Like her art historical subjects, Drayton . . . is no stranger to danger and has travelled far from home in search of the new. Far from following a safe, predictable path by concentrating on the 'winners' in this country's art historical narratives – the artists who are now household names – Drayton has followed a more risky path, focusing instead on more obscure, but no less deserving female 20<sup>th</sup>-century artists – Edith Collier, Rhona Haszard and most recently Ngaio Marsh . . . Drayton's skill as a biographer is the way she contextualizes her subjects within the artistic, social, intellectual and sexual mores of their times, providing insight into the way their personal and emotional circumstances have shaped their artistic careers and reputations".

*New Zealand Books: A Quarterly Review*, Volume 18, Number 4, Summer 2008, p. 21.

"In Joanne Drayton's readable and respectful biography we are reminded what an exceptional woman Ngaio Marsh was – and how her life really spanned two eras."

"Best of the Rest", *North and South*, January 2009, p. 63

"Wellington's Unity Books co-owner Tilly Lloyd recommends Joanne Drayton's *Ngaio Marsh: Her Life in Crime*, an "invigoration biography" that peels back all the layers and proves life can be as thrilling as fiction".

<http://heldonreviews.blogspot.com>, 20 November 2008.

"Dr Joanne Drayton has produced a subtle yet exquisite portrait of this extraordinary woman. Her descriptions of Ngaio the fashionable personality in Knightsbridge are as evocative as those of Ngaio the young artist holding exhibitions in an upstairs room with no door other than a rickety fire escape, or Ngaio the girl sleeping outside at her parents under the stars. Drayton effortlessly weaves together the development of Ngaio's novels and characters with her theatrical

work, her friendships and her upbringing . . . This book places Marsh firmly at the forefront of our country's creative endeavours”.

*Investigate Magazine*, December 2008, p. 93.

“Miss Marsh became renowned not only for the ingenuity of her murders but her meticulous research (and the same could be said for biographer Drayton) . . . Drayton also gives an illuminating account of the evolution of the detective story from Edgar Allan Poe onwards which serves to emphasize the importance of Marsh in this demanding genre.

*Wairarapa Times-Age*, 6 December 2008, p. 8.

“I have tried to finish a few of her popular novels of murder and (what she called) ‘teckery’ glanced at the ending to find who dunnit, and given up. Now in the light of the Drayton opus, I could well try again because the biographer has done such an excellent job in describing Marsh’ unusual, powerful personality and achievement in fiction and drama production . . . Ngaio Marsh is a revealing summation of an extraordinary life, thoroughly documented, each novel and major production individually assessed in its reflection of its author’s situation and ideas.

“Great in ‘08”, *Sunday Star Times*, 7 December 2008 p. C6.

“The three books from this year I’ve enjoyed most: Ngaio Marsh: Her Life in Crime by Joanne Drayton (HarperCollins) – a fascinating look at the life of one of our most successful writers in which Drayton rekindles renewed interest in her superb crime novels.”

“Books in Brief”, *Canterbury*, Vol. 5, No. 2, Summer 2008, p. 41.

“In this biography, Drayton, who was awarded the Alexander Turnbull National Library Fellowship in 2007 to work on the book, investigates the woman behind the public persona by piecing together the evidence from Marsh’s writing and theatre productions.

“Probing Mystery of Dame Ngaio’s Life”, *Wanganui Chronicle*, 5 November 2008, p. 10.

“But even with the material from letters, clippings, radio and television archives and interviews with Marsh’s friends and colleagues, Drayton said she felt there was something about Marsh “that was still mysterious”. This perhaps accounts for why Drayton’s book is not a standard chronological biography, but almost a narrative that begins with Marsh’s first novel and goes back and forth through her life”.

*Tamaki Makaurau*, Vol 20 No 1 October 2008, n.p.

“And Joanne Drayton’s biography has many of those novel’s qualities: memorable characters, arresting sense of theatre, interesting locations and backdrops, intelligent plotting, compulsive reading. The pace is rapid, the tone warm, the information as full as possible given that Ngaio tried to keep her private life private . . . Ngaio’s story begins with an atmospheric mock-detective opening to set a teasing, jokey mood and segues throughout the book into summaries of detective novels . . . The book has an attractive breadth and lightness of touch . . . It’s a fast-paced affectionate tribute to a great character . . . If it doesn’t solve the *Who is Sylvia (Fox)?* question, it lets us know, stylishly, that there is one”.

RNZ National, *Nine to Noon*, 24 September 2008, Kathryn Ran with Harry Ricketts reviewing.

“ . . . this is a terrific biography in many ways . . . she [Ngaio Marsh] is a great subject and she presents . . . particular challenges one is how are you going to fit in all this work that she did . . . Joanne Drayton comes up with rather a good solution, I think, which is that quite a lot of the chapters actually begin with a little bit of one of the novels either précised by her in pretty good prose or in quotation . . . She starts the biography with Ngaio Marsh writing her first book so we basically get the story of her writing life and then we dip back into the earlier life so it doesn’t start with her childhood and work through to her death . . . it’s the writing life and then scooping out these caves behind it to fill in the background . . . that’s the one challenge and it’s very well met I think . . . Any body who likes the books . . . if you are interested in Ngaio Marsh the writing life and the acting life you are going to want to read this.”

“Book Reviews”, *Timaru Herald*, 13 September 2008, p. 23.

“Joanne Drayton has written probably the definitive biography of a woman who for many years was a household name, both here and overseas. Yet Ngaio Marsh was an intensely private, shy person, despite her international celebrity status as one of the last century’s “Queens of Crime” . . . Dr Drayton recalls intimate details, such as Ms Marsh’s closeness to her cats, parents and selected friends, her generosity, problems with tax people and builders, her illnesses and other disappointments, her loves of tradition and travel, and her nature-loving and partying sides . . . Dr Drayton has given us a penetrating view of what it takes to be a genius”.

“Books that Unite Us”, *Capital Times*, 9 September 2008, p. 12.

“Joanne Drayton – biographer of Edith Collier, Rhona Haszard and Frances Hodgkins – has now investigated many red herrings and assembled the pieces to the puzzle that is Dame Ngaio Marsh. In the process Drayton proves that life can be as thrilling as fiction.

“Mystery Still Hangs Over Life of Ngaio Marsh”, *Timaru Herald*, 6 September 2008, p. 17.

“A new biography of New Zealand’ queen of crime, the late Ngaio Marsh, invites the reader to play detective at solving her greatest mystery – that of her private life

*North and South*, September 2008, p. 89.

“Art historian Joanne Drayton’s exhaustive book tells us more than we’ve known before . . . This is not a standard biography, however; not one that follows the straight line of chronology. Rather it’s a continuous narrative that begins with the birth of Marsh’s first novel.”

*Sunday Star Times*, “Crime Queen Investigation’, reviewed by Graham Beattie, 7 September 2008, C7

“Ngaio Marsh – New Zealand’s own ‘Queen of Crime’ – was an intensely private person and until now has remained an elusive character. So Joanne Drayton’s wonderfully researched and compelling biography is certain to create much interest. An art historian and biographer, Drayton was awarded the 2007 National Library Fellowship to research the book. It reveals Marsh as an astonishing force of nature, whose accomplishments have been strangely overlooked in her home country. Graham Beattie caught up with Drayton on the eve of the biography’s release . . .”

BOOKMAN BEATTIE’S Blog, “A Star Turn: An Evening With Dame Ngaio Marsh”, 6 September 2008.

“Dr. Joanne Drayton is a veritable ball of energy and enthusiasm, an entertaining speaker, and a fine biographer and last evening she lit up this Festival with a commanding performance on the stage of the Great Hall at the Christchurch Arts Centre, which decades ago was the city campus of the University of Canterbury and, appropriately, the scene of many of Ngaio Marsh’s theatre triumphs.”

*The Dominion Post*, “The enigma of Dame Ngaio”, 6 September 2008, p. E4.

“A new biography of New Zealand’s queen of crime, the late Ngaio Marsh, invites the reader to play detective at solving her greatest mystery – that of her private life, Diana Dekker in conversation with the author Joanne Drayton”.

*Listener*, “A Biographer Calls”, by Guy Somerset, 6 September 2008, pp. 36-38.

‘Hooper has learnt lots from Drayton’s book that even he as a friend didn’t know. ‘People who sit under the lighthouse often can’t see the light.’ Drayton’s advantage, he thinks, is that she hasn’t been cowed by the ‘mythic nature of Ngaio’ and the awe in which she was held.”

*The Christchurch Press*, “A crime writer’s final days”, 30 August 2008, p. D9.

[Published excerpt from chapter nine of *Ngaio Marsh: Her Life in Crime*]

*The Christchurch Press*, “Love, Crime and a dame’s life”, 30 August 2008, p. D11.

"I applaud Joanna Drayton for providing this rebuttal, and for some fine judgments . . . I welcome this richly informative book as a worthy addition to the tomes on the fascinating Dame."

*Canvas: Weekend New Zealand Herald*, 23 August 2008, 'The mystery of the crime writer', p. 10-13. "Linda Herrick talks to the biographer of New Zealand's most successful – but perhaps least-known – crime writer about piecing together the life of Ngaio Marsh".

### ***Edith Collier: A Light Among Shadows (2007)***

Film review by Peter Calder of "Edith Collier: A Light Among Shadows" (2007) for which I was a key researcher and documentary presenter. Calder writes: "Drayton properly contextualises the horrendous step her father took to express his disapproval of Edith's work: Wanganui was in the grip of a sensational homosexual scandal and groups of nudes were not well-regarded as proper material for the eyes of polite society." *New Zealand Herald*, 18 October 2007.

Film review by Helene Wong of "Edith Collier: A Light Among Shadows" (2007) for which I was a key researcher and documentary presenter. Wong states: "Assisted by Collier's family, biographer Joanne Drayton and Sarjeant Gallery director Bill Milbank, film-maker Michael Heath tells her story with simplicity while making the most of poignant revelations to draw us into her emotional life." November 3-9 2007 Vol 211, No 3521.

### ***Frances Hodgkins: A Private Viewing (2005):***

*NZ House & Garden*, February 2006, p. 71

"The book's title promises an insight into the private life of the artist and through the extensive use of Hodgkins's letters and accounts friends, a vivid sense of the artist builds on its pages . . . Drayton weaves seamless prose through the artist's own narrative, providing succinct synopses of contemporary art movements that demonstrate the significance of Hodgkin's work. This biography gives an insight into the person behind the paintings and her extraordinary life." (Jane Davidson, curator Auckland Art Gallery)

Concert FM, 12:00, 20/02/06, *Upbeat*, Music news, reviews & current affairs with Charlotte Wilson, (the interview ran for nearly about 50 minutes with musical interludes)

Plains FM 96.9, 25/02/06, interviewed by Morrin Rout (20-30 minutes)

"Joanne Drayton is one of our leading art historians and has followed up the success of her books on the work of Edith Collier and Rhona Hazard with a remarkable biography of Frances Hodgkins. It is a sumptuous and intriguing book and Joanne a wonderful source of information about the life of our most internationally acclaimed female artist . . ."

Gina Irish, "Revisiting Hodgkins", *Art New Zealand*, Number 118/Autumn 2006, pp. 75-6  
"In her recent biography *Frances Hodgkins: A Private Viewing* Joanne Drayton builds on existing material, offering a well researched, comprehensive and poignant profile of this iconic artist. *A Private Viewing* is not strictly an art historical text, but rather a thorough consideration of the artist's life tracing Hodgkins' journey from New Zealand to several overseas destinations, ending with her death in Britain."

*The Dominion Post*, "Underrated Hodgkins driven to paint", 20 October 2005, p. D3.

[Half a page article with pics. by Diana Dekker]

"Frances Hodgkins is to painting what Katherine Mansfield is to writing, believes the author of a new book on the artist. But she had her faults . . ."

*Otago Daily Times*, "Portrait of the artist as New Woman," 5-6 November 2005, MAG 4.

[Much of the material for this is directly quoted from the book. It is a full-page article, beginning: “She was born a Victorian but transformed herself into a New Woman and significant modernist painter. She was a strong personality, opinionated, bigoted, a manipulator of the truth, but almost always a superb storyteller . . . ]

*The Press, Christchurch*, “Hodgkins’ Way”, 9 November 2005, pp. D1 & D2

[This was a more than full page interview with Christopher Moore on Frances Hodgkins, entitled “Hodgkins’ way: A new book gives fresh insights into the life of prominent New Zealand artist Frances Hodgkins”.

*Dominion Post*, “Bringing Her all back home”, 19 November 2005, p. 20.

“In its biographical focus and chronological structure Joanne Drayton’s book builds on the foundations established by McCormick . . . Drayton’s intensive researches have resulted in a lively illustrated biography of one of New Zealand’s cultural heroines.”

*New Zealand Listener*, “Thoroughly Modern”, 19-25 November 2005, p. 37 by Andrew Paul Wood.

“Joanne Drayton’s *Frances Hodgkins: A Private Viewing* for the first time offers an accessible, readable biography of Hodgkins for the non-art historians – and that is a jolly good thing . . . This is a good, solid and insightful foray into the life and work of an internationally significant New Zealander of an exclusive pantheon. I feel I know Frances Hodgkins a lot more intimately, but this is still one person’s take on a very complex woman rather than her art, and as such is very much a private viewing.”

*art news New Zealand*, Summer 2005, p. 76.

“Author Joanne Drayton says she wanted this book to be an easy and engaging read – a real page turner; as much a book about travel and adventure as about art. The stuff of Hodgkins’s exceptional life (which she documented in many letters) certainly provides excitement for the reader . . . This is a wonderful book about an exceptional woman and artist.

*Air New Zealand Magazine*, “never a dull moment,” November 2005, p. 107.

“Bigoted, manipulative and egotistical, Hodgkins was not entirely likeable, but as biographer Drayton shows, never dull.”

*Wanganui Chronicle*, 19 November 2005, p. 7.

In this unforgettable and inspirational story Drayton has captured her struggles her failures, her wanderings in Europe in search of inspiration – and her out pourings of hopes, fears, and struggles in letters to her family and friends. The book is greatly enriched by the many excellent illustrations of Hodgkins’ painting and drawings. These, bring to life the artist’s perceptions and techniques, and her gradual move towards modernism.”

*Herald on Sunday*, Sunday View, Bookshelf, 13 November 2005, p. 21.

“Frances Hodgkins is a powerful, enigmatic figure in New Zealand’s art history – a courageous, unconventional woman, whose paintings made her a leading figure of 20-century British modernism. In a perfect confluence of biographer and subject, Joanne Drayton has written a biography of Hodgkins . . .”

*Weekend Herald* and *Herald on Sunday* 17 and 18 December 2005

Linda Herrick said:

“An account of Hodgkins’ adventurous life that reads like a cracking novel, and is complemented by a knowledgeable overview of art. Chapter headings such as “London the Riviera” and “A Touch of Ecstasy” indicate the book’s liveliness: someone should make the film.”

Margie Thomson pick for the year. She says: “I loved Joanne Drayton’s biography of FH biography that’s as lively as good fiction. And what an eccentric, talented, unconventional woman!”

*The Press, Christchurch*, "Characterful artist", 24 December 2005, p. D7.

"Now this fine biography by Dr Joanne Drayton amplifies Hodgkins's work, tracing her development from . . . The volume is exceptionally well researched. Joanne Drayton has performed a great service to the artist's memory, to art scholarship and, through her fluent, accessible writing, her readers."

(John Coley, former Director of the Robert McDougall Art Gallery)