

## Introduction: Archive Madness

The theme of this issue 'Archive Madness,' was that of the 2010 ASAL conference, held at the University of New South Wales and convened by the editors of this issue. The theme aimed to promote and enable consideration of the limits of disciplinary borders and the revival of the archive in literary analysis and the implications of these for the study of Australian Literature. The title echoes and redirects Derrida's famous study *Archive Fever: A Freudian Impression* and numerous essays here engage directly with Derrida's text. Archive fever, for Derrida, is 'a compulsive, repetitive, and nostalgic desire for the archive, an irrepressible desire to return to the origin, a homesickness, a nostalgia for the return to the most archaic place of absolute commencement' (91). The archive is simultaneously a site of revelation and concealment, both of which are accorded the authority of the actual trace.

The theme also addresses the new role of the archive in digital information systems and as a rubric to consider the archive of the literary-disciplinary formation itself, which is currently undergoing radical revisions. The 16 papers collected here consider these important questions in their various attentions to literary texts, their circulations and their disappearances. From their respective positions each asks how we think about the trace of word, text and object in the formation of the literary object and literary cultures? They question and perform our increasing attachment to the archival trace and speculate on their relationship to questions of the national literature and the annals of nation-formation?

In keeping with ASAL conventions, the conference included the annual Dorothy Green Memorial Lecture, on this occasion delivered by Dr Kate Lilley. In this thoughtful, affective consideration of the literary archive Lilley describes its contemporary operation as 'the metonymic circuit of textual objects and subjects, authors and readers, [which] is continuous with the desire for more complete or authentic access to an occulted scene of live composition, a missing author ... .' This premise adds further charge to Lilley's account of archival work for, as she discloses:

This paper is, circuitously, all about my mother, and me: my formal, legal role as Dorothy Hewett's literary executor (along with my brother, Tom Flood); the experience of growing up in the archive and of being, in a sense, part of the archive; and the task of curating a part of that archive as the editor of the new *Selected Poems of Dorothy Hewett*.

The temporality of the archive, its historical and antecedent distance is here complicated in intergenerational webs of connection that range across familial and professional lines. The result is a sharp analysis of archive practices and effects in a performative embodiment of their ongoing processes.

ASAL is also fortunate to receive funding from CAL (Copyright Agency Australia) that enables writers to attend the conference and present new work or deliver papers. With this backing we invited three writers/thinkers/activists to a panel titled 'The Unhomely Archive.' Panelists included Angelo Loukakis, Paula Abood and Joseph Pugliese. The panel comprises three interrelated papers taking up the possibilities and promises of traces of occluded or overlooked lives and bodies within the national archive. Angelo Loukakis's 'The Missing Archive' addresses a suitcase of correspondence comprised mostly of letters between his parents from the years before their marriage. The letters present moving, tangible, and at times mysterious connections between Greece and Australia during WWII, including the occupation of Crete, and the years just following. The connections between these particular lives, bodies and memories, constitute a profound and insistent alternative to the monolingual 'colonial and war missives' that comprise the vast bulk of public library repositories of letters.

Paula Abood's 'Archive of the Displaced' presents a related lacuna in the present institutionalised account of the nation. Abood writes of a current community cultural development program working to provide refugee women with the means to record the 'living repository' of war, displacement, racism and resistance through collective storytelling. Her account and the project itself provide a mindful response to the fleeting nature of the present and its traces in the face of official records. In 'Embodied Archives,' Joseph Pugliese deploys Alan Sekula's concept of the 'shadow archive' – 'the historical reservoir of images that functions to construct the enabling conditions for the emergence and cultural intelligibility of any image' – to attend minutely to the discursive effects of knowledge/power on the body of the subject, within the particularized context of 'the virulent liveliness of ongoing assimilationist violence that has such a tenacious grip in Australia.' In his account of the counter-histories of the village of his own birth, Spilinga in Calabria, Pugliese brings the argument by Michael Dodson that 'the past cannot be dead, because it is built into the beings and bodies of the living' to bear on the persistence and the invisibility of 'our Arab past' at that site, and in the lexicon of the present.

'A Future Summary of Jonglian Poetry, Using Fictional Devices,' Michael Farrell's delirious reading of Australian poetry against itself as a submerged tradition of radical experiment and non-Anglo voicings provides a wonderful gloss to the three 'Unhomely Archive' essays, sardonically binding the practice of poetry to contemporary formations of the nation: 'Australia's reputation as a poetry paradise has usually meant that we got the 'right kind' of refugee.' Farrell's 'fictional' premise is that Australian poetry began with the diary of Jong Ah Sing, an inmate of the Yarra Bend Asylum in the mid- to late- nineteenth century, and that his painful writings, held in the State Library of Victoria archives, initiate not only the matter of Australian canonical poetry, but also the terms of its critical and institutional response. The ambit of 'Yongian' influence is vast: 'your true descendant was Jong Shaw Neilson' who 'introduced colour into Australian poetry'; and 'There would be no 'SHOUTING' but for you. The first giant comma discovered by archivists is yours too. The triple and quadruple hyphen – yours,' and 'Some say Jong didn't actually die, but was released in the great insane Federation amnesty of 1901, and made his way to the Indigenous aeroplane towns of the Western desert.'

In ‘“A heart that could be strong and true”’: Kenneth Cook’s *Wake in Fright* as queer interior’ Monique Rooney presents a compelling reading of the complicated relations between self and other, interior and exterior, in the iconic, troubling text of *Wake in Fright*. Her discussion focuses on the play of aurality and lyricism in the novel’s account of outsider relations, and proposes a reading that draws on Michael Snediker’s ‘emphasis on a potentially joyful Freud’ in classic accounts of queer melancholy in order to attend to what she determines is a ‘critique of processes of masculinist dis-identification’ in the novel. This important discussion works to reanimate critical consideration not only of a significant and neglected text, but also of broader debates around the reach and nature of metropolitan subjectivities in post-WWII literature in Australia.

The issue contains two essays on the colonial archive. Ken Gelder’s essay ‘Negotiating the Colonial Australian Popular Fiction Archive’ calls our attention to the sheer size of this store, yet its inaccessibility to general and academic readers, and the related absence from scholarship and commentary. Gelder outlines the project of redressing this oversight undertaken by Rachel Weaver and himself, which has involved the digitisation of many colonial texts (500 to date) and four hardcopy anthologies of genre fiction including Gothic, Crime, Adventure and Romance, published by Melbourne University Press. The ready availability of this material promises to re-draw or fill-in the very sketchy information about writers and writing, which has perpetuated distorted understandings of the field. As Gelder sets out in the essay, the project is as interested in the fields of the fiction – the various modes of publication and circulation – as in individual works. This emphasis on context enables us to re-think appropriate systems of literary and cultural value for popular fiction.

The second essay on colonial fiction moves from such a large sweep to a focus on one text, namely ‘Eliza Hamilton Dunlop’s “The Aboriginal Mother” Romanticism, Anti Slavery, and Imperial Feminism in the Nineteenth Century.’ Katie Hansord presents the argument that Dunlop should be read within the interrelated frames of literary Romanticism and colonialism. From this perspective, she demonstrates that Dunlop’s work can be read through the lens of British Romantic women’s poetry, and more particularly in light of women’s ‘transatlantic anti slavery poetry,’ with its alignments of political and sentimental positions and rhetorics. ‘The Aboriginal Mother’ thus ‘should be read not only as an early example of sympathetic engagement with Indigenous Australians, but as a part of an international early feminist discourse,’ an Australian exemplar of a broader and unresolved ‘imperial genealogy of feminism.’

Three of the essays address questions of the archive explored in works of fiction. In ‘The Anarchivic Imperative of Peter Mather’s *Wort Papers*,’ Ron Blaber brings an overlooked author and text back into focus. Interestingly, Blaber informs us that the very first ASAL conference in 1978 included a paper on this text, but there may not have been another since. So this essay performs a meta-archival function in addition to its internal argument about the novel. Blaber argues that ‘*The Wort Papers* captures the problematic dynamic between the archival, that which is subject to the rules, processes and laws of the archive, and the anarchival, that which resists and subverts the archive.’ He judges that in ‘the final analysis the novel comes down on the side of the anarchival.’

Bernadette Brennan's attentive reading in 'Singing it anew: David Malouf's *Ransom*' focus on the role of beauty in *Ransom* and doubly locates the novel within the tradition of Homeric storytelling and within Malouf's own *oeuvre*. As Brennan points out, the closing sentence of the novel is given to a description of the humble mule who has survived the sacking of Troy: 'A charming creature, big-eyed and sleek, she bore the name of Beauty—and very appropriately too, it seems, which is not always the case' (219). Brennan's essay follows this lead to argue: 'Just as Malouf steps into a lacuna in Homer's poem so too he enters into an ongoing debate about the existence and nature of beauty in the world.' Brennan's location of the role of beauty in *Ransom* within and across Malouf's *oeuvre* offers a critical depth that comes from long and sustained consideration.

Lucy Treep's essay, 'Archive of Desire: The Souvenir in Eve Langley's Australian Novels' was the recipient of the 2010 A.D. Hope Prize, awarded annually for the paper judged to be the best ASAL July annual conference paper delivered by a postgraduate student. Treep focuses on the various ways in which the souvenir operates as a trace in a number of Langley's published and unpublished works. Specifically, she focuses on the role of the mother's house as a reservoir of souvenirs compiled by Langley's protagonist/alter ego Steve. This is an original and richly rewarding way to read Langley's work, attuned to its poetics and offering a way to understand her configuration of time, space, absence and desire.

Related to these considerations of fictional operations, the essays by Fiona Morrison, Sally Evans and Amanda Johnson discuss questions of authorship, authenticity and fictionality, though to very different effects. Fiona Morrison's essay '“I must have a mask to hide behind”: Signature, Imposture and Henry Handel Richardson' deploys Richardson's letters, autobiographical writing and her first novel to unpack the complex role of the male pseudonym in her construction of a writing self. Morrison argues that, like George Eliot, the male pseudonym afforded Richardson a 'means to negotiate equally pressing, but differently marked, questions of vulnerability, freedom and vocation.' The challenge to identity course, also a complication of the signature's claim to authenticity and to alignment between the signed body of the text and the body of the author.

In 'Archive Fever in a Typingspace: Physicality, Digital Storage, and the Online Presence of Derek Motion,' Sally Evans compares Derrida's formulation of the archive and the hypermedia theory of George P. Landow to demonstrate the 'analogue' foundations of Derrida's concept. Evans also questions which tools of textual analysis from the print age remain relevant in a digital context. Evans focuses on Derek Motion's self-publications as a print-indebted yet digital site that performs a form of 'self-sanctioning.' Evans maps out the terrain between and across analogue and digital environments to conclude that, in Motion's case, the notion of self-sanctioned publication, along with the growing volume of reader commentary and interaction on his blog, demonstrate some of the intermediary positions between pure print and pure digital forms.

Amanda Johnson's 'Archival Salvage: History's Reef and the Wreck of the Historical Novel' revisits some key debates from the recent 'History Wars' from the perspective of the historical novelist. Johnson makes use of the poetics of Bakhtin and Kristeva to re-state the possibilities for resistance by the historical novel, through its plasticity of

form, and its capacity to break established linguistic codes. Her interest in the permutations of truth and fiction in the light of the misunderstandings or misapprehensions of both writer and readers provides a fresh take on these debates and on the ways the historical archive bears on contemporary fiction.

The final two essays extend thinking about the circulation of literature: in Denise Formica's essay across countries and languages, while Stephan Kraitsowits focuses on the delimited category of Science Fiction. In 'Nation, Narration and Translation: the Construction of an Australian Literary Archive in Italian' Formica discusses the ways in which publishers, translators, academics and institutions enable and constrain the introduction of narratives from the Australian archive into Italian. Her essay examines the complexity of transposing a national literary archive – understood as an ideological product of specific historical-cultural circumstances – into another structure similarly constructed but by quite different imperatives. The choices regarding which Australian literature to translate into Italian, and the various circulations of this work can thus be understood as (an often broken) dialogue between two ideologies at particular historical moments.

As its title suggests, 'Australian Science Fiction, as showcased by Australian SF Anthologies,' by Kraitsowits, approaches the question of the genre of Australian SF through a consideration of anthologies of Australian SF writing. Kraitsowits begins by sketching problems that arise in relation to determination and classification and opts in the face of these for a definition grounded in a sense of chronology and thus of development. The discussion foregrounds the institutional shaping of genres through the involvement of academic writers and critics and perhaps more centrally, the Literature Board of the Australia Council. It argues that the slipperiness of 'Australian SF' itself precludes the possibility of a clear definition, such that the classification of 'Australian SF' is not sustained; however at the same time, the essay provides a strong sense of the vitality and diversity of this somewhat marginal field.

Elizabeth McMahon UNSW  
Brigitta Olubas UNSW