

In the Hewett Archive

KATE LILLEY
University of Sydney

‘Literature’ is coextensive with archival practices; with the preservation and valuation of texts. Without archives of various kinds the disciplinary work of literary history, literary criticism, textual studies in the broadest sense, would not be possible. It depends in the most literal way on what the American poet Susan Howe has called ‘the document universe’ (Howe 61). When we think of archives we probably think first of institutional archives presided over by professional archivists (the kind of archives to be found on the Rue des Archives in Paris) or, at least, of libraries, librarians, permissions, catalogues, finding aids, reading rooms, pencils and other technological enhancements. National archives and record offices undoubtedly contain significant materials for the textual and contextual study of literary production and authorship, often of a political and governmental nature. Fiona Capp’s valuable study, *Writers Defiled: Security surveillance of Australian authors and intellectuals 1920-1960* is an Australian case in point. As Marie Louise Ayres comments in ‘Evaluating the Archives: 20th Century Australian Literature’: ‘Many of Australia’s literary luminaries, including Katharine Susannah Prichard, Frank Hardy, Mary Gilmore, Judith Wright and Vance Palmer, were of sufficient interest to ASIO to merit substantial files’ (Ayres 14). The ASIO files of my parents, Dorothy Hewett and Merv Lilley, passed on by Fiona to them, provided my family with hours of amusement and a store of comic anecdotes of bumbling agents accidentally following Hewett’s much more respectable sister-in-law (also named Dorothy) going about her daily business in Sydney while Mum was travelling in China and the Soviet Union as part of a Communist Party delegation.



Figure 1: DH in China

Dad, tagged as a party organiser and recruiter, is repeatedly noted as ‘last seen boarding a train, destination unknown’ as he followed the trail of seasonal work around Queensland, years before he and Mum first crossed paths at the Party stand in Sydney’s Domain.

In literary usage, ‘archive’ tends to connote something more selective and idiosyncratic than the deep storage of government records, and less disturbing than politically motivated surveillance: the benign acquisition (by purchase or gift) of personal papers, private correspondence, working drafts, photographs, private libraries and other objects deemed of potential interest to researchers, belonging to authors deemed worthy of collection in their own right or because of their associations. This kind of archive exemplifies the logic of commodity fetishism at work in the arrangement, description and care of literary and paraliterary materials as objects of potential analysis implicated in the making of both literary and scholarly reputations. The metonymic circuit of textual objects and subjects, authors and readers, is continuous with the desire for more complete or authentic access to an occulted scene of live composition, a missing author, first and last drafts, genealogies of publication and so on: all that is not available to the general reader on the open market, and that is thus deemed to be of special value for scholars and institutions alike.

Sometimes the very scene of celebrated literary production, or a carefully orchestrated version of it, is reconstructed within a museum setting. In the Musée Carnavalet in Paris, former residence of the aristocratic seventeenth century writer and *salonnière*, Madame de Sevigné, you can buy a ticket to enter the ‘Literary Life of the 20th Century’ and there gaze upon its star exhibit, Proust’s bedroom, transplanted from 102 Boulevard Haussmann.



Figure 2: Proust’s bedroom, Musée Carnavalet

The Marianne Moore collection in the Rosenbach Library in Philadelphia includes not only her manuscripts and papers, and the contents of her library, but also her living room. As the Rosenbach's website puts it:

When [Moore] bequeathed her personal belongings to the Rosenbach, the living room of her Greenwich Village apartment was recreated in the museum as a permanent installation. The Marianne Moore papers and living room have earned the Rosenbach designation as a National Literary Landmark by Friends of Libraries, USA. Moore's Greenwich Village living room is permanently installed on the third floor of the historic Rosenbach house and is always on view to visitors as part of the Rosenbach house tour. The over 2,500 personal objects from the Moore room, ranging from furniture to figurines to postage stamps have been cataloged and are also a fruitful source of inquiry for interested researchers. (<www.rosenbach.org/learn/collections/marianne-moore-collection>)

If neither Moore's living room nor her correspondence with Pound *et al* excites you, the same extraordinary private collection holds important material relating to Chaucer, Defoe, Joyce, Lewis Carroll and Bram Stoker, as well as such strangely various treasures as Robert Burns' powder horn, a presentation copy of Erasmus's *Novum Testamentum* (1519) with woodcuts by Holbein, and a collection of letters, photographs, ephemera and objects once belonging to the notorious modernist Hollywood lesbian, Mercedes de Acosta, valued more for her and their erotic associations than for the strictly literary achievements of their owner. Indeed, in recent years, the de Acosta collection has attracted the kind of avid popular attention not often associated with The Rosenbach Library or its ilk. This interest springs from de Acosta's romances with both Marlene Dietrich and Greta Garbo. As Patricia White comments:

On [the 15th of April 2000], the tenth anniversary of Greta Garbo's death at age 84, fifty-five letters from the star to Mercedes de Acosta, together with seventeen cards, fifteen telegrams, a number of photographs, and a few miscellaneous items, were unsealed at the Rosenbach Museum and Library in Philadelphia. The cherished papers had been given by de Acosta to the library, an elegant repository with an impressive collection of modernist manuscripts and cultural artifacts, under condition that they remain sealed until ten years after the death of the longer-surviving correspondent. The unveiling took place amid much speculation, scholarly and sensational, that the sexual or romantic nature of the women's relationship might be revealed in the star's own words. It wasn't. (232)

Since being opened to persual by accredited readers, the letters have been pronounced disappointing on all sides. The fan site, Garbo Forever (<www.garboforever.com>), tries to make the most of what the letters did not disclose with the heading: 'The letters gave no evidence of a love story!' In order to read Garbo's letters one must attend the Rosenbach in person and by appointment, suitably credentialled, but digital images of selected items in the collection can be browsed online and downloaded at will. This is precisely what I did with this eloquent image of a scarf given to de Acosta by Dietrich, complete with the Rosenbach watermark.



Figure 3: scarf

Sometimes the writer's house *in situ* becomes a museum, like the Dickinson Homestead in Amherst. As Diana Fuss notes, 'All but a handful of Dickinson's poems are, in fact, written in the Homestead, the majority composed in the poet's bedroom, the most private chamber of the antebellum interior' (4). Dickinson's manuscripts and desk are located elsewhere, principally at the Houghton Library, Harvard, but a visitor may stand behind a rope and view the poet's narrow bed before heading to Dickinson's grave in the nearby cemetery. The ties between the Dickinson Museum and its authorial subject are unusually strong. Often such writers'-houses-turned-museums bear a tenuous relation to their namesake's literary production or even residence. This is true, for instance, of the Poe House in Philadelphia and the Whitman house in Camden, New Jersey, but the curators have been able to build on an historically slight association to produce a worthwhile museum nonetheless.

In Australia, the preservation of writers' houses is uncommon (witness the sale of Patrick White's home in Centennial Park, Sydney, and the recent controversy over planned renovations to what was once the residence of the Stead family in Vaucluse). Two notable exceptions are the Eleanor Dark house, 'Varuna', in Katoomba, and Katharine Susannah Prichard's house at Greenmount outside Perth, both of which have become Writers' Centres. Katharine lived at Greenmount from her marriage in 1919 to her death in 1969. After that it passed through several private owners before being turned into The Katharine Susannah Prichard Writers' Centre through the intervention of the WA branch of the Fellowship of Australian Writers, the WA Heritage Council and the local shire, who now own and lease it to the Katharine Susannah Prichard Trust. The 'Objectives of the Foundation' are enumerated on the website:

1. To preserve and maintain the former home and property of Katharine Susannah Prichard at 11 Old York Road, Greenmount, Western Australia.
2. To collect, preserve and display artifacts and memorabilia connected with Katharine Susannah Prichard.
3. To do any other such things as may be necessary to preserve the memory of Katharine Susannah Prichard in any place where her literary works, or translations thereof, are read.

4. To do anything that may be necessary to promote or encourage the craft of writing in Western Australia.
5. To encourage the study of literature and in particular the works of Western Australian authors.
6. To promote that humanitarianism which was the basis of Katharine Susannah Prichard's work.
7. To own any real estate, or acquire any chattels, and to make such improvements as will ensure that the above objects are achieved. (<http://kspf.iinet.net.au/objectives.html>)

I imagine a lot of debate went into the choice of that word 'humanitarianism' in Objective 6. The only acknowledgment of Katharine's communism in the biography on the site, written by Ric Throssell, Katharine's only child, is this sentence: 'With her own career promising a new future, she became a foundation member of the Communist Party of Australia'. In the next paragraph he tersely reports his father's suicide and continues: 'When she could face her private pain, Katharine Prichard returned to her tragic novel of the Depression, *Intimate Strangers*, which some have wrongly identified with Hugo Throssell's suicide'.

Intimate Strangers

I was christened 'Katharine Susannah' after 'KSP' and sometimes, as a child, gave my own name as 'Katharine Susannah Prichard' by mistake if I was asked to say my name in full. She sent me birthday cards (my birthday was two days before hers) – I remember being particularly thrilled by one with a red rose under a plastic sleeve – and inscribed copies of her children's books, *Moggie and Her Circus Pony* (1967) and *The Wild Oats of Han* (1928; revised and reissued 1968). When I took my copy of *Moggie* to primary school it was because I had learned to value the live connection between author and reader enshrined in a dedicated copy. One of my classmates said I must have written the inscription myself. Mum gave us 'classics' to read and new Australian books that came with gold stickers announcing the prizes they had won in that year's literary competitions: books bearing the imprimatur of critical esteem, destined for the archive. We read my mother's copies of the books she had loved growing up, *Snugglepoot and Cuddlepie*, *The Dream Girl's Garden*, *Anne of Green Gables* (the first instance I recall of a book my mother loved which I did not). Perhaps because we were told *not* to read *Bobbin Up*, the proletarian novel Mum published in the year I was conceived, the multiple copies in the bookcase exerted a powerful fascination on me. I could safely examine the foreign language editions published by Seven Seas Books in East Berlin without being guilty of reading them. In 'Unpacking my Library', Benjamin writes about a collector's objects as 'the scene, the stage, of their fate' (Benjamin 60). He goes on: 'Of all the ways of acquiring books, writing them oneself is regarded as the most praiseworthy method' (61). That lesson was impressed on me and my siblings from an early age. Next best was acquiring a book from its author. Over time, in different houses, whole shelves filled up with books written by Mum and Dad, with late additions by my brother Tom, my sister Rose and me.

Before she was immobilised by arthritis, Mum loved to go on literary pilgrimages. My sister and I visited Keats House in London with her. Mum and Dad went to Yeats's tower, 'Thoor Ballylee', in County Galway, and to Haworth for the Brontës. I went with them to Stinsford, Dorset, where Thomas Hardy's heart is buried in his

wife's grave. Mum always bought whatever souvenirs she could (some of these bits of literary tat may well have made their way into public collections). Wherever she went, boxes of books – once a huge trunk – followed her home months later. One of my strongest memories of the classic 1960s house in South Perth where we lived, built for us by Mum's mother on the site of her tennis court, is of the wall of books in the living room which I tried to memorise in sequence and from which I selected my first grown-up reading.



Figure 4: Forest St South Perth

My method was to choose the thinnest from a group by the same author, a process that led me, in the first instance, to Solzhenitsyn's *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich* and Beauvoir's *A Very Easy Death*. It wasn't long before I had staked my allegiance to poetry: slim volumes *par excellence*.

As befits their and her chaotic prodigality the Hewett papers are spread about – at the National Library of Australia (NLA), Fisher library (University of Sydney), the State Library of NSW, The Fryer Library at the University of Queensland, the Australian Defence Force Academy (ADFA), and the University of Western Australia. A lot still remains at the last place where she lived, Falconbridge, as we call the house on the Great Western Highway in the Blue Mountains: in boxes in the shed; in the large addition to the original house known as 'House no 2' or 'Dorothy's room'; and in drifts and piles in the original house. The whole property, in fact, where my father lived until recently, with its various buildings in different states of disrepair, has the feel of a chaotic repository, imminently museal. There are photographs of Mum on the walls, posters from productions of her plays, books and papers everywhere. It has certainly had its share of literary pilgrims.

I was startled to find, when I explored the website of the Katharine Susannah Prichard Writers' Centre, how close in style it is to Mum's house at Falconbridge. Katharine's original weatherboard cottage with its addition of 'a self-contained weatherboard workroom near the house' where, according to Bruce Bennett's short essay on the site, she 'wrote most of her novels and stories', is very similar to Falconbridge, where Mum lived for the last, prolific decade of her life. I was taken to 'Greenmount' as a baby to be presented to Katharine (there is a picture of the three of us which I

cannot find) but I don't recall ever going there again. Katharine was 77 when I was born in 1960 and died 9 years later. Her son Ric was 1 year older than my mother. Katharine wrote novels, short stories, plays, autobiography, works for children, journalism and poetry, as did Mum. In her controversial memorial essay on Prichard, 'Excess of Love', published in *Overland* in 1969 (now reprinted in Fiona Morrison's edition of Hewett's *Selected Prose*), Mum described Katharine as 'standing bewildered on the stone loggia of her Greenmount home in 1964', saying 'This is not my Australia, and I don't like it' (Morrison 169). 'Loggia' must have been Katharine's word: Mum always said 'verandah'. The long friendship between them ended in 1967 over Katherine's refusal to sign a petition in support of Sinyavsky and Daniel. She wrote to Mum that she was 'angry about this fatuous sympathy for the criminals without indignation at the outrageous crime they have committed to destroy the memory of Lenin' (cited in 'Excess of Love', Morrison 179). Hewett calls Katharine: 'Perverse, egotistical, implacable, naïve and eternally feminine, with an odd willfulness and unexplainable tenderness' (179). Reading it now, the whole essay has an uncanny quality. Mum could just as easily be describing herself and her own stone loggia, 'smothered in an overgrown garden' (178). In an odd touch, Hewett notes that Prichard's characters are 'reminiscent of Wordsworth's Lucy, "rolled round in earth's diurnal course with rocks and stones and trees"' (170). These are the lines that, much later, Mum chose for her own epitaph. They are inscribed on her gravestone in Springwood Cemetery.

Foul Papers

In the catalogue of Dorothy Green's papers, there are details of the manuscripts of the lectures she gave at ADFA on Blake, Coleridge, Conrad, Congreve, Dryden, Eliot (T.S and George), Emerson, Frost, Hardy, Joyce, Keats, Elizabethan and Jacobean plays, and modern Australian and American poetry and drama. These are the same topics, more or less, on which Mum lectured, including the commitment to Australian literature. As Mum told it, she and some of her colleagues in the English Department at UWA, were given permission to teach Australian Literature on the condition that it would not be calculated as part of their regular teaching load. This is what it once meant to be in an English Department, a model of generalist literary historical coverage that has all but vanished. As children my sister and I often went to Mum's lectures. Typescripts of some of them are now in an archive box in my office in the English Department at the University of Sydney, awaiting further disposition. On my shelves are a few souvenirs of her 60s critical library including Empson, Richards, Brooks, Williams, Kermode, Leavis, Adorno and Freud, all filled with her marginal annotations and underlinings.

Unlike Mum's papers, Dorothy Green's are highly organised and include wide-ranging collections of research material relating to scholarly projects, teaching and political activism, arranged in alphabetical sequence. Series 7.2 Folder 107, for instance, contains material gathered under the headings, Etiquette, Famine, Fascism, Federalism and Fiji. Her ADFA papers include extensive cuttings on Australian Literature such as those in Series 7.1 folder 37: Xavier Herbert, Hermes [the literary journal], John Hetherington and Dorothy Hewett. I don't know what cuttings about Mum are to be found in Folder 37 but I do know that, as the editor of *Australian Poetry 1968*, Dorothy Green selected the Hewett poem 'The Witnesses', included in *Rapunzel in Suburbia* in 1975. (Geoff Page also included it in his 2009 anthology, *60 Classic Australian Poems*.) Mum had first published in this annual series when she

was 22, in the 1945 volume edited by Slessor. The 58 poems in *Australian Poetry 1968* include work by Bruce Beaver, Chris Wallace-Crabbe, A.D. Hope, Les Murray, David Martin, John Manifold, James McAuley, Douglas Stewart, David Campbell, Vivian Smith, Rodney Hall, R.D.Fitzgerald, Bruce Dawe, and John Blight. Eleven women are represented: Nancy Keesing, Gwen Harwood, Jill Hellyer, Mary Finnin, Rosemary Dobson, Margaret Lewis, Sally McInerney, Elizabeth Perkins, Ella Turnbull, Mavis Watt and Hewett. Two years later Rodney Hall chose quite a different poem of Mum's, 'This Version of Love', for *Australian Poetry 1970*, where it appeared in quite different company. Here are Dransfield, Tranter, J.S. Harry, Rhyll McMaster and Judith Rodriguez alongside Judith Wright, Francis Webb and Vincent Buckley. 'This Version of Love' was later included by Tranter and Mead in their *Penguin Book of Modern Australian Poetry* (1991). When I read through these two anthologies, separated by just a couple of years, mini-archives in themselves, I felt that I had crossed a literary-historical threshold.

The NLA's 'Guide to the Papers of Dorothy Hewett' states:

Since the first consignment was received in 1979 a number of different approaches to arrangement and levels of description have been applied to the collection, differences which are reflected in the folder titles and notes. No discernible order was apparent in the contents of the consignments. Order has been imposed by the Library to the extent of grouping similar material into a series arrangement whilst retaining the order of adjacent papers wherever possible. In this way Hewett's apparently random approach to filing has been maintained to some degree.

Series 10, 'Miscellaneous papers and objects, 1910-1990', includes Bag 1, 'Two tissue boxes with holograph annotations by Hewett'. As she became less mobile, Hewett wrote on whatever was to hand: envelopes, books, a diary, tissue boxes, pill packets, brochures.



Figure 5: annotated tissue box

She was also in the habit of urgently underlining whatever book she was reading and copying phrases into the margin.

In her article, 'Creative Acts: Archives, Artifacts And Australian Women's Autobiographies', Christine McPaul comments:

One final aspect of Hewett's artifacts in the Library is worth examining. She donated two tissue boxes, both of which have writing on them, and one of which contains two scrunched yellow tissues, apparently used (Box 18 MS 6184). According to the Library's records there was no indication as to which of Hewett's manuscripts the writing on the boxes belonged, and in any case, much of the writing is illegible... The explicit connection between an artifact and a donor's body highlighted by the tissues and the tissue boxes serves to reinforce the potential autobiographical relationship between other donors and artifacts held by the Library. Viewed from a different perspective, the tissue boxes and tissues take on a theatrical quality, perhaps becoming a prop which contributes to an understanding of Hewett and her work, particularly her involvement with theatre in Australia. On another level, Hewett's action could be seen as a rebuff to the discourses surrounding the act of donation under the Taxation Incentives for the Arts Scheme and makes a mockery of the associated bureaucratic processes. It is doubtful the Scheme's creators envisaged a donation such as this. After all, what market value could be placed on artifacts which may well contain the bodily residues of a living Australian? (308)

I showed this article to Mum when it came out: she was mortified, and she was not easy to mortify. No doubt it was not her intention to gift her used tissues to the National Library. What was or was not included was mostly chance. But McPaul's intuition is not far from the mark. Hewett's habit of writing on anything that could literally be written on, and of literally and figuratively overwriting the pages of the books she read, was a sign of her desire to write (on) everything, and to turn everything into (her) writing.

Maryann Dever, Ann Vickery and Sally Newman coin the term 'intimate archive' in their excellent book of the same name to denote personal papers, stressing that all archives are the product of various kinds of mediation. They cite Hewett's account in *Wild Card*, written many years after the fact, of witnessing Aileen Palmer burning what she takes to be the letters of Aileen's mother, Nettie Palmer, who had recently died: 'It was Australian literary history that Aileen was burning' (14). I heard this story many times as part of Mum's strongly held belief that a writer's personal papers should be preserved as part of 'Australian literary history' with nothing held back. She implicitly criticises Prichard in 'Excess of Love' for leaving directions in her will that her papers should be destroyed in 'a bonfire in the garden' (Morrison 173). There is a suggestion in *The Intimate Archive* that, as arresting, even shocking, as Hewett's eyewitness testimony may be, her story of Aileen Palmer burning Australian literary history may not be altogether reliable. Other evidence, we are told, suggests that Aileen was in fact 'a conscientious caretaker' (14). It's an interesting case, and one that can probably never be settled, but anyone who knew Mum knows that the reliability or otherwise of her stories, oral and written, was highly unpredictable. I have learned or confirmed many things as a reader of Mum's published work that I did not know. Some of her work I have not read precisely because I don't want to know more than I already do. At other times, reading more and comparing versions has only added to my confusion.

Lily-leaf

What is the function of an ‘intimate archive’ in relation to a public, confessional oeuvre? Hewett’s texts are nothing if not confessional, often scandalously so. They are also archival in another sense: Hewett used her texts as storehouses for iconic scenes, images and intertexts from her own life, recycling them across genres and over time, in a kind of preserved or reified form. This was a technique of containment and attempted archival control coextensive with aesthesis. She talked like that too, in set-pieces, rehearsing favourite stories, often word for word. Although she was a highly engaging person, it could be hard to have the sense of a live conversation with her. She did not like to deviate from the scripts she had put in place and we were her intimate audience.

I was a child-archivist in the Benjaminian sense. I paid ferocious attention to my mother and her intimate objects in a way that she did not (or so I thought), keeping track of her books, her clothes, the drawers of her dressing table, the contents of her purse, the names of the people she met, her appointments, her stories. When she could not remember a detail I could often supply it. I shared the sense of Anne Sexton’s eldest daughter, Linda Gray Sexton (1953-), her sometime minder, editor, executor and memoirist, who wrote in *Searching for Mercy Street*:

[I]f I wanted to share my mother’s life it was the poetry I must share with her. If I wanted to be close, indispensable, a companion, then words and language would be the bricks with which I would build the bridge. (88)



Figure 6: double portrait, mother and daughter

I was raised in a present and future literary archive; as an object in, and subject of, that archive; and as one destined to be an archivist of a kind. As an editor and scholar I’ve done my share of work in institutional archives, particularly on rare, sometimes unique copies of printed books and pamphlets, both modern and early modern. That experience informs my thinking but it is not my topic here. 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* published by the University of Western Australia Press.

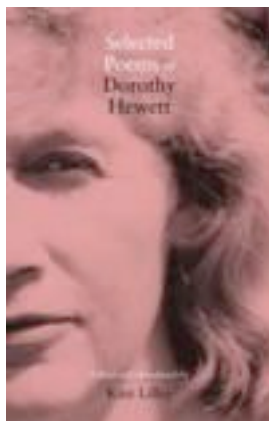


Figure 7: DH Selected Poems cover

Writing of Christina Stead in 1968, Dorothy Green commented: ‘It is a thankless task for critics to point out the merits of books which are allowed to go out of print’ (Green 150). I commenced editing the *Selected Poems* in the knowledge that all of Hewett’s six major books of poetry and the *Collected Poems* edited by Bill Grono were out of print. Only *Wheatlands*, co-authored with John Kinsella, was still in print. This situation isn’t unusual, far from it. Such is the fate of the small print runs of small presses. In discussions of the literary archive, the vulnerability of print is often overlooked. As a family, we do not even possess copies of the two early Hewett chapbooks, *Hidden Journey* and *Late Night Bulletin*, recently listed in an antiquarian catalogue for the combined sum of about \$800. As anyone who teaches modern and contemporary literature knows, the chief constraint in setting texts is whether or not they are in print (or digitally accessible).

As I write this, it is close to nine years since Mum died on 25 August 2002, and I am 50. I published my first book of poems, *Versary*, just before she died when I was 42. She was 40 when she published *What About The People* with my father; 45 when she published *Windmill Country*, her first full-length collection. My second book of poems, *Ladylike*, will come out this year in the wake of my edition of Mum’s *Selected Poems*. These curious calculations may not really be fit for public airing but I have not cut them out because they are undoubtedly an instance of the madness of the archive. ‘Inheritance,’ writes Benjamin, ‘is the soundest way of acquiring a collection. For a collector’s attitude toward his possessions stems from an owner’s feeling of responsibility toward his property...the attitude of an heir’ (Benjamin 66). I discovered recently, reading Mum’s letters to Dad while she was pregnant with me, that my nickname in utero was ‘lily-leaf’.

Gail Jones in her 2006 Dorothy Green Lecture ‘A Dreaming, A Sauntering’ writes of ‘[t]he child, any child, who imagines her own history’:

Wishing to *collect* the lost other or the otherness of one’s own place might also be seen as intuitively heterotopic: collecting, as Susan Sontag points out, is always an act of redemption; it is always a means by which the “profane relic” (Walter Benjamin’s term) is used to establish practical and material forms of remembrance, a means by which we recognise multiplicity. (14)

Before she died in 2002, Mum asked me to edit her *Selected Poems*. I have read and heard these poems all my life, sometimes typing them for her or helping her to edit

them. It has been a labour of love, with all the ambivalence that entails, to immerse myself in them as an editor as a ‘practical and material form[] of remembrance’.¹



Figure 8: Passage du Désir; photo Melissa Hardie

Rue des Archives. Passage du Désir.

The question of the archive is always a matter of life and death, preservation and destruction, memorialisation and forgetting. Mum’s plaque on the Writers’ Walk at Circular Quay in Sydney was laid while she was still alive. Its ambivalent inscription, ‘I had a tremendous world in my head and more than three-quarters of it will be buried with me’ (a line from *The Chapel Perilous*), was chosen by Katherine Brisbane. Mum didn’t like it much but she went along with it.



Figure 9: DH plaque, Circular Quay; photo Melissa Hardie

Last year they named a street after her, in Canberra of all places. Part of a new residential development, no-one much lives there yet. Hewett Crescent joins Patrick White Circuit in two places and Eleanor Dark Lane in another.



Figure 10: Hewett Crescent; photo Monique Rooney

At what level of governmentality and town planning was it decided that national literary investments and obligations should be mapped onto the capital's streetscape in this citational form? There's a kind of poetic justice in it after all. Hewett's heart may be buried in Springwood but the greater part of her literary remains – including those tissue boxes – can (or will) be found in unprecedented order in Canberra in the National Library of Australia, where they can be read without restriction, as was her wish.

NOTE

¹ See my 'Introduction' to *Selected Poems of Dorothy Hewett*, ed. Kate Lilley, Perth:UWA Press, 2011.

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