The intimate archive

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*This article examines the issues involved in using archival material to research the personal lives of the Australian writers Marjorie Barnard (1897–1987), Aileen Palmer (1915–1988) and Lesbia Harford (1891–1927). The article provides an introduction into the romantic experiences of the three women, based on their private letters, diaries and notebooks held in public institutions, including the National Library of Australia's Manuscript Collection.**

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Art historian Whitney Chadwick tells the story of how she found herself 'digging in the archives at a time when there were sexier intellectual things to do'.[1] The question for us is: when did archives suddenly become sexy? Certainly that is how they appear to us today. Once considered the province of only the most dedicated literary scholar or historian, the archive has become something of a crossover success story in Academe and beyond. Researchers across the humanities are now writing about the concept of the archive and talking about their latest bout of 'archive fever'.[2] We seem to be witnessing the emergence of a new critical turn that is focused on revising our approaches to the documentary, the museal, the testimonial; revising how we do things with a fragment, a word, a memory, a draft. While this may be the inevitable outcome of the destabilising of what political philosopher Wendy Brown describes as the 'constitutive narratives of modernity',[3] it has engendered a fertile cross-disciplinary space of scholarly inquiry.

What is driving this renewed interest in the archive? For some it is about the 'power of historical explanation'[4] in reclaiming the lives of subjects who have been 'hidden in history',[5] for others it is a sign of the extent to which we have made a fetish of the archive as 'a literal substitute for the "reality" of the past'.[6] Philosopher Jacques Derrida's notion of 'archive fever' is concerned with the desire to record – and implicitly to control – memory, history and canonicity, and thus aid the production of selective views of national cultures. But it is also concerned with the desire to discover or to make sense of what has been recorded. What these competing strains of 'archive fever' have in common is a 'passion for origins and genealogies'.[7] As Derrida argues, 'The archivization produces as much as it records the event'.[8]

However, it is not scholars alone who have been gripped by these impulses. Cultural theorist Mike Featherstone observes that 'today, the will to archive is a powerful impulse in contemporary culture'.[9] We can witness this impulse in the proliferation of virtual archives on websites, such as MySpace and Facebook, where individuals record relationships, friendships and the intimate details of their personal lives. New technologies enable everyone to be his or her own archivist, and it may well be that the act of archiving the self has become the work of contemporary subjectivity.[10] In Featherstone's words, we may be living in an era where 'to be is to record'.[11]

But what does it mean to begin to sift the available traces of someone's life? Where do the boundaries lie between private lives and public scrutiny? In the information age, meaningful distinctions between the public and private are increasingly difficult to maintain as sensibilities shift, and what would once have been considered personal or private now circulates in widely accessible virtual forms. But what of members of earlier generations who were rather more reticent when it came to exposing the intimacies that shaped their existence and who perhaps never anticipated that anyone would seek to investigate such matters? How do we make sense of surviving traces of their private lives that have found their way into public archives? What protocols govern scholarly attention to these particular aspects of the archival record? How do we read these papers?

Current debates surrounding archival research now frequently focus on the intimate connections between the desire for knowledge, the passion that drives our work as researchers, and the particular tensions that govern how we read and interpret the materials we find when we venture 'into the archive'. Indeed, it was a shared preoccupation with the 'experience of being in the archive'[12] and grappling with the complex questions arising from archival research that prompted us to consider writing on this topic. As feminist researchers, we were interested in the interface between public and private selves, in how individuals are constituted by, but also negotiate, social identity. Moreover, as researchers of women writers, we were also interested in the intersections between fiction and the real, and how knowledge is circulated and transformed through the word. And we were interested in both the pleasures of reading and its ethical burdens.

While our research involved creating or locating connections, we had all embarked on separate journeys. Our investment in particular subjects, the length and even the contexts of our research journeys differed, making our use of 'we' strategically contingent. As Lyn Hejinian contends, the 'we' of collaboration might best be thought of as the 'we of supervention, the we of surprise', in foregrounding the tensions between self and other.[13] Archival research, like collaboration, relies on encounters, as well as the need to discover linkages and to test the limits and modes of history making.

Between us, we have worked in archival collections in Australia, the United States, Britain and Europe. This trans-national experience of divergent archival procedures and methods of collating material has produced a broad understanding of the differing historical, national and cultural contexts in which archives themselves are constructed. It has also sponsored a deep understanding of our crucial roles as scholars and how, in interpreting textual material, we are also shaping that material in different ways in our own images. We have come to archival research from fields of historical and literary studies; finding in the interdisciplinary context of feminist inquiry a place to consider women as historical subjects in their own right. To this extent, our work is motivated by what Griselda Pollock terms 'feminist desire'.[14]

Drawing on our own research experiences, we have sought to tease out both the conceptual and practical issues involved in archival research into the more intimate aspects of women writers' lives – friendship, love, romance and sexuality. Until recently, literary scholars have tended to show a marked reticence on the subject of their own research and reading practices. In contrast, we reflect quite explicitly on the work we have done sifting through the diverse primary sources available for understanding the lives of women writers, and we work to foreground the connections between the research process and the final outcome. To this end, we recount our own journeys through the private literary papers of some quite distinct Australian literary figures of the modernist era: Marjorie Barnard, Lesbia Harford, Nettie Palmer and her daughter Aileen Palmer.

Each of our stories addresses the question of how to read what we call 'the intimate archive'; that is, collections of private and, in some cases, highly personal papers that have found their way into public collections. These private/public papers (known in archival parlance as 'fonds') possess different qualities and pose markedly different challenges from those associated with preserving and researching administrative or government records.[15] Broadly speaking, the issues include the provenance and construction of individual fonds, or what Derrida describes as 'the act of *con*signing through *gathering together signs*';[16] questions of access; the role of the scholar in shaping archival material; and issues of interpretation that inevitably arise when considering the fragmentary or incomplete evidence of women's intimate lives.

Although we use a range of general terms, such as 'archival material', 'fonds', 'papers' or 'collections', to describe the documents assembled together within the archive or the archive itself, our research is concerned with particular genres of writing. The letters, diaries, journals, fiction, poetry and autobiographical writing upon which we rely offer evidence of daily life, of significant events and relationships, and – in the case of literary figures – of the creative processes and habits of mind that underpin their published works and the reputations that are built upon them. Such personal papers also provide insights into often complicated and idiosyncratic practices of self-representation. As literary scholar Rosemarie Bodenheimer notes:

> Letters cannot 'explain' novels or give us access to the writer 'behind' the fictional narrative, nor can excerpts from letters reliably provide 'facts' about a situation or a sensibility on which to ground a literary argument. Letters and novels are both acts of self-representation in writing and, as such, may both be taken, to begin with, as fictions.[17]

We are sensitive to specific issues raised by different genres of writing though not reductive about conventional distinctions between fact and fiction and between truth and authenticity in relation to what literary theorist Leigh Gilmore terms 'autobiographics'.[18] Our different reading practices are all concerned with the complex question of how to read the 'elements that ... mark a location in a text where self-invention, self-discovery, and self-representation emerge within the technologies of autobiography'.[19]

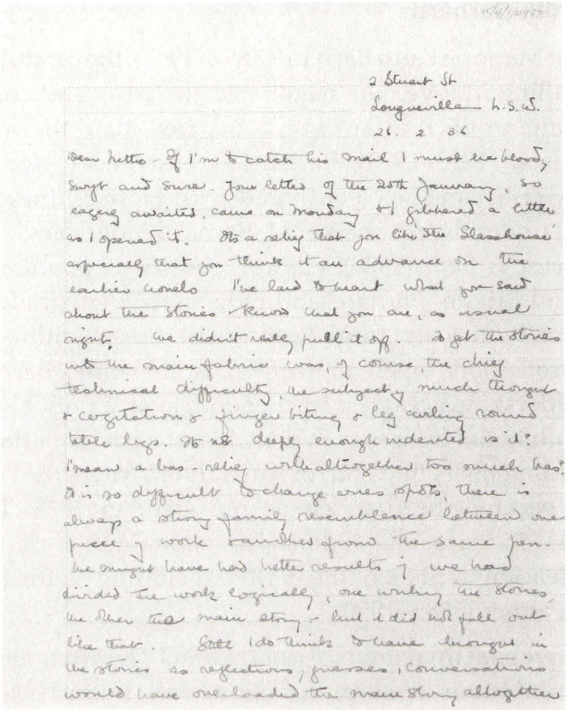
There exists, as Catherine Hobbs points out, 'an intimacy in the personal archive not present in the collective, corporate, formalized record-keeping system'. This leads her to argue that 'archival theory needs to be elaborated with more nuance for personal archives' if it is to grapple effectively with what she terms 'the flotsam of the individual life'.[20] We seek to take up that challenge from the perspective of the literary researcher examining the diverse 'archival stories' contained within collections held in the National Library of Australia and elsewhere.

Marjorie Faith Barnard

In the case of Marjorie Faith Barnard (1897–1987), the central experience is that of falling in love. She negotiated the costs and consequences of conducting an illicit affair with a married man, the writer Frank Dalby Davison (1893–1970). Barnard is best known for the fiction and literary criticism she co-authored with Flora Sydney Eldershaw (1897–1956) under the pen-name 'M. Barnard Eldershaw'.[21] Their first novel, *A House is Built* (1929), enjoyed enormous popular success in Australia and Britain. Barnard and Eldershaw were graduates of the University of Sydney and forged successful careers within the narrow range of professions open to women at the time: Barnard was a librarian; Eldershaw became a teacher and, later, a public servant. The two were influential figures in Sydney literary circles of the 1930s and 1940s, including the Fellowship of Australian Writers (FAW), of which Eldershaw became the first female president in 1935. Throughout their careers, Barnard and Eldershaw maintained close friendships with other leading writers of the period, including Nettie (1885–1964) and Vance Palmer (1885–1959).

Their controversial final novel, *Tomorrow and Tomorrow and Tomorrow* (1947), an ambitious dystopian fiction, was unfairly subjected to wartime censorship prior to publication and only appeared in full in 1983.

Of the affair between Barnard and Davison, little in the way of documentary detail is now available. Barnard preserved no personal correspondence: her own papers consist merely of neat manuscripts, typescripts and formal correspondence with publishers and agents.[22] Indeed, she reveals herself to be a keen editor of the archival record, producing a prim picture of professional engagement that nudges us gently away from any investigation of the woman behind the successful writer. However, as Adam Phillips points out, such an ordering, when read symptomatically, begs the question, 'What is the version of yourself that you present organized to stop people thinking about you? What are the catastrophes associated with your repressed repertoire of life-stories?'[23]



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Dear Nettie – If I'm to catch this mail I must be bold, swift and sure. Your letter of the 25th January, so eagerly awaited, came on Monday & I gibbered a little as I opened it. It's a relief that you like 'The Glasshouse' especially that you think it an advance on the earlier novels. I've laid to heart what you said about the stories & know that you are, as usual right. We didn't really pull it off. To get the stories into the main fabric was, of course, the chief technical difficulty, the subject of much thought & cogitation & finger biting & leg curling round table legs. It's not deeply enough indented is it? I mean a bas-relief with altogether too much bas? It is so difficult to change one's spots, there is always a strong family resemblance between one piece of work & another from the same pen. We might have had better results if we had divided the work logically, one writing the stories the other the main story – but it did not fall out like that. Still I do think to have brought in the stories as reflections, guesses, conversations would have overloaded the main story altogether

Marjorie Barnard (1897–1987), Letter to Nettie Palmer, 26 February 1936, Papers of Vance and Nettie Palmer, 1889–1964. Manuscripts Collection, National Library of Australia, MS1174/1/4957, Courtesy the Estate of Marjorie Barnard and Curtis Brown

The very few letters from Barnard that survive in Davison's papers provide remarkably little for the researcher to go on. And yet it is possible to piece together the elements of their relationship through her letters to third parties; that is to say, a tale unfolds, albeit elliptically. The challenge, then, becomes one of how to read and work with these fragments, given that, as researchers, 'we are generally dismayed by the gaps that fragments expose, and try to fill them'.[24] We often harbour an insistent (deeply suppressed and often denied) desire to find in our archival sources a whole where there can only ever be random parts, to perform acts of reconstitution in the service of producing a coherent and seamless account of our subject. As classical literature scholar Page DuBois notes:

> What remains to us of the past, what we know of the present, of the consciousness of others, for example, is fragmentary. One way of responding to this recognition is to pursue a dream of wholeness, transparency, perfect access to what we desire to know. Another is to accept the partiality of our experience, to seek, even as we yearn for more, more facts, more words and artifacts ... to read what we have.[25]

How, then, do we live with - and work with - the patterns of knowing and not knowing thrown up by these sources? And, in the case of Barnard, how are these dilemmas mirrored in the conflicting gestures of concealment and revelation that mark her private letters and short fiction? In sum, is it possible to resist the insistent (and often unacknowledged) pressure to 'story' the disparate archival traces of her connection with Davison, while uncovering and contemplating Barnard's own impulse to leaven her short fiction with traces of the affair; that is, her own efforts to 'story' the same material?

Lesbia Venner Harford

In the case of Lesbia Venner Harford (1891–1927), we find a poet who was largely unknown during her lifetime but who began to be recovered in the 1970s as a key figure in Australia's social rights movement, especially in terms of class, gender and sexuality. One of the earliest women to gain a law degree and a leadership position in the Victorian trade union movement, Harford confounded her peers by becoming a factory worker and servant in order to 'live' her radical politics rather than merely espouse them. This was despite being born a 'blue baby' and struggling throughout her life with extremely fragile health. By dying tragically young, Harford acquired an almost martyr-like status.

To what extent has this kind of framing been generated to serve the interests of surviving family members and lovers, as well as subsequent literary scholars and, later still, social institutions such as the law. Often readings of Harford are more revealing of the hopes and values of these individuals, particularly ones in need of an icon of survival, determination, outspokenness and moral rebellion. While taken up by members of the left as well as, more recently, those of conservative bent, Harford always remains a figure representing moral integrity and nonconformity. We

consider why her writing appeals as an instrument of social change, despite it being in the form of love poetry and fiction, rather than more direct non-fiction championing the rights of women, workers or the poor. Harford frames the political as intimate and interior. The effect of her poetry, in particular, instils in readers a closeness and heightened sense of the moral obligation to live ethically or to become a social witness.

Harford's poetry was unusual for its time in touching upon taboo or controversial topics, such as menstruation, pacifism, free love and Sapphism. It remained largely unpublished during her lifetime, shared only with a small group of friends, family and lovers. A published selection would not appear until almost two decades after her death and, even then, it was in a volume tightly trimmed and edited by her long-time friend Nettie Palmer. While there has been a need to construct particular truths about Harford (whether in terms of her radical class or feminist politics, or her sexual orientation), there is often too little evidence to verify such truths. Harford left little material behind (mainly three exercise books and a manuscript of an unpublished novel that was discovered by accident), and her friend Nettie is sketchy in her reminiscences.

Other central figures, such as Harford's husband Pat and friend Katie Lush, left nothing to document their relationships with Harford. Much of the research into Harford's life and writing takes the form of quests and 'rescue' operations, as if discoveries remain to be made that will substantiate theories about Harford and 'fix' her story into a coherent narrative. In our view, Harford's writing is far more ambiguous and instead offers up a complex, less straightforwardly heroic figure. Rather than giving a diarist's insights into Harford's life, her writing stages ambivalence toward sexual desire and the ideology of free love. It moves between embracing and rejecting the possibility of romantic fulfillment and plays out a repetitive narrative of doomed love for both genders.

The case of Harford demonstrates the effect of archival change or reorganisation upon scholarly research, highlighting the need to be cautious in configuring what remains of any writer's papers in terms of fixity or stability. The three exercise books that constitute the source of almost all of Harford's poetry were held privately for many years by an early researcher of her work, poet and therapist Marjorie Pizer.[26] Pizer's decision to give the exercise books to the Mitchell Library in

2002 necessitated a large-scale review of research, with new citations required and further comparative work between various archival holdings undertaken. Further, Lesley Parsons's 1976 honours thesis on Harford was also removed as a catalogued holding at the University of Melbourne around a similar period.

Aileen Yuonne Palmer

The difficulties of reading the multiple textual lives encrypted in a personal archive are evident in the case of Aileen Yuonne Palmer (1915–1988). She was the eldest daughter of two of Australia's pre-eminent literary figures – Vance and Nettie Palmer – but her own literary career was severely constrained by frequent periods of institutionalisation for the psychiatric illness with which she struggled for much of her adult life.[27] While literary scholars have used her parents' papers extensively, Aileen Yvonne Palmer has only recently come to the attention of the academic community, principally because of her involvement as an interpreter with a mobile medical unit during the Spanish Civil War (1936–1939).[28] She also worked for an ambulance unit in London during the Blitz, reluctantly returning to Australia in 1945 after an absence of 11 years because her mother had become ill.[29] Aileen Palmer's papers at the National Library of Australia contain several boxes of manuscripts, and drafts of novels based on her experiences in Spain and London which she hoped to get published. In fact, her only published work was a collection of poems titled *World Without Strangers?* (1964).[30]

Anyone seeking to make use of this archive must contend with the radical uncertainty engendered by Palmer's routine transgression of the boundaries between literary genres. Whether this was the result of traumatic wartime experiences or the effect of psychiatric institutionalisation is impossible to know. Nevertheless, the archive presents unique challenges for the scholar seeking to recover Palmer's life from the autobiographical fragments she left behind. One of the most disorienting characteristics of the archive is the difficulty in determining what type of document one is reading. Letters, for example, subsequently reveal themselves to be chapters or fragments of epistolary novels. The confusion arises out of Palmer's practice of interchanging characters' names and 'real' names in her diaries, letters

and fiction. This sense of uncertainty is exacerbated by her repetitive, even obsessive, concern with rewriting 'episodes' from her 'life' with infinitesimal changes to often minor details.

The difficulty of disentangling fact from fiction in Palmer's writing becomes particularly acute around issues of sexuality. It is possible to chart the encrypted traces of a lesbian relationship on scraps of paper titled 'Notes for a Novel', written in the first person and recounting details of Palmer's life in London. But, can we assume that this is an autobiographical account? If so, where does the story of Palmer's wartime lover Harry, who appears throughout 'Pilgrim's Way' (the main body of 'autobiographical' writing in this archive), fit into this picture? Can one read Palmer's diaries as being closer to the truth than the numerous fictional representations of her life that comprise 'Pilgrim's Way'? How does one choose a single narrative of a life when the archive presents multiple versions? The sense of uncertainty that infuses Palmer's writing highlights the limitations of conventional approaches to autobiography and biography, and to the question of what constitutes 'self-representational writing'.[31] As Martha Nell Smith notes of Emily Dickinson, she 'produced works that call all our modes of textual regulation into question and remind us, as do the tenets of contemporary literary theory, that a control which proposes to fix and finish literary or biographical texts ... is in fact illusory'.[32]

Into the archive

If, in the cases of Barnard, Harford and Palmer, we go against the more familiar practice of suppressing meta-archival narratives and instead reveal our pathways through these collections of papers, it is with a view to showing the benefits of keeping in play precisely those elements of uncertainty and contingency inherent in the primary documents with which we work.

This mode of researching and writing offers us ways to open up contemplation of the fragmentary nature of the biographical subject, as well as the fragmentary nature of our sources. It also compels us to continue to interrogate the complicated relationships between historical subjects, the incomplete traces they leave behind and those of us who follow on, chasing, sifting and weighing those traces.

With these considerations in mind, any contemporary discussion of archival research must begin by acknowledging the epistemological pressure placed upon the concept of 'the archive' in recent years. This pressure has marked a turn away from the positivist understanding of archival repositories as being mere storehouses of records, toward considering the status of the archive as a significant element in our investigations.[33] Ann Laura Stoler characterises this shift as the 'move from archive-as-source to archive-as-subject'.[34] It has brought to the fore a recognition that, beyond being a receptacle for 'the stuff of history', the archive has its own history, shaped as much by specific cultural and political pressures as by accident and serendipity. This, in turn, dictates what (and who) we find there and how we might configure the relationships between evidence and history and between power and knowledge, factors that critically determine both the histories we can and do write, and those we cannot and do not.

Deborah Cherry captures the dilemma when she argues forcibly that 'what is recorded, preserved, or printed depends on the interest, politics and prejudices of those who control and determine what is of historical value'.[35] And only what is preserved can be accessed. For these reasons, scholars have had to acknowledge that the records we encounter in various archives cannot be read as offering clear-cut 'verification' of 'what really happened', as though the 'truth lay buried in the archives, a sleeping princess awaiting [our] awakening kiss'.[36] Instead, the very processes of preserving (or destroying), gathering, selecting and ordering archival records represent mediating acts: acts that shape the archive as we find it and inevitably transform the possible meanings of those artefacts and the historical narratives they might sponsor. Jane Taylor encapsulates this point when she questions whether an archive can be understood any longer as simply a place for storing sets of materials or whether it needs to be recognised as 'an idea, a conception of what is valuable and how such value should be transmitted across time'. Her conclusion – that the archive is 'at once a system of objects, a system of knowledge and a system of exclusion'[37] – points to the profoundly constructed and deeply political nature of the archive, challenging many hitherto basic assumptions about 'archival fixity and materiality'.[38] Feminist critics, such as Cherry, have done much to highlight the gendered dimensions of the dominant archival record by pointing to the ways in which it has been

built upon and reinforced the systematic exclusion or marginalisation of certain historical subjects, as well as by arguing for critical approaches that might both address these gaps and expose the politics that produced them. Griselda Pollock frames this specific intellectual project in the following powerful terms:

> The scattered and fragmented past of women, irregularly recorded in, or frankly erased from, the archives and largely ignored in each culture's desire to build its present and future upon a selectively created, male-biased history, is reinvented precisely because of the pain of its absenting. This missing support for contemporary feminine subjectivities and identities becomes politicized in the struggle to understand current structures of gender and sexual difference that are shaped by culture's active erasure of women from what it uses as its self-defining histories.[39]

In her critique of the status of archives and the practices of those who engage with them, Pollock makes the salient observation that archives exist in dynamic relationship not just to the past, but to the present and the future. Archival sources remain absolutely central to re-imagining women's relationships to national literary cultures and to the field of cultural production more generally. As Elizabeth A Meese notes:

> The discovery, publication, and analysis of women's archival material are a necessary beginning to the reassessment of women's place in the literary canon and of the canon itself. Specifically, women's archival materials can aid in clarifying the assumptions that underlie canonisation and devising new, more inclusive criteria; in discovering additional writers and works deserving of literary attention and repute; and in developing fuller contexts in which to understand women's lives and works.[40]

While literary history records an author's published contributions to literary culture, archival materials might also reveal the larger dynamics of the literary scene and the other equally significant roles through which women actively forged that culture. Often this entails according significance to more ephemeral, fugitive and dispersed sites of cultural production, such as journals, appointment diaries, committee minutes

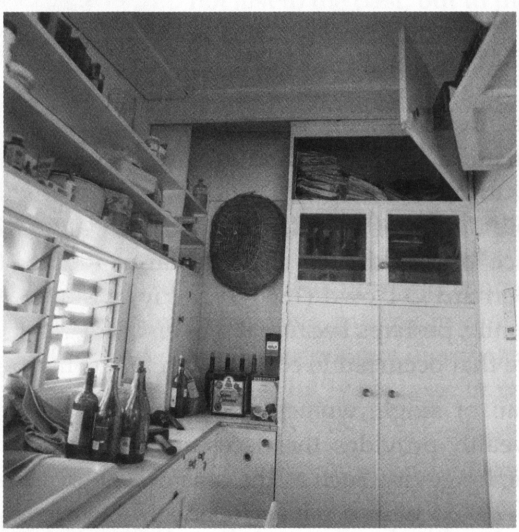
and lecture notes, thereby remaining sensitive to the idea that 'what passes for trivia and gossip in the masculine eye ... [can be] profoundly philosophical'.[41] Nettie Palmer's surviving papers in the National Library of Australia, for example, provide ample evidence that her extensive literary correspondence, and the vast network it created for writers, was at least as influential as her published work as a critic, editor and poet. Without access to the records of her correspondents, Palmer – who arguably now eclipses her once better-known and more celebrated novelist husband – would not be recognised for the great enabler of other people's work that she was. In preserving those papers, moreover, she was performing the work of privately archiving the national culture (or, at least, a Palmer household version of it) and of laying down and preserving the documentary heritage that a subsequent generation of scholars would turn to. The significance of such 'auto-archival' practices should not be overlooked.

The fact that Nettie Palmer's extensive literary archive survives and is readily accessible should not blind us to the fate that more frequently attends women's literary heritage. Women's papers are particularly vulnerable to destruction. This may be voluntary. Citing the cases of the American writers Djuna Barnes (1892–1982) and Eudora Welty (1909–2001), Elizabeth A Meese suggests that women writers 'have a tendency to destroy their unpublished papers and work, often viewing this material as private and irrelevant'.[42] But such destruction is more likely to be involuntary, particularly for women writers who tested the boundaries of middle-class, domesticated femininity. The correspondence of working-class poet Marie EJ Pitt (1869–1948) to fellow poet Bernard O'Dowd (1866–1953), for instance, was burnt by some of his family, perhaps because it was emblematic of O'Dowd's life with Pitt, a life that occurred in competition to his marriage.

The paper trail of single women without offspring is often at risk. Sometimes wealth provides the necessary boost to social status to ensure historic longevity, such as the case of American heiress Natalie Barney (1876–1972), whose papers reside in an exclusive rare-book library within the Sorbonne. The papers of unmarried women may also have been kept because a father, brother or other male connection was deemed historically important.[43] This is the case with the Palmer

papers, where daughter Aileen's literary remains have found their way into the archive, not because of her identity as a writer but because of her position as the daughter of more distinguished ones. Interestingly, it was Aileen and her sister Helen who performed the roles of 'keepers of the flame', sorting and organising their parents' papers for dispatch to the National Library. Dorothy Hewett recalled first visiting Nettie at home after Vance's death and discovering that Helen 'was upstairs packing up the family archives to be sent to the National Library'. Hewett returned to the house again after Nettie's death and decades later compiled a quite startling account of that second visit:

> It was dark, dismal and cold. Aileen lit a fire in the grate and talking savagely to herself began sorting through two filing cabinets filled with papers. Every now and again she consigned a bundle of letters to the fire.' Lies, all bloody lies', she muttered. I realized these must be the papers Helen had been sorting on my last visit. It was Australian literary history that Aileen was burning.[44]



Scholars have noted the vulnerability of women's documentary heritage. Louis Seselja (b. 1948), The laundry and cupboard where Dymphna Clark stored her research papers, Manning Clark House, Canberra, 2001. Pictures Collection, National Library of Australia, nla.pic-an23161853

In contrast to this vision of reckless destruction, Aileen's letters to her sister reveal that she was a conscientious caretaker, anxious to preserve the papers but also mindful of the feelings of the people connected to them. While the bulk of their parents' papers went to the National Library in February 1965, in June of the same year Aileen asked her sister for:

> a final opinion about the letters of Marjorie Barnard and the papers of Hugh McCrae, because these were not sent to Canberra with the other papers, on account of thoughts at the back of your mind ...[45]

Further correspondence between the sisters indicates the matter lay unresolved for several more months, although Barnard's letters did eventually find their way to the National Library, where they now provide the most profound insights we have into both her professional and her personal life. While we do not know what 'thoughts' had made Helen Palmer hesitate, we do know for certain that early on in her career Barnard had expressed considerable alarm at the news that Nettie was 'stockpiling' her letters, something she suggested at the time was 'enough to scuttle [her] as a correspondent'.[46] That she subsequently became more relaxed about such matters is clear from her keenness in later years to advertise 'the Barnard–Palmer correspondence ... public property & being used'.[47] Indeed, she embraced the possibilities such a paper trail might hold for securing her place in the literary establishment, at a time when her writing career was all but over.

Whereas Aileen Palmer's papers are accorded value through her family connections, Nettie herself ensured the survival and circulation of writing by her female friends, including Lesbia Harford. Similarly, Miles Franklin ensured the survival of papers by her friend poet Mary Fullerton. Second-wave feminism has ensured that women's literary heritage is not as neglected as it once was, although for many early Australian women writers, the interest in their papers has come too late and the paper trail has already gone cold. It is also worth considering how genre may influence archival acquisition and preservation. Nettie and Vance Palmer placed the social realist novel centrally in their vision of Australian national culture, and this bias

continued throughout the second half of the twentieth century. Women working in 'minor' genres, such as the short story, poetry, the essay, the letter and the autobiography, remain marginalised. Certainly, the reputations of Harford, Barnard, Nettie and Aileen Palmer are still not as strong as those of their male contemporaries or, arguably, their novelist contemporaries, such as Henry Handel Richardson, Eleanor Dark, Christina Stead and Miles Franklin.

Feminist scholars of the 1980s tended to undertake 'search-and-recover' rescue missions in order to install past women writers in the archival record. Today, feminist scholars find it increasingly necessary to go 'backstage' in order to examine how individual archives are constructed, manipulated, policed and experienced by those who oversee them and who use them.[48] As the example of the Palmer papers suggests, one critical issue for researchers is how specific archival collections have come into being, and the struggles that have attended their passage from the private to the public realm. That such passages can reveal themselves as sites of tension only reinforces the idea that all archives are, in the words of Michael Lynch, 'as much products of historical struggle as they are primary sources for writing histories'.[49] While the full picture of an archive's history and formation may be difficult to establish in every instance, the role of such processes in shaping our access and interpretations is a live issue.

One of the most sustained and entertaining accounts of the shaping of individual archives is provided in Ian Hamilton's book *Keepers of the Flame: Literary Estates and the Rise of Biography* (1992). Beginning with John Donne and working across the centuries to Sylvia Plath and Philip Larkin, Hamilton examines how the literary archives that we can now view for each of those authors have been directly and indirectly shaped by the actions of the authors themselves and by their heirs, executors and others through whose hands their surviving papers have passed. Hamilton cites examples of helpful winnowing, judicious tidying up and outright censorship of papers - actions usually undertaken in the interests of producing, preserving or enhancing for posterity, an impression of a celebrated literary figure. In one case, Hamilton recounts the flaming destruction of a Victorian author's literary remains, noting how members of the executor's

family stood about cheerfully 'roasting chestnuts in the ashes of the great'.[50] While Hamilton is chiefly concerned with the ways in which the writing of literary biography is bedevilled by the opposing impulses of 'keepers of the flame' to conceal and disclose, his work is significant for highlighting the basic requirement for researchers to be sensitive to the range of possible interventions that have shaped the documentary records of a subject's life.

Indeed, there are multiple ways in which an archive can be shaped before the scholar even enters the picture. Firstly, it is shaped by the original donor (who may or may not be the creator), who choses what to lodge with a particular institution and, conversely, what to withhold. That is, donors exercise the prerogative of property. We can think here of Ted Hughes's controversial destruction of Sylvia Plath's later diaries, and Austin Dickinson's crude attempts to excise from letters Emily Dickinson's passionate expressions of love for her sister-in-law, Susan Huntington Gilbert Dickinson.[51] This means remaining cognisant of the fact that there are usually omissions in any collection that might be just as significant as the surviving material. In Hamilton's terms, we must ask 'what is preserved, by whom and for whom?'[52]

Secondly, it is not unusual for libraries and archives to seek out and purchase material associated with subjects deemed culturally or historically significant. In the process, archivists may also undertake 'precustodial interventions'[53] designed to understand (and perhaps influence) the working habits and recordkeeping practices of potential donors. Thirdly, the very act of acquisition informs the nature and meaning of the papers acquired: not only does the material 'take on the role of being representative and exemplary of something outside that collection' (a person, a literary movement, and so), but the material also gains the 'status of being worthy of collecting' and 'enters into relationships' with other items inside that institution.[54]

Through the actions of archivists who acquire, catalogue and describe the material, the papers then become a formal 'collection'.[55] The collection might be subject to restrictions, such as limiting reader access to all or parts of a collection, again implicitly shaping our perceptions of it. The later donation of additional material, and any

reordering of the existing holdings that then occurs to accommodate it, will have the same effect. Finally, as Kate Eichhorn reminds us, 'objects and documents can and do disappear, even in the archives'.[56] The sheer fragility of particular items or unfortunate occasions of incorrect shelving[57] can place items within an individual collection beyond the reach of the most eager and persistent reader. Each of these represents instances of how, in Derrida's terms, 'the technical structure of the *archiving* archive also determines the structure of the *archivable* content even in its very coming into existence and in its relationship to the future'.[58]

It is only after a fond has been created through these processes that the researcher enters the reading room and begins to read: sifting, transcribing, interpreting and analysing – in other words, shaping the archive in our own image and according to our own research priorities. But that shaping is also potentially productive, if not revelatory, for it is the professional researcher, together with the archivist and the librarian, who 'create the maps and record the journeys into the archive that produce the images we have of the possibilities of the material'.[59]

Louis Seselja (b. 1948), The stacks at Hume Warehouse,
annex of the National Library of Australia, Canberra, 2005.
Pictures Collection, National Library of Australia, nla.int-nl39436-ls46

Journeys through private papers

In reflecting upon our own research journeys, we consider how scholars might account for the pleasures and frustrations of their own chase as they hunt down the passionate pursuits of others, and how the insights gained through these searches have the potential to shift the ways in which we understand particular women writers and their lives and work. For many researchers, archival study involves both literal and metaphorical forms of journeying. One of the most intriguing accounts of these twin excursions is provided in Ted Bishop's *Riding with Rilke: Reflections on Motorcycles and Books* (2005), in which he tells of riding his Ducati several thousand miles from Edmonton, Canada, to the literary archives held by the Harry Ransom Center in Austin, Texas – a narrative that shifts constantly between the obsessions of the riding life and those of the writing life.

Bishop feels vindicated in his dual preoccupations when he reads that Virginia Woolf had once planned to learn to ride a motorcycle ('Mrs Dalloway would certainly be different if the character had gone to get flowers on a Royal Enfield').[60] He invites us to join him as he travels to a place where he is not so much concerned with the essentials of scholarship but with the idiosyncrasies of the scholar who has learnt to love the myriad pathways – some direct and some random – by which we reach our insights. Despite years of dedicated research conducted according to the appropriate scholarly rules and conventions, he nevertheless is willing to admit that 'the real discoveries seem to come from nowhere, to be handed to you, after days or weeks in which (it appears in retrospect) the insight has been perversely denied, as if there were not just curators but some other power controlling the archives.'[61]

Then there is the story of historian George Rudé, who travelled from Adelaide to a municipal archive in France where, in recognition of the distance he had come and the need to make the most of his research time, the clerk in charge happily locked Rudé inside the archive at closing time when he himself departed. Armed with a baguette and a small carafe, Rudé would work until he 'could decipher no more', at which point he 'would climb out through a fanlight'.[62]

Canadian historian Ruth Roach Pierson has recently offered an insightful account of archival research as a form of 'refuge, penance, and revenge'.[63] Still burning from the injustice of the sexual double standard that ended her marriage, she writes of how she holed up in the Public Archives (now the National Archives) in Ottawa to examine discriminatory treatment of women in Canada's armed services during World War II. While she experienced the long hours working there as 'a set of severely self-punishing practices', her pain was leavened by the pleasure of recognising the unfolding parallels between her own experiences of sexual inequities and those of the women whose lives she was researching. Her final revenge took the form of a history of those women. 'Although probably no one else at the time drew the connection between my personal drama and my published research,' she confesses, 'it gave me great satisfaction to have these views appear in print'.[64]

The examples of Bishop, Rudé and Pierson suggest that if this form of research involves journeying, it is not just any kind of journey but one that is driven and shaped by powerful investments. As Alice Yaeger Kaplan comments, 'only the most extreme emotions can drive people to the drudgery, to the discomfort, of sitting and sifting through dog-eared documents, manuscripts, microfilms'.[65] However, the pleasures of archival research usually outweigh the 'drudgery'. If not, the dream of discovering a cache of letters revealing details of a secret love affair or shedding light on a subject's important relationships is enough to keep even the most disheartened researcher sifting through what Carolyn Steedman so aptly calls 'the great, brown, slow-moving strandless river of Everything'.[66] It is this gripping delusion, that everything will finally be revealed, that characterises *le mal d'archive* ('archive fever').[67] As Derrida observes: 'It is to burn with a passion. It is never to rest, interminably, from searching for the archive right where it slips away. It is to run after the archive, even if there's too much of it.'[68] The passions excited by archival research are almost exclusively private experiences, seldom permitted to show themselves outside the four walls of the reading room. In Kaplan's words, 'the archive runs on a passion that is anything but public and which is rarely talked about'.[69]

However disturbing, exciting or, indeed, 'possessed' our archival exploits have been, as researchers we are almost inevitably trained to suppress these elements in the published accounts of our findings. Conventional scholarly protocols dictate that we discuss what we have found, but rarely the paths by which we found it. To do otherwise, Kaplan maintains, could have two damaging implications: first, to reveal the extent to which success in the archives is bound up with luck, accident and coincidence, which, in turn, might undermine the credibility of the findings; and, second, it would draw attention away from the contents of the archive in favour of the researcher, whose proper role, Kaplan insists, is 'to disappear behind the glory of her material'. 'The passion of the archives,' she says, 'must finally be used to eradicate all personal stories in the interests of the dry archival report, fit for a public'.[70]

Kaplan's injunction to the researcher 'to disappear' in this way suggests there is a distinction to be neatly drawn between the process and the product of archival research –we, however, seek to work from a different premise. We prefer the view that meaning and significance are not necessarily inherent in the archival artefact. As with any form of text, meaning does not simply flow from these documents, it is actively produced through engaged reading, which is always provisional inasmuch as it remains open to challenge and contestation. We work here in the knowledge that the fevered search and the passionate searcher play substantial, if not determining, roles in producing meanings for and attributing significance to the archival artefact. So, rather than view meaning as singular, fixed and fully present within the documents we peruse, we embrace the sometimes unsettling idea that 'different meanings are created by different readers who bring diverse reference systems with them'.[71]

There are two critical elements here: the first is the radical instability of meaning attached to the archival artefact; the second, albeit related, is the question of futurity in our archival logics. It is here that we can recognise how our encounters with archives are inevitably animated by a struggle over meaning and by the never innocent reading practices we bring to bear on an archive in its totality, on the individual artefact found therein and on the relationship between the two. These qualities are captured most insistently by Derrida's assertion that 'if we want to know what [the archive] will have meant, we will only know in times to come'.[72]

Derrida punctures many of the more familiar understandings of what an archive is and how it operates. While we remain attached to the idea of the classical archive as a fixed set of documents offering original evidence associated with an historical event or figure, Derrida makes us realise that the archive is more than the physical documents it contains and that the processes of meaning-making associated with it are complex and unstable. In short, he concludes that the materials we encounter are far from inert and that they do not simply 'speak for themselves'.

In many senses, there is no single archive. Readers will construct their own 'archive' from the documents they variously choose to highlight, ignore or pass over, and, in this way, we are all implicated in the infinite unfolding quality of the archive. This scholarly shaping occurs not only in a conscious decision to exclude highly sensitive material or to ignore material that challenges a scholar's argument or reflects badly (in his or her estimation) on the subject – it occurs equally in the routine establishment of research priorities, questions and interpretative practices. In this way, archival research 'brings texts and readers together in a unique and (re)creative relationship'.[73] We now turn to considering this relationship.

Reading the intimate archive

The impetus to go 'digging' in the archives might begin with a desire to recover the voices of women whose stories have been lost or written out of mainstream cultural narratives; or to re-evaluate those counter-narratives of reclamation for the elisions or oversights they have willingly or unwittingly inscribed in the retelling of particular life stories. However, historian Penny Russell makes the point:

> despite the differing intellectual and imaginative demands of their work, biographers, historians and writers of fiction based on 'real' historical characters all occasionally share the experience of being in the archives reading letters, diaries and other personal material, seeking the contours of a life, the constructions of self, the moments of dramatic or intense emotion. And in the act of reading, can enter fleetingly into relationships of affect and empathy with those long-dead chroniclers of sorrow and joy.[74]

Such experiences raise the place of 'empathy and affect' in recuperative and historical practices. While we may wish to stabilise the past, Lee Ronald notes that 'we are never fully in control of what we read and how we interpret what we read'.[75] As Russell suggests, the scholar may experience a range of conflicting emotions in the course of archival research. Finding a lock of a subject's hair interleaved in correspondence might produce an unexpected emotional response, as historian Jill Lepore reflects:

> but holding it in the palm of my hand made me feel an eerie intimacy with Noah himself. And, against all logic, it made me feel as though I knew him – and, even less logically, liked him – just a bit better.[76]

The researcher may experience strong feelings of dislike, or dis-identification with the subject. Or, the researcher may feel disconcerted and unsure how to quantify the response to reading (and thus witnessing) the archival traces of trauma. Feelings toward our subject may change as our journey progresses. The subject we may have initially visualised and grown attached to might dissolve upon reading a particular series of letters that reveal a mean-spirited, more egotistical, or simply less appealing version of the subject. In such cases, archival engagement becomes melancholic rather than pleasurable. Realising the extent to which Lesbia Harford relied on a single repeated narrative and a number of stock metaphors meant a double-take in terms of assessing the extent of her originality but also a re-evaluation of terms such as 'originality' and 'genius'. The emotional effect of her writing changes, not necessarily for the worse.

Alternatively, a subject disliked initially, may prove surprising. While it might once have been inconceivable to regard as a kindred spirit a writer such as Mary Gilmore (1865–1962), for instance, a greater immersion in her archived papers could lead to new feelings of respect, even potentially to an appreciation of the sly archness that sometimes pervades her letters. As Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick contends, once this is apprehended, the questions shift from 'how "one" *should* read, ... how people *should feel*, to the much harder ones of how they do and of how feelings change'.[77]

Placing greater focus on the processes of reading and meaning-making in our 'intimate' archival research involves posing questions about who we are and how we operate as readers of the most intimate records of the loves and lives of others. As Sedgwick argues:

> After all, to identify as must always include multiple processes of identification *with*. It also involves identification *as against*; but even did it not, the relations implicit in *identifying with* are, as psychoanalysis suggests, in themselves quite sufficiently fraught with intensities of incorporation, diminishment, inflation, threat, loss, reparation, and disavowal.[78]

Although it is often possible to discern traces of the affective dimension of archival research in even the most 'objective' scholarship, open discussion of such issues is usually relegated to the margins, appearing in footnotes, or as a subtext. These techniques, Catherine Waldby reminds us, are used to maintain the fiction of the 'disembodied scholar':

> One of the effects engendered by the device of the disembodied author is the understanding of academic texts as purely rational, conscious creations with a transparent relationship to the objects they describe ... The interpretative practice which accompanies this understanding of text production reads texts as though they were transparent windows through which to see reality, and which pays no attention to the subjectivity of the author or the language he may use.[79]

However, the 'relationships of affect and empathy' that Russell describes clearly raise questions about the role of the scholar in constructing meaning from textual traces, and about the place of emotion in scholarly research. While the relationship of an author to his or her text and the reader's role in the interpretative process are subjects that have been extensively debated in literary and cultural studies for over half a century,[80] the task of theorising their application to specifically historical modes of thinking and practice has only been undertaken recently.[81] What is it that distinguishes the experience of '*being* in the archives' from other types of research?

Surveying the recent upsurge of books on the archive, one is struck by the extent to which the 'experience' of archival research – the act of reading fonds or the archive as a generalised concept incorporating all of these aspects – is characterised as a transcendent encounter with the past.[82] Dominick LaCapra argues that claims to transformative archival experiences testify to the ways in which the archive itself has been made into a fetish, becoming 'more than the repository of the traces of the past', rather it has been required to 'stand-in for the past ... bring[ing] the mystified experience of the thing itself – an experience that is always open to question when one deals with writing or other inscriptions'.[83]

For LaCapra, this 'experience' is the 'transferential relation' produced between scholars and their 'objects of study' (and implicitly between the past and the present), which must be negotiated in the course of (all) scholarly research:

> Transference implies that the considerations at issue in the object of study are always repeated with variations – or find their displaced analogues – in one's account of it, and transference is as much denied by an assertion of total difference of the past as by its total identification with one's own 'self' or 'culture'.[84]

According to LaCapra, the challenge 'is to develop an exchange with the "other" that is both sensitive to transferential displacement and open to the challenge of the other's "voice"'.[85] We have sought to engage with, in different ways, the problems raised by the scholar's position as the author of a 'discourse on the other'.[86] Biography is the most salient example of such discourse, and it is also the scholarly arena where the fraught relations between an author and the subject has been most extensively theorised.

The narrator of Martha Cooley's novel *The Archivist* reflects on how his training 'had taught [him] to privilege the reader's curiosity over all other considerations'. Suffering a crisis of conscience, he wonders why 'the writer's hunger for privacy [is] always less compelling than the reader's appetite – voracious, insatiable – for more words?'[87] His ruminations raise questions about what can or should remain 'private' in a public archive and what separates legitimate scholarly intent from plain old voyeurism.

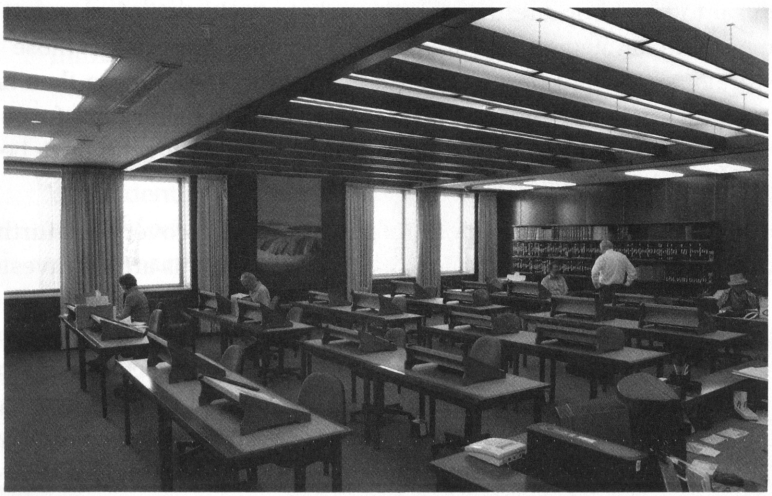
In the normal course of events, we do not regard kindly those who read other people's mail and poke around in their private papers. Yet, scholars confronting intimate archives appear licensed to do just that – to operate in the guise of both spy and gossip, as they peruse and report on the details of private lives made public by virtue of their preservation within an archive. A sense of the delicacy of these operations has in all likelihood been blunted by the fact that we live in the age of disclosure, an age characterised by the public's right to know. When Ted Hughes asserts defensively that he hopes 'each of us owns the facts of her or his own life',[88] it is not certain that we are in full agreement.

Over the years, one's sense of another's privacy has been systematically eroded. Henry James longed for the time when it might 'cease to be a leading feature of our homage to a distinguished man that we ... sacrifice him on the altar of our curiosity'.[89] But even as James expressed those sentiments, he was reluctantly witnessing in his own time a major shift in the nature of biography, from its staid Victorian manifestations to a frightening new tradition of truth-telling that revelled in private lusts, dirty linen and indiscreet letters. As we know, James's own response to this shift was to go 'a-burning' and 'a-scissoring' among his personal papers, happily intending, he declared, to 'frustrate as utterly as possible the post-mortem exploiter'.[90]

Even those more attuned to the rigours of celebrity can have their moments of doubt. For example, Mercedes de Acosta, one-time lover of both Marlene Dietrich and Greta Garbo, was happy enough to place her most intimate correspondence from them in a public museum ('I would not have had the courage to have burned these letters'). Nevertheless, she found herself fretting over how to ensure that the deposited papers would be 'respected and protected from the eyes of vulgar people'.[91]

This begs the question of how the distinction between respectable scholarly passions and the merely prurient or 'vulgar' is maintained. Much depends on the appropriate 'credentialling' of the scholarly reader – the systems of privilege that libraries and archives routinely use to address questions of access and prohibition. Those who seek to access these institutions must inevitably demonstrate that they have the requisite qualifications and a suitable research purpose. Further obstacles in the form of collection or item-specific restrictions may

produce additional hierarchies of readership. In particular, if one's inquiry is bound up with the realm of sexuality, the suitability or seriousness of one's research may well require additional justification or provoke particular forms of gatekeeping.



Louis Seselja (b. 1948), The Manuscripts Reading Room of the National Library of Australia, Canberra, 2005.
Pictures Collection, National Library of Australia, nla.int-nl39436-ls14

While this issue might present itself in different ways for scholars researching other topics, it is a particular risk that those working on the subjects of intimacy and sexuality take when trying to locate material. If we are too forthcoming about our research, we may find our access blocked for various reasons (including homophobia), but if we are not able to ask direct questions of archivists and librarians, we may never learn about relevant material in disparate collections. Durba Ghosh, for example, writes of the repeated difficulties she encountered in her efforts to research miscegenation, in the context of the intimate domestic lives of the British in colonial India, and of being warned by 'officials' that her topic was 'unsavory' and 'unsuitable'; in short, not the stuff of 'proper history' that a 'nice girl' like herself should be delving into. Such gatekeepers, she concludes, were attempting to 'discipline [her] into writing a history which resonated for them'.[92]

However, as Alison Moore observes, such hurdles are 'only partially about limiting access'; they are also about the very construction of meaning and value for such cultural artefacts.[93] One thinks here of gay and lesbian scholarship over the last 30 years, which has uncovered extensive evidence of what historian Martha Vicinus has termed a 'refusal to know' or a refusal to acknowledge evidence of noteworthy same-sex relationships in archival collections, especially those of culturally significant figures.[94] Perhaps for this reason, more than any other, much scholarly energy in the field of lesbian history has focused on the recovery and recuperation of historical subjects who have been 'hidden from history'.[95]

Yet, as the aims and investments of the project of recovery are further scrutinised, it has become clear that scholarship in this area is invested in promoting particular ways of reading archives that are focused on sexuality and 'proving' sexual identity, often to the exclusion of other considerations. The desire to be able to see oneself reflected in history is very powerful for those who have been excluded from its embrace. However, as in the cases of Lesbia Harford and Aileen Palmer, narratives of feminist and lesbian reclamation have often unwittingly obscured alternative readings of their respective archival embodiments. In these examples, it is possible to see the ways in which changing cultural attitudes play a part in determining the kinds of subjects we 'find' in the archive.

In letters, scraps of notes or a diary entry, we are offered some of the most fragmented and ephemeral textual traces of a life and the intimate connections that structured it. But while we sometimes conflate the private and the confessional, there is no guarantee that what we will find preserved within someone's personal papers will necessarily offer clarity of insight or confirmation of intent. Indeed, the notion that coherent and legible revelations of feelings will inevitably emerge from sifting through the archival remains of intimate attachments is questionable, not least because more telling documents have often failed to survive. This is precisely because, in the words of Daphne Du Maurier, 'few people really want to be frank about themselves, or their ex-lovers ... This is where one is bound to have a lot of glossing over'.[96] So, it is likely that our subjects have edited the record or were prone, in any event, to practise

certain forms of subterfuge – conscious or unconscious – in what they committed to paper (and in what they chose to keep). We must contend with ellipsis, code and impenetrable innuendo in a context where, unlike the original recipients, as readers we lack the shared context that would guarantee comprehension of so many details in the documents we examine. Elizabeth Susan Wahl notes:

> Intimacy evokes closeness, familiarity, and kinship, but the kinds of associations it encompasses can range from the familial or confidential to the erotic or sexually licit. Intimacy reveals what is most cherished and essential to one's identity as an individual, but it is usually marked by a sense of privacy, even secrecy, that transforms the language of intimacy into a kind of code not easily penetrable or comprehensible to those outside its boundaries.[97]

This means that we have to learn to live with ambiguity, with the details we cannot pin down and even with downright error. These factors inevitably colour our work in a field where the distance between the original producer of a document and the scholarly reader grows daily, tempting us further and further into speculation and inference. But, just as the intimate must not be confused with the confessional, it must also be distinguished from the explicit. While remarkably unguarded outpourings exist (such as Marjorie Barnard's declaration to Jean Devanny that her lover 'liked my body very much'[98]), it is important to remain alert to the ways in which documents convey desire, emotion or attachment in other more muted ways. This is sometimes hard to countenance, as we are accustomed to finding significance within letters. As Mireille Bossis observes:

> The words of a letter have a real weight (*poids de réel*) different from that of the words in any other kind of writing. For writer and recipient the letter is above all an extension of daily life ... It is this real weight which leads love letters to be treated as sacred objects, even fetishes.[99]

However, where there are no clear and unambiguous statements of longing contained in any single letter within an extended correspondence, is it not possible to discern in the sheer volume of a set of letters an expression of one person's overwhelming desire

for continuous contact with another? And what can we make of someone's careful hoarding of the myriad random scraps and traces of the object of their desire?

The critic Nelljean McConeghey Rice contends that poet Anna Wickham's passion for American expatriate writer Natalie Barney was not reciprocated, an assumption based on the fact that Barney's executor found Wickham's correspondence and poetry to Barney in a shoebox, labelled 'Anna Wickham', in 'the back of a disused cupboard'.[100] Does it matter if the letters and poems were in a shoebox? Does it matter that the shoebox was kept or, even further, that it was labelled? How and when was the cupboard used? Such examples raise questions about how we read and make sense of gestures that reveal intimacy in other - extra-textual - ways.

Even beyond the impulse to edit records of telling detail, beyond the obscurities wrought by time and distance and the muted possibilities of other documents, there is a further phenomenon that goes to the heart of our efforts to trace records of intimate attachments. Any engagement with this particular realm - what Ann Cvetkovich has termed 'the archive of feelings' - is troubled by the 'invisibility that often surrounds intimate life, especially sexuality'. This, Cvetkovich suggests, results directly from the fact that, by nature, 'sex and feelings are too personal or too ephemeral to leave records'.[101] We should be cautious, then, about assuming that there is - or ever was - a tidy paper trail for us to pursue in every instance.

Touching the past

Once we have identified a collection and gained access to it, what considerations then govern our journeys among private papers? Firstly, we need to remain sensitive to the fact that just because particular documents survive does not mean that their preservation and public scrutiny necessarily coincide with the desires or aspirations of the individual whose papers they happen to be. After all, in addition to the materials that have been carefully lodged by design, archives are also filled with 'mad fragmentations that no one intended to preserve and that just ended up there'.[102] So, it is likely that parts of the intimate record we examine were never

intended for our eyes. It is left to archivists to weigh the ethical dimensions of granting researchers access in the face of possible violations of privacy, especially where living people or the recently deceased are involved.[103]

What kind of reading experience does this produce? Take the personal letter, for example. Critics have commented on the paradoxical pleasure of the original letter reader – paradoxical because the pleasure is predicated upon the absence of the loved one who writes.[104] But what of the pleasure of the researcher who forms the dubious and generally unanticipated third corner of a triangle of writer, recipient and interloper? To peruse letters and manuscripts, which at the time of writing were never intended to circulate publicly, is to experience the voyeuristic sense of looking over the shoulders of writers at work (and at play). It can also result in a new-found sense of 'proximity to the act of creation', something that has long 'lent the manuscript page its rarity and value in market terms'.[105] Often there is a slight frisson attached to such reading experiences, but they may also produce more complicated reactions. Witness the palpable sense of dismay and intrusion Ted Bishop experienced when confronted with the single handwritten page that was Virginia Woolf's suicide note:

> I felt a physical shock. I was holding Virginia Woolf's suicide note. I lost any bodily sense, felt I was spinning into a vortex, a connection that collapsed the intervening decades. This note wasn't a record of an event – this was the event itself. This writing. And it was not for me. I had walked in on something unbearably personal.[106]

The rawness of Bishop's reaction is not connected solely to the intimacy of the expressed sentiments but more particularly to the material nature of the encounter. As he admits, he was viewing a letter that he had read in print 'dozens of times before', but sliding the original sheet of paper from its manila envelope provoked a profoundly different reaction – a sense of violation. This reminds us of how encounters between the scholar and the archive are embodied ones, where it is not only the intellectual but also the physical and emotional dimensions that endow the experience with its unique texture.

The episode of the suicide note further testifies to the unacknowledged power and attraction of paper. Whatever the advertised virtues (not least of which is the protection of fragile documents from damage due to over-handling), it is a rare individual who will avow a preference for microfilmed or digitised documents when paper beckons. We are reluctant to forego the particular intimacies and pleasures associated with losing ourselves in paper for, whether we admit it or not, paper is what we have come for when we broach the reading room: it is our fetish, the object that promises intimate connection to our subject and that stands in for what cannot be retrieved.[107] We can contemplate our subject's choice of stationery and contend with the full drama of their handwriting - the characteristically neat copperplate, the distinctive hurried scrawl, the tiny illegible scribble. (Indeed, as with all intimates, the instant recognition of our subject's handwriting operates as an index of 'our' familiarity.) We can weigh the subtle distinctions between writing and typing, and we can marvel at the minute size of pocket diaries. We turn individual sheets over so as to inspect the underside of documents and hold them up to the light to view joins and watermarks - or do we do it just because we can?

We are free, moreover, in sifting the physical documents to ponder the scratched-out word and the hastily added postscript, together with the fading ink, the creases from the original folds and perhaps certain additional elements accumulated over time: foxing of the paper, lacy silverfish damage, stains and inscrutable after-the-fact annotations written by unknown hands. These are the possibilities that fuel our reading-room romances with the physical object - and they are the same ones that sponsor impulses to steal away something highly desirable that we have found there.[108] It is uncommon for a scholar to tire of paper and to admit, as Leon Edel does in the face of voluminous piles of correspondence, to being 'bored by so much epistolary effort'.[109]

Given this obsessive involvement with paper, it is ironic how seldom we comment on the physical properties of the documents we covet so intently. It is as though the words exist independently of their material underpinnings, the original lure of which has faded away.[110] There is a case to be made, however, that in approaching archived documents in this way we lose sight of their status as material culture and,

consequently, fail to extend our reading habits to encompass the realm of material literacy. Hugh Taylor suggests that one reason for this is the overwhelming tendency for literacy to 'objectify' and 'detach' us from what we read, with the result that 'information becomes almost rootless, floating away from the artefact in which it was anchored'.[111] Thus, we focus intently on the words on the page but forget that the page holds its own meaning, however transparent it might have become.[112] And yet we know that some writers have been thoroughly alive to the materiality of the writing process and invested heavily in it: they have carefully selected their personal stationery, notepads and writing equipment as a vital, almost talismanic, aspect of what they do. Claire Bustarret reminds us that individual writers – in the age before computers, at least – used different kinds of paper at different points in their careers or chose particular stationery items for specific tasks. 'A writer,' she suggests, 'is liable to develop meaningful habits as well as to react to incidental events (which may remain for the most part unknown to us), not only in choosing the paper, but in using the writing surface, as well as in folding, cutting or gluing it'.[113] In essence, the paper itself tells a story. Where, for example, an individual letter or card contains nothing more than the most banal inscription, the sheer volume of such missives or their careful preservation can testify in oblique ways to the significance of a relationship. As Mieke Bal observes, 'verbal texts are not the only objects capable of conveying narrative'.[114]

Along with the materiality of documents, we must also consider photographs and ephemera as examples of archival artefacts that 'tell' stories, convey narratives and shape how we think about our subjects. Ephemeral objects give the illusion of bringing us nearer to the writer or the writing experience. One of Henry Handel Richardson's typewriters featured centrally in an exhibition curated by two of us (Maryanne Dever and Ann Vickery) on Australian women's writing. The typewriter attracted a good deal of attention, as visitors felt Richardson's fingertips spectrally pounding away on its keys.[115] Yet, it also provided a greater understanding of Richardson's writing process, being at the time at the forefront of typewriter technology, thus demonstrating Richardson's extensive knowledge of her tools.

Other ephemera, such as a writer's library, bookmarks, advertising brochures, journals and newspaper clippings, help to illuminate contexts of production, dissemination and reception. While ephemera studies has only recently emerged as a field of scholarly endeavour, the complex interpretative issues raised by the photographic image have led to the development of a sophisticated body of theory concerned with explicating the tension that lies at the heart of such forms of representation. As Roland Barthes observes:

> A specific photograph, in effect, is never distinguished from its referent (from what it represents), or at least it is not *immediately* or *generally* distinguished from its referent ... It is as if the photograph always carries its referent with itself.[116]

Unknown photographer, Nettie Palmer on a Bicycle at Elsternwick, Victoria, 1902, sepia-toned photograph; 10.0 x 7.3 cm.
Pictures Collection, National Library of Australia, nla.pic-vn4239300

The faded snapshots, glossy studio portraits or passport-sized headshots interleaved in the pages of letters and diaries or pasted into scrapbooks often, quite literally, frame our subjects. Yet, we rarely discuss the powerful influences of these 'photographic subject-objects' on our interpretative processes.[117] We tend to see in 'the very moment of the photographic event, the abbreviation that telescopes history into a moment'.[118] In our view, the discovery of a photograph seems to provide 'proof' of the existence of a lesbian coterie at the University of Melbourne in the 1930s, thus corroborating an ambiguous fictionalised diary account. But what does it 'prove'? Why is a photograph a more reliable witness to historical presence than a diary record?

These 'little fetishes' – as Carol Mavor so aptly describes photographs – allow us to indulge in the fantasy that we can see through these miniature portals into another time and place and that, in doing so, we are able to 'touch the past'.[119] Perhaps it is also the materiality of these artefacts that helps create the highly seductive but illusory effect of being closer to 'what actually happened'. However, we know that these artefacts do not present the past 'as it really was'. Rather, they bear the traces and carry the voices of the dead, whom we imagine speak to us.[120] As Joan Scott reminds us:

> Retrospective identifications, after all, are imagined repetitions *and* repetitions of imagined resemblances. The echo is a fantasy, the fantasy an echo; the two are inextricably intertwined.[121]

In our book *The intimate archive*, we reflect on our attachments to 'imagined resemblances' with Marjorie Barnard, Lesbia Harford and Aileen Palmer. In drawing attention to the scholar's role in 'making up people'[122] from their archival embodiments, we hope to shed light on what French historian Arlette Farge terms *le goût de l'archive* (the taste of the archive): 'to have a taste for archives is visibly to wander through the words of others, to seek a language which preserves their pertinence'.[123] And we hope also to convey something of our taste for the embodied experience of encountering the archive.

While it is true that new technologies for reproducing and circulating unique archival documents in electronic form mean that the concept of the archive is now 'loosening and exploding',[124] taking with it the

familiar distinctions between the private, enclosed space of the reading room and wider public access, our stories emerge from the particular intimacies that we have associated with entering the physical space of the archive. These include the necessity to travel in order to view certain collections, the experience of claiming the reading room as one's own familiar working environment, the calling up of boxes and the handling of the documents they contain. And if, as Antoinette Burton contends, 'desire ... is a crucial component of the archive experience',[125] then these stories map our seduction by memory, paper and the possibility of contact with something that feels like 'the past'.

Endnotes

[1] Whitney Chadwick, 'Historiography/Feminisms/Strategies', *N. Paradoxa*, no. 12, March 2000, available at <*http://web.ukonline.co.uk/n.paradoxa/panel2.htm*>, accessed 3 October 2007.

[2] A now commonplace phrase originating in the title of Jacques Derrida, *Archive Fever: A Freudian Impression*, translated by Eric Prenowitz, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1996.

[3] Wendy Brown, 'Introduction: Politics Out of History', in *Politics Out of History*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 2001, p. 3.

[4] Antoinette M Burton, *Dwelling in the Archive: Women Writing House, Home, and History in Late Colonial India*, New York, Oxford University Press, 2003, p. 138.

[5] Judith Schuyf, 'Hidden from History? Homosexuality and the Historical Sciences', in Theo Sandfort, Judith Schuyf, Jan Willem Duyvendak and Jeffrey Weeks (eds), *Lesbian and Gay Studies: An Introductory, Interdisciplinary Approach*, London, Sage Publications, 2000, p. 61.

[6] As historian Dominick LaCapra argues: 'When it is fetishized, the archive is more than the repository of the traces of the past which may be used in its inferential reconstruction. It is a stand-in for the past that brings the mystified experience of the thing itself - an experience that is always open to question when one deals with writing or other inscriptions'. Dominick LaCapra, 'Is Everyone a *Mentalité* Case? Transference and the "Culture" Concept', in *History and Criticism*, Ithaca, Cornell University Press, 1985, p. 92, fn. 17.

[7] Antoinette M Burton (ed.), *Archive Stories: Facts, Fictions, and the Writing of History*, Durham, Duke University Press, 2005, p. 3.

[8] Derrida, p. 17.

[9] Mike Featherstone, 'Archive', *Theory, Culture and Society*, vol. 23, nos 2 and 3, 2006, p. 595.

[10] As Antoinette M Burton comments, 'What *Wired* magazine has called "Googlemania" is thus at least practically akin to Derrida's archive fever, with everyone acting as his or her own *arkheion*.' Antionette M Burton, p. 4.

[11] Featherstone, p. 595.

[12] Penny Russell, 'Affecting Women: Or, on Weeping in Archives', paper presented at *International Federation for Research in Women's History* Conference, University of New South Wales, 8–9 July 2005.

[13] Lyn Hejinian, letter to Karen Kahn, 5 January 1994, Papers of L Hejinian, Mandeville Special Collections Library, Geisel Library, University of California, San Diego, MS 74/23/13.

[14] Griselda Pollock, *Differencing the Canon: Feminist Desire and the Writing of Art's Histories*, London, Routledge, 1999, pp. 16–18.

[15] For a glossary of archival terms, including 'fonds', see the Society of American Archivists website, available at <*http://www.archivists.org/glossary/term_details.asp?DefinitionKey=756*>, accessed 12 April 2008.

[16] This is Derrida's definition of the 'archontic function', Derrida, p. 3.

[17] Rosemarie Bodenheimer, *The Real Life of Mary Ann Evans: George Eliot, Her Letters and Fiction*, Ithaca, Cornell University Press, 1994, pp. 5–6.

[18] Literary theorist Leigh Gilmore suggests this term 'to describe those elements of self-representation which are not bound by a philosophical definition of the self derived from Augustine'. Leigh Gilmore, *Autobiographics: A Feminist Theory of Women's Self-Representation*, Ithaca, Cornell University Press, 1994, p. 42.

[19] Gilmore, p. 42.

[20] Catherine Hobbs, 'The Character of Personal Archives: Reflections on the Value of Records of Individuals', *Archivaria*, no. 52, 2001, pp. 127, 131.

[21] For a more detailed account of their lives and careers, see Maryanne Dever, 'M. Barnard Eldershaw', in Selina Samuels (ed.), *Dictionary of Literary Biography: Australian Literature 1915–1968*, Farmington Hill, Gale Group, 2002, pp. 3–13.

[22] See Papers of Marjorie Barnard, Mitchell Library, MS 451, 887, 2809, A3577, 4869.

[23] Adam Phillips, *On Flirtation: Psychoanalytic Essays on the Uncommitted Life*, Cambridge, Mass., Harvard University Press, 1994, p. 72.

[24] David Greetham, '"Who's In, Who's Out": The Cultural Poetics of Archival Exclusion', *Studies in the Literary Imagination*, vol. 32, no. 1, 1999, p. 16.

[25] Page DuBois, *Sappho is Burning*, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1995, p. 39.

[26] Marjorie Pizer would co-edit a comprehensive volume of Lesbia Harford's poetry with Drusilla Modjeska. See Lesbia Harford, *The Poems of Lesbia Harford*, edited by Drusilla Modjeska and Marjorie Pizer, Sydney, Angus & Robertson, 1985.

[27] See Judith Keene, 'Aileen Palmer's Coming of Age', in Barbara Caine and Rosemary Pringle (eds), *Crossing Boundaries: Feminisms and the Critique of Knowledges*, Sydney, Allen & Unwin, 1988, pp. 180–92.

[28] See Adam Carr, 'An Age of Certainty: Three Generations of Melbourne Radicals 1870–1988', PhD Thesis, The University of Melbourne, 2001; Amirah Inglis, *Australians in the Spanish Civil War*, Sydney, Allen & Unwin, 1987; and Keene, pp. 180–92.

[29] Palmer was with the Stepney Auxiliary Ambulance Service from 1939 to 1943, and went to work at Australia House in London until 1945. A Palmer Letters to Family 1939–1945, Papers of A Palmer, National Library of Australia, MS 6759, Folder 1, Series 1. The 'Blitz' from *Blitzkreig* (lightning war) is considered to extend from 7 September 1940 to 16 May 1941, although the city was bombed heavily again in 1944. Figures on casualties vary widely, with some estimates of 20,000 civilians killed to others of 43,000 killed and 140,000 injured. For a discussion of the ways in which information was suppressed (including casualty figures) and moulded to prevent panic in London during the 76 days of bombing, see Angus Calder, *The Myth of the Blitz*, London, Jonathan Cape, 1991.

[30] Aileen Palmer, *World without Strangers?*, Melbourne, Overland, 1964. The AustLit database lists 29 pieces of writing (articles and poetry) under Palmer's name, including a pamphlet of poems titled *Dear Life* written under the pseudonym 'Caliban' and printed in 1957. Palmer's choice of the pseudonym 'Caliban' is an obvious reference to the character from Shakespeare's *The Tempest*, the sad and monstrous 'outsider'. Indeed, the theme of being an outsider recurs in Palmer's writing, including in 'Pilgrim's Way', which Palmer seems to have named because of the following lines from the opening passage of Chaucer's *The Canterbury Tales*, which she quotes frequently: 'Then longer folk to go on Pilgrimages/And Palmers for to seek strange straundes'. 'Moira Y. Pilgrim', 'Hospital Notes' variously dated 1973–1979, Papers of A Palmer, National Library of Australia, MS 6759, Folder 5, Series 4.

[31] Gilmore, p. 42.

[32] Martha Nell Smith, *Rowing in Eden: Rereading Emily Dickinson*, Austin, University of Texas Press, 1992, p. 57.

[33] See Burton; Derrida; Arlette Farge, *Le Goût De L'Archive*, Paris, Seuil, 1989; Louise Kaplan, 'Archive Fever: Material Reality and Psychic Reality in Biography', *Biography and Source Studies*, no. 6, 2001, pp. 104–14; Joan M. Schwartz and Terry Cook, 'Archives, Records, and Power: The Making of Modern Memory', *Archival Science*, vol. 2, nos 1/2, 2002, pp. 1–19; and Carolyn Steedman, *Dust*, Manchester, Manchester University Press, 2001.

[34] Ann Laura Stoler, 'Colonial Archives and the Arts of Governance: On the Content in the Form', in Carolyn Hamilton et al (eds), *Refiguring the Archive*, Dordecht, Kluwer Academic Publishers, 2002, p. 86.

[35] Deborah Cherry, *Painting Women: Victorian Women Artists*, London, Routledge, 1993, p. 6.

[36] James Fentress and Chris Wickham, *Social Memory*, Oxford, Blackwell, 1992, p. viii.

[37] Jane Taylor, 'Holdings: Refiguring the Archive', in Carolyn Hamilton et al (eds), pp. 244, 246.

[38] Antoinette M Burton, 'Introduction: Archive Fever, Archive Stories', in Antoinette M Burton (ed.), *Archive Stories: Facts, Fictions, and the Writing of History*, Durham, Duke University Press, 2005, p. 2.

[39] Griselda Pollock, 'Feminist Dilemma with the Art/Life Problem', in Mieke Bal (ed.), *The Artemisia Files: Artemisia Gentileschi for Feminists and Other Thinking People*, Chicago, University of Chicago, 2005, p. 180.

[40] Elizabeth A Meese, 'Archival Materials: The Problem of Literary Reputation', in Joan E Hartman and Ellen Messer-Davidow (eds), *Women in Print 1: Opportunities for Women's Studies Research in Language and Literature*, New York, Modern Language Association, 1982, pp. 37–8.

[41] Louise Bernikow, *Among Women*, New York, Humanity Books, 1980, p. 144.

[42] Meese, p. 41.

[43] ibid.

[44] Dorothy Hewett, 'Excerpt from "The Empty Room": An Autobiography in Progress', *Overland*, no. 160, 2000, p. 8. We discuss Hewett's possible motivation for incorporating this 'scene' in her memoirs in Chapter 3 of Maryanne Dever, Sally Newman and Ann Vickery, *The intimate archive: journeys through private papers*, Canberra, National Library of Australia, 2009.

[45] A Palmer to H Palmer, 28 June 1965, Papers of H Palmer, National Library of Australia, MS 6083, Box 2, Correspondence.

[46] Barnard to N Palmer, 9 April 1935, Papers of V and N Palmer, National Library of Australia, MS 1174/1/4642–5.

[47] Barnard to L Brown, c. May – June 1969, Papers of L Brown, National Library of Australia, MS 9508, Series 3, Folder 7. Brown, a former colleague, was compiling a bibliography of Barnard's work when Barnard suggested that the papers should be included in such a listing.

[48] Burton, p. 7.

[49] Michael Lynch, 'Archives in Formation: Privileged Spaces, Popular Archives and Paper Trails', *History of the Human Sciences*, vol. 12, no. 2, 1999, p. 67.

[50] Ian Hamilton, *Keepers of the Flame: Literary Estates and the Rise of Biography*, London, Pimlico, 1993, p. 157.

[51] Martha Nell Smith draws attention to the way Austin Dickinson alters pronouns (from feminine to masculine), deletes individual letters to create new words/meanings (a reference to Susie becomes 'us'), erases, cuts, writes over, rules over or deletes entire sections of pages of letters with references to or expressions of affection about Susan Huntington Gilbert Dickinson. As Smith further notes, this 'erasure' has itself been erased from scholarly editions of Dickinson's letters. Smith, pp. 11–49.

[52] Hamilton, p. viii.

[53] Sue McKemmish, 'Evidence of Me ...', *Archives and Manuscripts*, vol. 24, no. 1, 1996, p. 41.

[54] Josephine Mills, 'Modus Operandi', in Josephine Mills and Nancy Tousley (eds), *On Collecting*, Lethbridge, University of Lethbridge Art Gallery, 2004, p. 11.

[55] Both Catherine Hobbs and Barbara Craig have argued for a re-conceptualisation of literary archival practice to foreground the active, interpretative role of the archivist. See Catherine Hobbs, 'New Approaches to Canadian Literary Archives', *Journal of Canadian Studies*, vol. 40, no. 2, 2006, pp. 109–19; and Barbara Craig, 'The Archivist as Planner and Poet: Thoughts on Larger Issues of Appraisal for Acquisition', *Archivaria*, no. 52, 2001, pp. 175–83.

[56] Kate Eichhorn, 'Archival Genres: Gathering Texts and Reading Spaces', *Invisible Culture*, no. 12, 2008, p. 4, available at <*http://www.rochester.edu/in_visible_culture/Issue_12/index.html*>, accessed 24 July 2008.

[57] Hugh Taylor writes of how 'the weakest part in the archival chain of orderly sequence is the clerk who returns a document to the wrong file. In short, flowers in the wrong place become weeds.' Hugh Taylor, '"Heritage" Revisited: Documents as Artifacts in the Context of Museums and Material Culture', *Archivaria*, no. 40, 1995, p. 12.

[58] Derrida, p. 17.

[59] Featherstone, p. 593.

[60] Ted Bishop, *Riding with Rilke: Reflections on Motorcycles and Books*, New York, W.W. Norton, 2005, p. 39.

[61] ibid., p. 111.

[62] See Humphrey McQueen, 'Perceptions of Archives and Archivists', in Michael Piggott and Colleen McEwen (eds), *Archivists: The Image and Future of the Profession*, Canberra, Australian Society of Archivists, 1996, pp. 52–3.

[63] Ruth Roach Pierson, 'Archival Research as Refuge, Penance, and Revenge', *Queen's Quarterly*, vol. 114, no. 4, 2007, pp. 491–9.

[64] ibid., p. 488.

[65] Alice Yaeger Kaplan, 'Working in the Archives', *Yale French Studies: Reading the Archive: On Texts and Institutions*, no. 77, 1990, p. 104.

[66] Steedman, p. 18.

[67] Derrida, p. 12.

[68] ibid., p. 91.

[69] Kaplan, p. 103.

[70] ibid., p. 107.

[71] Patricia Hayes, Jeremy Silvester and Wolfram Hartmann, 'Picturing the Past', in Carolyn Hamilton et al (eds), p. 113.

[72] Derrida, p. 36.

[73] Lynch, p. 79.

[74] See Russell.

[75] Lee Ronald, 'Reading as Act of Queer Love: The Role of Intimacy in the "Readerly" Contract', *Journal of International Women's Studies*, vol. 5, no. 2, 2004, p. 57.

[76] Jill Lepore, 'Historians Who Love Too Much: Reflections on Microhistory and Biography', *The Journal of American History*, vol. 88, no. 1, 2001, p. 129.

[77] Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, *Novel Gazing: Queer Readings in Fiction*, Durham, Duke University Press, 1997, p. 2.

[78] Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, *Epistemology of the Closet*, Berkeley, University of California Press, 1990, p. 61.

[79] Catherine Waldby, 'Feminism and Method', in Rosemary Pringle and Barbara Caine (eds), *Transitions: New Australian Feminisms*, Sydney, Allen & Unwin, 1995, pp. 17–19.

[80] However, as Seán Burke shows in the collection, *Authorship: From Plato to the Postmodern*, discussions over the role and authority of the author can be traced from classical Greek philosophy, through Biblical exegesis to the 'twentieth century controversy' of the Death of the Author that Burke describes as a 'gloriously baroque meditation on authorship'. Seán Burke (ed.), *Authorship: From Plato to the Postmodern: A Reader*, Edinburgh, Edinburgh University Press, 1995, p. x.

[81] Although Hayden White started the discussion in 1973 with *Metahistory: The Historical Imagination in Nineteenth-Century Europe*, it has taken several decades for these ideas to be considered seriously in historical practice, mainly because of the tremendous challenge they represent to traditional ways of thinking/writing history. See Robert F Berkhofer Jr, *Beyond the Great Story: History as Text and Discourse*, Cambridge, Mass., Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1995; Keith Jenkins, *Refiguring History: New Thoughts on an Old Discipline*, London, Routledge, 2003; Dominick LaCapra, *History and Reading: Tocqueville, Foucault, French Studies*, Melbourne, Melbourne University Press, 2000; Alun Munslow, *The New History*, Harlow, Essex, Longman, 2003; Joan Wallach Scott, *Feminism and History*, Oxford Readings in Feminism, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1996; and Hayden V White, *The Content of the Form: Narrative Discourse and Historical Representation*, Baltimore, Johns Hopkins University Press, 1987. As Alun Munslow argues 'but to expect that historical understanding begins with the historian's language rather than the past takes a heart in mouth epistemological leap. Most historians can't do it and won't do it.' Munslow, p. 47.

[82] See Steedman.

[83] LaCapra, p. 92, fn. 17.

[84] ibid., p. 72.

[85] ibid., pp. 72–3.

[86] Michel De Certeau, *The Writing of History*, translated by Tom Conley, New York, Columbia University Press, 1988, p. 3.

[87] Martha Cooley, *The Archivist*, London, Abacus, 1998, p. 322.

[88] Ted Hughes, 'Sylvia Plath: The Facts of Her Life and the Desecration of Her Grave', *The Independent*, 20 April 1989.

[89] Henry James, 'Gustave Flaubert', in Morris Shapira (ed.), *Selected Literary Criticism*, London, Heinemann, 1963, p. 139.

[90] Henry James to his executor Harry James, 1915, in Ian Hamilton, p. 220.

[91] De Acosta to William McCarthy, 31 October 1964, Rosenbach Museum and Library, Philadelphia, PA, folder 07:01. For an excellent deconstruction of the distinction between respectable scholarly passions and the excessive ('vulgar') practices of fandom, see Joli Jenson, 'Fandom as Pathology: The Consequences of Characterisation', in Lisa A Lewis (ed.), *The Adoring Audience: Fan Culture and Popular Media*, London, Routledge, 1992, pp. 9–29.

[92] Durba Ghosh, 'National Narratives, Miscegenation', in Burton (ed.), pp. 30, 38, 39.

[93] Alison Moore, 'Access and Exclusion, Obstruction and Protection in the Guarding of Licentious Books', paper presented at the *Bodies of Knowledge: Archives and Sexuality* Conference, University of Queensland, 26–28 April 2007.

[94] Martha Vicinus, 'Lesbian History: All Theory and No Facts or All Facts and No Theory?', *Radical History Review*, no. 60, 1994, p. 59. See also Smith.

[95] In her discussion of 'the relationship (if any) between gay and lesbian and mainstream history', Schuyf asks: 'is homosexuality really hidden from history – or rather hidden *in* history?' Schuyf, p. 61.

[96] Kathy Brewis, 'An Affair to Remember', *The Sunday Times*, 15 April 2007, available at <*http://www.entertainment.timesonline.co.uk/tol/arts_and_entertainment/books/article1642202.ece*>, accessed 18 June 2008.

[97] Elizabeth Susan Wahl, *Invisible Relations: Representations of Female Intimacy in the Age of Enlightenment*, Stanford, Stanford University Press, 1999, p. 1.

[98] Barnard to Jean Devanny, 1 January 1947, JC JD/CORR (P)/16, in Carole Ferrier (ed.), *As Good As a Yarn with You: Letters between Miles Franklin, Katharine Susannah Prichard, Jean Devanny, Marjorie Barnard, Flora Eldershaw and Eleanor Dark*, Cambridge, United Kingdom, Cambridge University Press, 1992, pp. 156–7.

[99] Mireille Bossis, 'Methodological Journeys through Correspondences', *Yale French Studies: Men/Women of Letters*, no. 71, 1986, p. 64.

[100] Nelljean McConeghey Rice, *A New Matrix for Modernism: A Study of the Lives and Poetry of Charlotte Mew and Anna Wickham*, New York, Routledge, 2003, p. 128.

[101] Ann Cvetkovich, *An Archive of Feelings: Trauma, Sexuality and Lesbian Public Cultures*, Durham, Duke University Press, 2003, pp. 242, 244.

[102] Carolyn Steedman, 'The Space of Memory: In an Archive', *History of the Human Sciences*, vol. 11, no. 4, 1998, p. 67.

[103] See Sara S Hobson, 'In Secret Kept, in Silence Sealed: Privacy in the Papers of Authors and Celebrities', *The American Archivist*, vol. 67, no. 2, 2004, pp. 194–211; and Glenn Dingwall, 'Trusting Archivists: The Role of Archival Ethics Codes in Establishing Public Faith', *The American Archivist*, vol. 67, no. 1, 2004, pp. 11–30.

[104] Joy Hooton, 'Life-Lines in Stormy Seas: Some Recent Collections of Women's Diaries and Letters', *Australian Literary Studies*, vol. 16, no. 1, 1993, p. 10.

[105] Hobbs, p. 113.

[106] Bishop, pp. 34–5.

[107] LaCapra, p. 92, fn. 17.

[108] Burton notes with respect to the powerful appeal of the archival artefact that 'more than one scholar has confessed to me a desire to take objects from the archive'. Burton, p. 9.

[109] Leon Edel, *Writing Lives: Principia Biographica*, New York, Norton, 1984, p. 240.

[110] See Catherine Labio, 'Woman Viewing a Letter', *L'Esprit Créateur*, vol. 40, no. 4, 2000, pp. 7–12.

[111] Taylor, p. 9. See also Ala Rekrut, 'Material Literacy: Reading Records as Material Culture', *Archivaria*, no. 60, 2005, pp. 11–37.

[112] Nigel Hall argues: 'On the whole, little has been written about the materiality of writing and it is probably the very everydayness of such artifacts, and the fact that the mind of the user is mostly focused upon what is being created by their usage, that makes for them being so taken for granted they become virtually transparent to the user.' Nigel Hall, 'The Materiality of Letter Writing', in David Barton and Nigel Hall (eds), *Letter Writing as Social Practice*, Amsterdam, John Benjamins Publishing Company, 1999, p. 83.

[113] Catherine Bustarret, 'Paper Evidence and the Interpretation of the Creative Process in Modern Literary Manuscripts', in John Slavin (ed.), *Looking at Paper: Evidence and Interpretation: Symposium Proceedings, Toronto 1999*, Ottawa, Canadian Conservation Institute, 2001, p. 89.

[114] Mieke Bal, 'Telling Objects: A Narrative Perspective on Collecting', in John Elsner and Roger Cardinal (eds), *The Cultures of Collecting*, Cambridge, Mass., Harvard University Press, 1994, p. 98.

[115] Maryanne Dever and Ann Vickery, *Australian Women Writers 1900–1950: An Exhibition from the Monash University Library Rare Books Collection*, 29 March to 31 July 2007, see <*http://www.lib.monash.edu.au/exhibitions/women-writers/index.html*>, accessed 23 April 2010.

[116] Roland Barthes, *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography*, translated by Richard Howard, London, Vintage, 2000, p. 5. Jennifer Green-Lewis argues that the tendency to 'slide' from 'image to praxis, from viewer to viewed and back again to the eye of the lens' when discussing photographs and photography 'dates from the mid-nineteenth century, when photography became useful as a site for the discussion of topics beyond itself and then served for years as the self-effacing frame of debate on any number of issues in varying disciplines. Within these disciplines, photography most frequently provided a locus of debate for issues having to do with realism, especially literary realism'. Jennifer Green-Lewis, *Framing the Victorians: Photography and the Culture of Realism*, Ithaca, Cornell University Press, 1996, p. 19. Yet, this does not entirely account for the sense that the photograph 'spaces time and temporalizes space. A force of arrest, the image translates an aspect of time into something like a certain *space*, and does so without stopping time, or without preventing time from being time'. Eduardo Cadava, *Words of Light: Theses on the Photography of History*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1997, p. 61.

[117] Carol Mavor, *Pleasures Taken: Performances of Sexuality and Loss in Victorian Photographs*, Durham and London, Duke University Press, 1995, p. 120.

[118] Cadava, p. 63.

[119] Mavor, p. 33.

[120] De Certeau, pp. 46–7.

[121] Joan W Scott, 'Fantasy Echo: History and the Construction of Identity', *Critical Inquiry*, vol. 27, no. 2, 2001, p. 287.

[122] Ian Hacking, 'Making Up People', in *Historical Ontology*, Cambridge, Mass., Harvard University Press, 2002.

[123] Muriel Pic, 'Sebald's Anatomy Lesson: About Three Images-Documents from *On the Natural History of Destruction, The Rings of Saturn and Austerlitz*', *Colloquy: Text Theory Critique*, no. 9, 2005, available at <*http://colloquy.monash.edu.au/issue009/pic.pdf*>, accessed 30 August 2008.

[124] Michael Lynch, 'Archives in Formation: Privileged Spaces, Popular Archives and Paper Trails', *History of the Human Sciences*, vol. 12, no. 2, 1999, pp. 65–87.

[125] Burton, p. 10.