



Books as archival objects

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ABSTRACT

This paper reflects on the place of books in archival collections and outlines the methodology used to incorporate Germaine Greer's publications and personal library in the Greer Archive. Identification and inclusion of metadata documenting context, significance to the creator and relationships to other records in the Archive, demonstrate the value that can be added to bibliographic records.

KEYWORDS

Archives; personal libraries; cataloguing; metadata

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Here is Germaine Greer in her office at The Mills, her house at Stump Cross, Essex (Figure 1). You can see the environment of a consummate researcher, surrounded by her filing cabinets and her books, some of which I recognise as now at the University of Melbourne Archives (UMA). This lovely photograph is one of a sequence of images taken in 2014 to document the Greer Archive *in situ*, prior to it being packed by Dr Katrina Dean and Jock Murphy for transport to Australia.

I expect I am not the only archivist who has worked with collections where books are either not initially selected for inclusion in an archive, or where discretionary disposal of publications and printed material is an option – on the basis that copies are readily available in library collections, newspaper articles can be sourced online, they are not obviously 'relevant' etc. The purely functional appraisal of publications based on criteria such as their uniqueness, availability, subject matter and monetary value is more problematical in personal papers collections. Layers of meaning and personal significance not relevant to business or organisational archives come into play and books may have been retained as 'evidence of me' personal history, for sentiment, or for reasons that may become clear only as the archive is explored. Perhaps some of us have 'been there' ourselves as we cull our own library shelves, and look at books important, at least at one time, to us or family members, experiencing first-hand the poignancy of almost seeing the person within a book and the associations and memories a common-or-garden volume can evoke. Logistically, most institutions cannot 'take it all', in analogue form at least, and hard appraisal and selection decisions preferring primary source material often have to be made.



Figure 1. Greer in her office, The Mills, Stump Cross, Essex. Photograph by Nathan Gallagher, 2014.

In the Greer Archive, both published and unpublished material are intrinsic to the Archive, containing as it does the life of a writer, academic, public intellectual, lover of Italy, music and pets, gardener, conservationist – in other words, polymath.

The many record types and material formats in the Greer Archive include two discrete collections of books, which will be the focus of my discussion. I began to understand the extent of the published material in the Archive as I listed my ‘first’ Greer series ‘Major Works’ last year, the series relating to Greer’s writing of her books. What I found, in addition to the expected iterations of drafts and manuscripts, was evidence of Greer as the diligent researcher, and constant library user (Figure 2).

Many folders in this series comprised voluminous bundles of research material, of all types – photocopied scholarly articles, art catalogues, campaign booklet sent to her by a women’s organisation on women’s health. Even with a light-touch description for these files, I listed in more detail than what is usual in the ‘More Product, Less Process (MPLP)’ environment,¹ as my colleagues and I have been fortunate to have the resources to catalogue in some detail this rich collection. As I reached the end of the Major Works series, I could see that I had also listed a mini-archive of research. This plethora of research material is also found in other series in the Greer Archive, especially the Women and Literature series and Women Artists series, which Greer herself has described as sub-archives of the Archive.

The two book series comprise 124 volumes. One group of books came with the major accession of the Archive in 2014, as selected by Greer in Essex. An additional 41 volumes and one magazine were sent by Greer in 2016 in a crate accompanying correspondence files. The books in this later accession were described by Greer as being sent to ‘use up the space’ (in the crate), a casual reference which belied that Greer, the conscious archivist, had retained these books, plucked them from her shelves and had them sent to join her Archive in response to correspondence with the Greer Curator, Dr Rachel Buchanan. Buchanan had contacted Greer in early 2016 about Greer’s research sources for *The Female Eunuch*.



Figure 2. Library/readers' cards belonging to Germaine Greer. Held in Item 2017.0004.00045.

She was trying to 'unpick how you blended multiple sources, provocations and inspirations into one manuscript and at such speed'. Greer replied: 'The best way to proceed is probably working back from the footnotes of the published versions [of *The Female Eunuch*]' Greer advised that she 'had my own copies of the books referred to in TFE and these are still in my possession. If they are wanted for the archive, I shall send them.'² This offer was accepted.

We had some interesting discussions at UMA on how best to process these two collections of books. Yes, the books are individual volumes, which could be catalogued using library standards by the University of Melbourne Library and included in the main library catalogue; one advantage could be that the books would be found via a library search, gaining a potentially wider audience than is possible with the current UMA collection-management system. But, by virtue of their inclusion in the Greer Archive, are they more importantly archival records in which provenance, context and connections with other items and series in the Greer Archive is vital information to capture, and could such metadata be easily incorporated into bare-bones library cataloguing?

Preliminary assessments of the 13 boxes of books received in the 2014 accession, and the supposed 'ballast' sent in 2016, confirmed these collections were created for different purposes, albeit with some anomalies. The 2014 transfer contains 24 books authored or edited by Greer and 84 books containing contributions by Greer (articles, introductions etc.). Most of these were interleaved with a thin strip of paper marking Greer's entry, confirming their archival status as part of the Greer oeuvre, and also Greer's conscious construction of the archive of her work. Twenty-seven volumes also contained marginalia, annotations, underlining, inscriptions and/or interleaved items, such as compliments slips or notes to Greer by the publication author(s).

These boxes, however, also contained a small selection of books about, or mentioning, Greer and her milieu, including her ex-husband Paul du Feu's 1973 memoir *Let's hear it for the long legged women* (2014.0056.00084) and Richard Neville's *Hippie Hippie Shake* (1995) (2014.0056.00088) on 1960s London and the OZ trial. Christine Wallace's unauthorised biography of Greer, *Untamed Shrew*, was not sent, although Greer included David Plante's *Difficult Women: A Memoir of Three* (1984) (2014.0056.00085), a book she also loathes (Figure 3).

The Transformations of Allegory (1974) by Gay Clifford, Greer's colleague at the University of Warwick and close friend, was in these boxes, inscribed to Greer (2014.056.00025), a companion piece to Greer's 1990 edition of Clifford's poetry *Poems by Gay Clifford* (2014.0056.00082), in which Greer's scholarly introduction also traces the history of their friendship. I found too Ann Cornelisen's novel *Any four women could rob the Bank of England* (2014.0056.00064). Published in 1983, this humorous crime caper features a character 'expatriate Hermione Hendricks', 'bona fide celebrity ... author of Put that in your Jock Strap...'. Guess who? We know from the General Correspondence series that Ann was a friend and neighbour of Greer's in Tuscany in the 1970s (2014.0042.00192) and she is acknowledged as the source of Greer's rather excellent recipe for Spaghetti alla Checca, published in the University of Tulsa's *Erudite Professor's Cookbook* (1982) (2014.0056.00040). Also in this collection, this is a light-hearted item from Greer's time as the often-beleaguered Founder/Director of the University of Tulsa Center for the Study of Women's Literature (1979–83) (Figure 4).

We allocated the descriptive title 'Publications By, Contributed To, or About Greer' to this series (2014.0056).



Figure 3. Three books on Greer and her milieu held in Series 2014.0056: Paul du Feu, *Let's hear it for the long legged women*, 1973 (Item 2014.0056.00084); David Plante, *Difficult Women: A Memoir of Three*, 1984 (Item 2014.0056.00085); Richard Neville, *Hippie Hippie Shake*, 1995 (Item 2014.0056.00088).

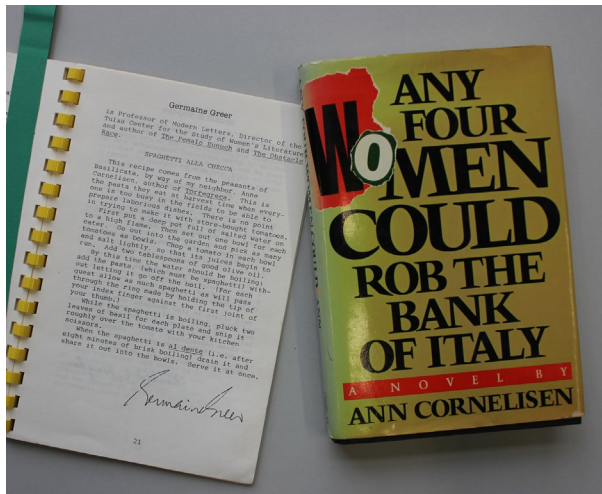


Figure 4. Ann Cornelisen novel and Tulsa cookbook, held in Series 2014.0056: Ann Cornelisen, *Any four women could rob the Bank of England*, 1983 (Item 2014.0056.00064); University of Tulsa, *Erudite Professor's Cookbook*, 1982 (Item 2014.0056.00040).

In the 2016 accession, annotations, marginalia and/or interleavings in 32 of the 42 items indicated that these books were actively used by Greer for reference and research purposes. These books had in fact arrived with Greer ‘interventions’ in the form of specific contextual information – many of the books containing yellow sticky notes, annotated with what they were used for or meant to her. Greer’s comments, and perusal of *The Female Eunuch* footnotes, confirmed that many of the books sent were indeed significant to her in researching and writing *The Female Eunuch*. Here we see her well-thumbed copies of some of the talismanic books of the 1960s (Figure 5).

These include: Norman O. Brown’s *Life Against Death* (1968) and *Love’s Body* (1966); Mary Ellman, *Thinking about Women* (1969); Erna Wright, *Periods without Pain* (1966); a heavily annotated copy of Peter Laslett, *The World We Have Lost* (1966); Eric Fromm, *The Art of Loving* (1969); Norman Mailer, *Cannibals/Christians* (1966). The sticky note on Shulamith Firestone’s *Dialectic of Sex* reads ‘This is a proof copy of an important influence on GG not now easy to find’.

The 2016 accession also contains volumes of poetry by women poets, speaking to Greer’s scholarship and her establishment of Stump Cross Books, her own imprint, which published the work of forgotten women poets. Two items that Greer identified as textbooks, namely Robert Frost’s *Selected Poems* (1955) (complete with doodles) and John Dryden’s *The Poems and Prose of John Dryden* (1955), are some of the few survivors of her time at the University of Melbourne. A further small volume on the Pre-Raphaelite painter Dante Gabriel Rossetti, a 1906 edition of Bell’s Miniature Series of Painters, is embossed with the University of Melbourne Library stamp; a library book finally returned? (Figure 6).

Our decision for this series title was ‘Annotated Reference Publications’ (2016.0137).

We decided we would catalogue both these series in the archival series listing format we were using for the rest of the Greer Archive, to easily upload to the current UMA collection-management platform, but to include item-description elements that could enable a cross-walk to Library catalogues in the future, mainly via the ISBN (Figure 7).

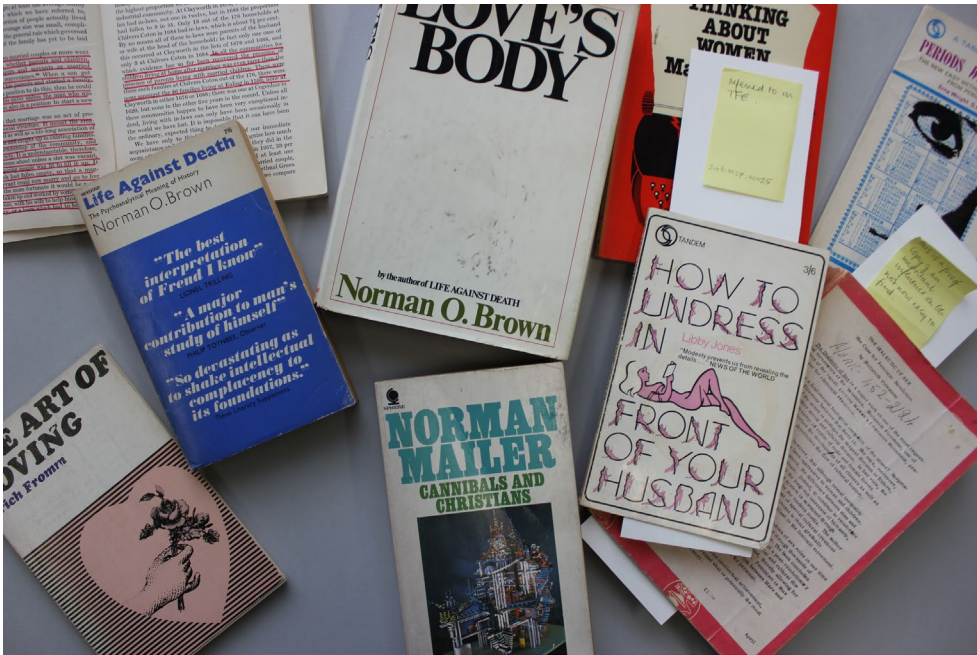


Figure 5. Books held in Series 2016.0137, significant to Greer in researching and writing *The Female Eunuch*.

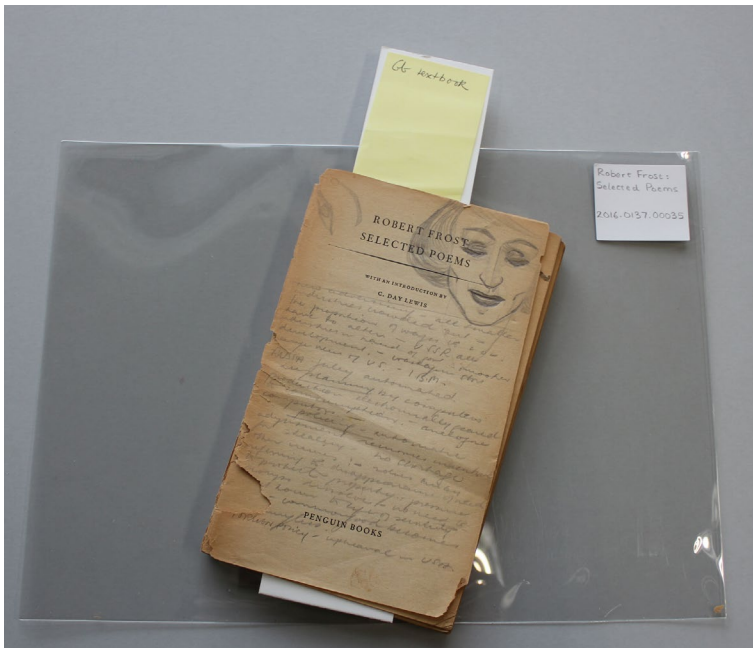


Figure 6. Robert Frost, *Selected Poems*, 1955 (2016.0137.00035).

I'd like to acknowledge the work of Dr Natasha Storey, from the University of Melbourne Library, who helped translate our decisions into practice and worked on both book series.

Item Number	Unit/Box	Title	Date	Description
2016.0137.00001	2016.0137 Unit 1	Periods Without Pain	1966	Document type: paperback book; Author: Erna Wright; Publisher: London: Tandem, 1966; Series: Tandem book; Description: 46 pages, illustrations, 18cm. This book is referenced in <i>The Female Eunuch</i> . Subjects: Menstruation; Pain—Treatment
2016.0137.00002	2016.0137 Unit 1	Astraea	2002	Document type: paperback book; Author: Jane Stevenson; Publisher: London: Vintage, 2002; Description: 307 pages, 20cm; ISBN: 0099286645. Inscription on title page - dedication to Greer from the author. Subjects: Historical Fiction; Fiction; History
2016.0137.00003	2016.0137 Unit 1	Giving Sorrow Words: Women's Stories of Grief After Abortion	2000	Document type: paperback book; Author: Melinda Tankard Reist; Publisher: Potts Point, N.S.W. : Duffy & Snellgrove, 2000; Description: 286 pages, 20cm; ISBN: 1875989676. Single page typed letter inserted inside book, between front cover and first page. Letter is a dedication from Melinda Tankard Reist to Greer, thanking Greer for allowing her to quote from Greer's works. These works include: 'The Feminine Mistake', <i>The Sydney Morning Herald</i> , 9 May 1992; 'What Women 'Won'' in <i>The Whole Woman</i> , 1999; and <i>Sex and Destiny: The Politics of Human Fertility</i> , 1985. Correspondent: Melinda Tankard Reist. Subjects: Abortion—Psychological aspects; Grief; Sex and Destiny

Figure 7. Series 2016.0137 extract of cataloguing list format.

The first few records from the 'Annotated Reference Publications' series list shown here contain basic bibliographic metadata: document type; author; date; publishing location; publisher; physical description; and ISBN, if available. Items were cross-checked against bibliographic listings on OCLC WorldCat (<https://www.worldcat.org/>) and tagged with consistent subject headings, using a combination of headings in existing WorldCat records and our in-house Greer thesaurus based on the Library of Congress.

Importantly, inscriptions, interleaved letters, sticky notes and any other additional meta-data accompanying the books were included in the item descriptions. The inscriptions and letters link us directly to the personal and social significance of Greer's work, and also the impact of her celebrity. A letter written by poet Fran Landesman to Greer (interleaved within her poetry book *Songs without music* (c.1970–79) reflects on Landesman's experience of reading *The Female Eunuch*: 'Too late for me ... I wonder how I would have been' (Figure 8).

Describing herself as 'one more female eunuch', Landesman closes with the hopeful refrain that one day she may meet 'some of the post-Greer girls'. Sue Kedgley, author of *The Sexual Wilderness: Men and Women in New Zealand* (1985), refers to Greer's 'infamous' New Zealand visit in 1972 (in which Greer was arrested in Auckland on obscene language charges for saying the words 'bullshit' and 'fuck') (Figure 9).

Kedgley discusses the significant impact of this visit on the New Zealand public.³ And note Greer's annotation that archival material is in New Zealand.

Returning to the larger series, 'Publications By, Contributed To, or About Greer', this final image gives an idea of the range and diversity of Greer's contributions (Figure 10).

The few examples shown here include: Greer's introduction to a bijou edition of Christina Rossetti's *The Goblin Market* illustrated by Laurence Housman (1975); her generous writing

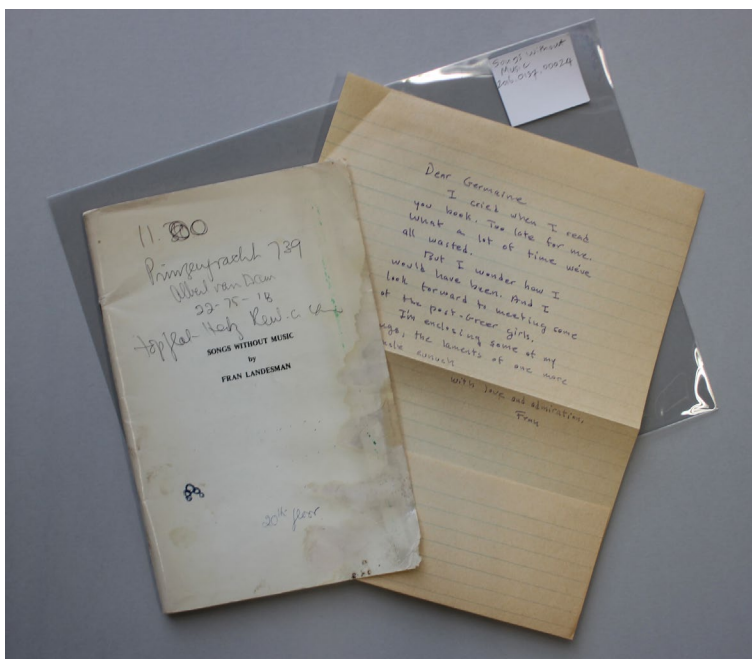


Figure 8. Fran Landesman, *Songs without music*, c.1970–79 and letter (Item 2016.0137.00024).

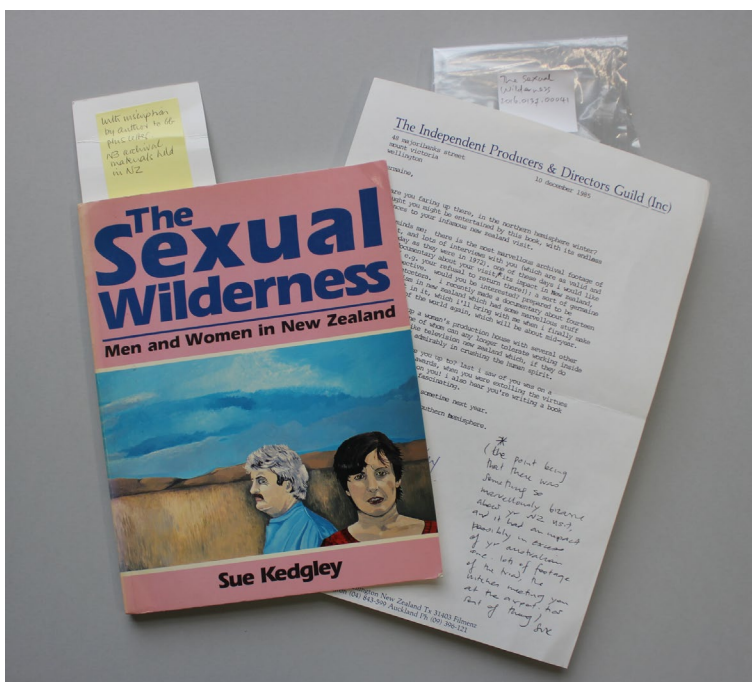


Figure 9. Sue Kedgley, *The Sexual Wilderness: Men and Women in New Zealand*, 1985 and letter (Item 2016.0137.00041).



Figure 10. Examples of books with contributions by Greer, held in Series 2014.0056.

on women artists Tacita Dean and Jane Bown; a chapter in *Perspectives on Federico Fellini* (1993); foreword to *The Autobiography of a Sexually Emancipated Communist Woman* (on Alexandra Kollontai). Some light-hearted items include her contribution to *First Kisses* (1990) and summaries of her appearances on BBC TV's *Grumpy Old Women*.

I have been working on the 'Speaking' series (2017.0009) in the last few months, relating to over 800 speaking appearances made by Greer in the last 30-plus years. This is proving to be primarily a series of administrative arrangements, as she generally speaks off the cuff, and there is rarely a transcript or typescript of her speeches. Also, despite her profile as a public commentator, Greer usually resists having her talks recorded. She considers a speech to be a unique experience with the particular audience, which would be compromised by the formality of a recording. I can now make connections back to some of the books we hold as the published outcomes of conference papers given by Greer, just one more example of the interconnections we are now able to make between series.

My work on the books in the Greer Archive has highlighted to me that a book is often more than a book. Their value to archival collections is determined by the creator of the archive but is also strongly developed by the archivists who initially appraise and select, and then go on to process a collection. While we have made these volumes discoverable via basic bibliographic cataloguing, much of the value to future researchers is undoubtedly in the additional metadata documenting their context, Greer's contributions, their importance to her, our inclusion of pointers to marginalia and annotations, and how her books link to other series and items within the archive. We have taken our cues and clues from the creator of the archive. Sometimes it has been clear direction and information, sometimes breadcrumb trails which we have followed to 'aha' moments of connections and meaning,

increasingly drawn from our ambient knowledge of the archive, knowledge which, as my colleagues have discussed, is fragile and transitory. Our approach throughout this project has been deliberately non-interventionist, respectful of provenance and original order and the relationship of the creator to her archive. Our overlay of metadata, both as supplied by Greer and discovered by us, confirms the place of books, in the Greer Archive at least, as unequivocally archival objects.

Endnotes

1. Mark A Greene and Denis Meissner, 'More Product Less Process, Revamping Traditional Archival Processing', *American Archivist*, Fall/Winter 2005, pp. 208–63.
2. Germaine Greer/Rachel Buchanan emails 12 January 2016, 13 January 2016, 29 February 2016.
3. The letters from Fran Landesman and Sue Kedgley to Greer are cited and discussed in the scope and content note to series 2016.0137 'Annotated Reference Publications'. This scope note was substantially written by Natasha Storey and is available via the UMA website <<http://archives.unimelb.edu.au/>>. This article draws on and acknowledges Dr Storey's work on Series 2016.0137 and Series 2014.0056 'Publications By, Contributed To, or About Greer', while on secondment to the UMA from the Baillieu Library in early 2017.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author.

Notes on contributor

Sarah Brown is an archivist and librarian. She has worked for the trade union movement, universities, and on many collections of personal papers. Sarah joined the Greer team in 2016 to catalogue the archives of Professor Greer's major published works, and has since processed other series in this rich archive. Sarah holds a Masters of Library and Information Science.