

Fryer Bulletin

May 2008

Welcome to the new look Fryer Bulletin. The purpose of this bulletin is to highlight significant events on the Fryer Library calendar and to let you know about library collections, resources and projects. The intention is to inform you, the researcher, about the richness of our collection and its potential for use. Please do not hesitate to contact me directly if there is something you would like to know about Fryer's services or collections. I would be pleased to hear from you.

Mark Cryle, Manager, Fryer Library, The University of Queensland
e: m.cryle@library.uq.edu.au | p: +61 7 33656205 | web: www.library.uq.edu.au/fryer/

Events

Carter Brown

At the Friends of Fryer event on 3 April Toni Johnson Woods gave a thoroughly engaging talk entitled *Australia Doesn't Have to Rhyme with Failure: Carter Brown as Cultural Export*. Fryer holds nearly 400 individual titles written by the best-selling Australian author, whose real name was Alan Geoffrey Yates (1923-1985). Yates penned a series of detective 'pulp' fiction books between the early 1950s to the early 1980s. Much of Yates' work was produced in a period when the home-grown popular fiction industry blossomed under an Australian Government tariff system that effectively banned US imports. Carter Brown titles were translated into 14 languages. The books were written initially for the Sydney based Horwitz Publications, which sold the overseas rights to the US-based multinational, Signet. In 1997 Yates was awarded a posthumous Crime Writers' Association of Australia Ned Kelly Award for Lifetime Achievement. The Carter Brown books are estimated to have sold more than eighty million copies worldwide. All of the titles in the Fryer collection are individually listed on the UQ Library catalogue and the lively cover art is available online through UQ eSpace (<http://espace.library.uq.edu.au/>).

Refugee Narratives

On 19 June from 9am-1pm we are venturing into new territory by hosting a seminar entitled *Refugee Narratives: Documenting the Lived Experience*. There will be a number of papers presented, both academic and non-academic. The speakers will include Professor Gillian Whitlock, who recently gave a paper at the MLA Conference in Chicago entitled *Letters from Nauru*, and Bruce Henry, an immigration lawyer. There will also be an invited panel of refugees. The event will focus on the issues that surround collecting refugee stories. Amongst our holdings are the papers of Julian Burnside and Kate Durham who were active in the Spare Rooms for Refugees campaign. These papers include large numbers of refugee letters. We will publicise this event in more detail when a program has been finalised.

Spotlight on the Collections

Brisbane's Realist Writers

In his chapter on Brisbane and literature in *By the Book: a Literary History of Queensland*, Pat Buckridge (p64) argues that the literary scene in 1950s Brisbane was dominated by a single poet, John Manifold, "a communist

activist from a patrician Victorian family, with a Cambridge education and elite cultural tastes.” Buckridge (p67) describes Manifold as the “benevolent commissar” of an ‘Old Left’ in Brisbane literary circles whose cultural authority has often been underestimated. Similarly, William Hatherell (*Australian Literary Studies*, 21, 2, 2003, p151) contends that Manifold was a central figure in what was “a particularly rich node of the ‘left-nationalist’ culture that flourished in Australia in the first post-war decade.”

The most important organisational expression of this literary culture was the Brisbane Realist Writers’ Group, formed in 1950 following the success of a similar group in Melbourne. As Ian Syson (*Australian Literary Studies*, 15, 4, 1992, p334) explains, the Realist Writers’ movement spread from Melbourne to Brisbane, Sydney, Perth and Newcastle and was firmly established as a national body by 1964. Through ideology and personnel it maintained a close association with the Communist Party, at least in the early days. Its aims were twofold: “the encouragement and development of worker-writers and the continuation of a perceived national, democratic and realist tradition.”

The Brisbane Group was active around both of these goals, particularly the former. It encouraged workers to write fiction, poetry and drama and through its national journal, *Realist Writer*, and its links to the Australasian Book Society and the journal *Overland*, it held out the possibility of publication. It was also prominent in the debates within communist and realist circles on the character and role of realist writing, most notably in the 1960s when secretary Bill Sutton led a spirited campaign to preserve *Realist Writer* as a journal with a working class standpoint, dedicated to publishing worker-writers.

A thorough account of the Brisbane Group’s role in the State’s literary history has yet to be produced. Buckridge’s essay scarcely mentions it, while Hatherell (p152) largely attributes the vibrancy of Brisbane’s realist literary culture to “the energetic presence of Manifold himself.” In both accounts, the focus falls on Manifold as the movement’s leading light, leaving the movement itself in the shadows. This “street-lamp conception” of the realist tradition, as Syson (p334) describes it, tends to celebrate certain literary figures, while downplaying their engagement with communism and the “support groups and struggles” they were usually connected with.

Both the realist writers and their organisations have found a place in the collections of Fryer Library. Over 200 items relating to the Brisbane and National Realist Writers’ bodies are brought together in manuscript collection F500, while Peg Penberthy’s collection F2458 contains a further 52 items. The *Realist Writer* and its successor *The Realist* is available (PR8000.R4), along with an index to the journal compiled by Ian Syson (PR8000.R4 S97 1990). Fryer holds John Manifold’s papers (UQFL177), which comprise 3 boxes of manuscripts of his stories, novels, plays, poems and radio scripts, as well as a large body of literary criticism and political writing. We also hold works by Bill Sutton and Nancy Wills, both members of the Brisbane Group.

Another prominent realist writer represented in Fryer is Ron Tullipan (UQFL103). Born in Murwillimbah, Tullipan lived for many years in Queensland where he worked on farms, building sites and the waterfront. After returning from overseas in the late 1950s he settled in New South Wales and became involved in the Sydney Realist Writers’ Group. He wrote short stories and five novels, winning the Dame Mary Gilmore Award for his novel *March into Morning*. His extensive Fryer collection includes drafts of his literary work and literary criticism.

Thea Astley

Australian author Thea Astley, AO, was born in Brisbane in 1925. Schooled at All Hallows, she completed a Bachelor of Arts degree at The University of Queensland before training as a teacher. After marrying Jack Gregson in 1948, she moved to Sydney. Thea wrote part time while working as a teacher, publishing her first novel *Girl with a Monkey* in 1958, just after the birth of her son. She went on to win her first Miles Franklin Award in 1962 for her novel *The Well Dressed Explorer*. Thea won the Miles Franklin three more times - in

1965 for *The Slow Natives*, in 1972 for *The Acolyte* and in 2000 for *Drylands: a Book for the World's Last Reader*, and was nominated in 1997 for *The Multiple Effects of Rainshadow*. Thea also won many other literary awards and was awarded an honorary Doctorate of Letters by The University of Queensland in 1988. She finally retired from teaching in 1980 to write full time, having spent several years working for Macquarie University. She moved first to Kuranda in north Queensland, then to Byron Bay after the death of her husband, where she died in 2004.

The Thea Astley Papers (UQFL97) have been collected over many years, with the last addition arriving in August 2006. The papers consist of drafts of her books, short stories, correspondence (both personal and professional), and some family history material. The most recent addition of material has been listed and a complete listing of the contents of the collection will soon be available via the Library catalogue.

Fryer Library Space Update

The drilling has stopped and the paint smells are gone. After three disrupted months Fryer staff have moved back into a refurbished work space on level 4 of the Duhig Building. Thanks to you, our users, for your understanding during this period. It's back to business as usual. "Now where did we put those paper clips?"

Digital Australiana

In this section we report on developments and resources which may be of interest to researchers in Australian studies. These are not necessarily projects in which Fryer has been involved.

The Nambour Chronicle

The Nambour Chronicle has been scanned from microfilm and made available in digital format. The entire full text runs from 1903 to 1955. You are now able to search the entire paper by keyword or issue date and can download and print directly from the paper (<http://www.nambour-chronicle.com/>).

Australian Folklore Unit

Warren Fahey's Australian Folklore Unit website has recently made available via podcast a 16 part ABC Radio series of folksongs, poetry and stories entitled *While the Billy Boils*. Warren tells us "you will hear rare songs and ...some of Australia's most significant interpreters of our traditional heritage."

To listen, visit the Australian Folklore Unit website (<http://www.warrenfahey.com>) and select 'podcasts' on the menu bar.

Also available are *The Australian Legend* (12 program series) and *The Songs That Made Australia* (10 part series).



Exquisite artworks accompany the maps in Freycinet's atlas [above]