

2009

From paper, ink and dust: Thank you (two words from an archive of Elizabeth Jolley's writing for students)

Andrea Wood
Edith Cowan University

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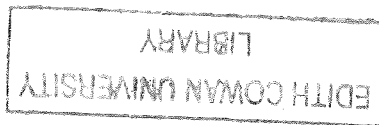
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From Paper, Ink and Dust: Thank You (two words from an archive of Elizabeth Jolley's writing for students).

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Submission date: 2nd November 2009

USE OF THESIS

The Use of Thesis statement is not included in this version of the thesis.

Abstract

The installation *Thank You (two words)*, will be an outcome of my research into the creative process through practice-led research. It will aim to communicate to the viewer something of the search and experimentation I have carried out in the studio through a material engagement with a small personal archive of writing by Elizabeth Jolley (1923–2007). Through an engagement with particular materials—paper, ink, and dust—the installation will also aim to participate in a conversation of broad relevance in the visual arts, and one in which many artists, writers and thinkers have been interested since the eighteenth century: a conversation about thinking, making and seeing begun by Romantic writers and thinkers. Many recent commentators, including visual artists, have responded to the archive as a melancholy place of loss; however my research has been predicated on the notion that the archive and the past to which it gives access might make possible conversations with the thinkers, writers and artists of the past and facilitate contemporary creative work. As such, my research also participates in a conversation about the archive. This exegesis backgrounds my planned installation through a discussion which briefly describes the Jolley archive and the key ideas—the Romantic fragment, the archive, dust—that have accompanied my creative work in the studio. I demonstrate the ways in which Paul Carters' concept of “material thinking” has been instrumental in the development of my project, through a discussion of my adoption of aspects of Elizabeth Jolley's creative process and in the development of my planned installation. I also outline the way I have come to see the migration of dust as a metaphor for interactions between people and objects in the spaces of the archive and the gallery and for the conversations in which I aim to participate through the installation, *Thank You (two words)*.

I certify that this thesis does not, to the best of my knowledge and belief:

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Signed

Andrea Wood

Date: 8.12.09

To my supervisor, an inspiring artist and teacher, Paul Uhlmann, *Thank You*.

Thank you also to Richard Jolley for his kind permission to include facsimiles of a number of the teaching notes as appendices to this exegesis; and to Barbara Milech, Brian Dibble and Adrian Wood for afternoon tea, book borrowing and for sharing with me some of their fond stories of knowing Elizabeth Jolley.

A. W.

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Introduction

The aim of this creative visual research has been to create an installation of paper, ink and dust conceived on the foundations of my research into the creative process using methodologies articulated in the discipline of practice-led research. Estelle Barrett (2007, p. 1), in her introduction to *Practice as Research: Approaches to Creative Arts Enquiry*, defines practice-led research as: “generative enquiry that draws on subjective, interdisciplinary and emergent methodologies that have the potential to extend the frontiers of research.” The interdisciplinary dimension of creative arts research provides for Barrett (2007, p. 7), a “rationale for acknowledging the innovative potential of the fluid location and application of creative arts research approaches and outcomes.” Barrett (2007, p. 7) asserts:

The interplay of ideas from disparate areas of knowledge in creative arts research creates conditions for the emergence of new analogies, metaphors and models for understanding objects of enquiry. Hence the capacity of artistic research for illuminating subject matter of both the artistic domain as well as that belonging to other domains and disciplines of knowledge.

Barbara Bolt (2007, p. 26–34) argues, in her essay “The Magic is in the Handling,” that practice must lead research rather than simply be the research: it is the interplay between inquiry, studio process and exegesis that is crucial to research outcomes. Bolt (2007, p. 31) states: “the exegesis plays a critical and complementary role in revealing the art.” My research has been practice-led, that is, primarily practice based, informed by key texts from other disciplines, and augmented by the process of writing an exegesis. It has also been informed by a number of key ideas contained within or arising from my reading of a small personal archive¹ of teaching notes written by Western

¹ A broad definition of the word ‘archive’ has been provided by Richard Pearce-Moses (cited in Nygard, T. & Sonstebly, A. 2009, p. 48), writing for the Society of American Archivists:

Australian² author Elizabeth Jolley (1923–2007).³ The key ideas arising from the Jolley archive and accompanying my research in the studio comprise aspects of Elizabeth Jolley’s creative process, the Romantic fragment,⁴ the archive,⁵ and conceptual understandings of dust,⁶ including how dust might relate both physically and metaphorically to my creative practice and, it is hoped, to viewers’ responses to my work. It has been my aim to materially engage with the Jolley archive in the studio. The interaction between my practice-based research and my research into the creative process, my research into the contents of the Jolley archive and the key ideas surrounding it, aims to produce an installation of visual artworks which will communicate to the viewer something of my search and experimentation as an artist, while participating in a number of relevant conversations.

“Materials created or received by a person, family, or organisation. Public or private, in the conduct of their affairs and preserved because of their enduring value contained in the information they contain or as evidence of the functions and responsibilities of their creator, especially those materials maintained using the principles of provenance, original order, and collective control; permanent records.”

² Jolley migrated to Australia from England in 1959 (Dibble, 2008, p. 137). She wrote in an artist’s statement (1981, p. 215): “Perhaps an influence on my work is a small portion of Western Australia. I came to Western Australia in the middle of my life. I realise that the freshness of my observation can distort as well as illuminate. The impact of a new country does not obliterate the previous one but sharpens memory, thought and feeling thus providing a contrasting theme or setting.”

³ This archive was salvaged by me from a family member, and is a collection of undated teaching notes and photocopied poetry and student writing with marginalia written by Jolley. It is one example, similar to hundreds which might have once existed, since Jolley worked as a lecturer and teacher of creative writing at Curtin University of Technology for nearly four decades.

⁴ The first use of the term ‘Romantic’ in an artistic context originates with the first issue of Friedrich von Schlegel’s (1772–1829) journal *Athenæum* in 1798 (Blayney-Brown, 2001, p. 11). A ‘fragment’ commonly refers to a piece of anything taken or broken off from a greater whole, but as a motif in art and literature it also has a history which dates back to the Romantic movement, originating with Schlegel and other German philosophers and writers in the 1790s. The Romantic fragment will be defined in chapter one.

⁵ The past decade has seen a striking increase in the body of literature and research concerned with the form, function and meaning of the archive. A brief overview will be provided in chapter one. This literature touches upon many disciplines, including contemporary visual art.

⁶ A primary definition of dust in The Shorter Oxford Dictionary is “that which rises in a cloud, as dust, smoke, vapour.” A number of contemporary visual artists work with dust.

The installation, *Thank You (two words)*⁷ at Spectrum Project Space in November 2009 will aim to participate in a conversation with others about aspects of creative process. I also aim to communicate connections I have made between the Elizabeth Jolley archive and archives, with the Romantic fragment and with dust. *Thank You (two words)* will contain the results of studio investigations employing a range of strategies such as drawing, photography, video work and assemblage. As one result, I envisage that the key ideas accompanying my research and the connections I have made between them will weave through the individual artworks and through the installation. For example, the Romantic fragment is an example of a key idea with which I have made connections and, as torn fragments of fragile paper containing drawings, ink blots, drawings made from ink blots or taches (stains)⁸ and writing in ink, it will appear throughout my individual artworks and the installation in different ways. I have responded to the Jolley archive as a repository of fragments from which I have made new creative work and it has led me to explore the archive, which I propose may also be experienced as a collection of fragments and dust from which new creative work may be made. I have therefore imagined the installation of my work as a similar space: that is, as a confluence of fragments and dust with which, it is hoped, viewers will engage. In chapter one of this exegesis, I background my planned installation by outlining the Jolley archive and my research into the Romantic fragment, through which I discovered dust in the archive.

Jolley shared aspects of her creative process in a number of essays contained in the

⁷ These were words written by Elizabeth Jolley in the margin of a student creative writing project. The complete phrase she wrote was “thankyou” (struck through) and then, “Thank You (two words, my mother said).” A desire to pay homage to Jolley (a creative mind of the past) has been part of my response to the Jolley archive.

⁸ These were some of the techniques used by the poet-draftsman Victor Hugo (1802–1885) in his pen and ink drawings. Described as “true products of the Romantic movement” (Philbin, 1998, p. 6), the drawings of Victor Hugo have also inspired my work with ink and paper in the studio which is described in chapter 2.

books *Central Mischief* (1992) and *Learning to Dance* (2006), and in the many interviews she gave (Baker, 1986; Ellison, 1986; Grenville & Woolfe, 1993; Kavanagh, 1989; Reid, 1989; Willbanks, 1992). She often described her work habits in variations of this statement made to Candida Baker in 1986 (cited in Bird, 1991, p. 169):

Well I work all the time, in my head—on scraps of paper because I can't remember anything. I cultivated what I call the ability to make the quick note because if I didn't I never would have been able to write. You see, I was a housewife with three children...I used to write late at night when everybody had gone to bed. I couldn't have written if I hadn't made little notes during the day. When I was cleaning and shopping and so on, or when I was talking on the telephone, or when people were talking to me, I would constantly be making little notes. I had masses of little bits of paper in folders. If anybody had asked to see a work in progress it would have been lots of bits of paper with scribbles on.

Throughout my research I have adopted aspects of Elizabeth Jolley's creative process, including her timetable. That is, I have taken her advice in a number of ways. I have worked throughout the day taking "quick notes" (for example, written or drawn on scraps of paper and by taking photographs) and then late at night or early in the morning,⁹ rising in the dark in order to make use of her strategies for getting work done. This was an important part of the project because although Jolley did not write about it this way (indeed she described it as simply a practical way to get work done), I have found her timetable to be a very particular experience: one which has increased my understanding of her creative process. In chapter two, I will elaborate on Jolley's creative process, in particular her concepts "the quick note" and "sophisticated spaces."¹⁰ In addition to the Jolley archive, Paul Carter's 2004 book *Material Thinking*:

⁹ In an interview with Ray Willbanks (1991, p. 116) Jolley said: "I get up at about four-thirty in the morning. I used to work right into the night but I found I wasn't working very well. I was too tired. I've tried this four-thirty thing now for about a year. I do find it hard but I find I get more done before I need to take Leonard his tea. That's around six-thirty or seven. I get more done in that time than I was getting done staying up until twelve or one o'clock. I'm really working better."

¹⁰ Jolley's creative process aided her creation of spaces across the narrative, allowing readers to

The Theory and Practice of Creative Research has been an influential text to which I have referred throughout my research. I will briefly outline Carter's understanding of the process of invention and his concept of "material thinking"¹¹ before detailing the way I have applied his theories in practice through creative research.

Chapter three will contain further explication of my studio explorations, and outline something of the approach I will take to installing my artwork at Spectrum Project Space. For example, an artwork developed in the course of this research was installed at the Junction Art Gallery for the group exhibition *Diagram* in October 2009. I have reconfigured the artwork in different spaces a number of times throughout the course of my research and documented the changes I made to its form. I envisage that this evolving work will be an important component of my planned installation. I will also introduce, through a discussion of another component of my installation, Jolley's concept of "the little dance in writing", as well as how, by responding to the Jolley archive, *Thank You (two words)* will aim to participate in a conversation with which many artists, writers and thinkers have been interested: a dialogue about thinking, making and perception begun by Romantic writers and thinkers in the 18th century.

Many recent commentators, including visual artists, have responded to the archive as a melancholy place of loss,¹² however my research has been predicated on the notion that the archive and the past to which it gives access might make possible conversations with the thinkers, writers and artists of the past through an engagement that seeks to

reach their own conclusions about characters or events in the story.

¹¹ Carter's concept of "material thinking" is based on the idea that alternative forms of knowledge may be gained through artistic processes and materials.

¹² For example, Ulrich Baer (2008, p. 56) reviews Okwui Enwezor's exhibition *Archive Fever* at New York's International Centre of Photography and writes that many contemporary artists approach the archive as "a symbolic or evidentiary access to traumatic memory." He argues for the possibility of hope in the archive. See also (Rice, 2008; Roberts, 2002; Voss & Werner, 1991).

make new, contemporary creative work. As such, my research also participates in a discussion about the archive, and tests the possibility of the archive or archives and the past they represent as catalyst for new creative work. I use the migration of dust as a metaphor for interactions between people and objects in the spaces of the archive and the gallery and for the conversations in which I aim to participate through the installation, *Thank You (two words)*.

Chapter One

Finding Schlegel's kernel in Elizabeth Jolley's notes.

Sometimes you read or listen to an utterance that is spread over time and you catch the meaning either at the end, or if you are smart, half way through. The meaning seems to float, to some degree, free of what seems to carry it.

If you read a poem that really means something to you, you will stop at that poem, you don't turn to the next or do anything else. You just sit there and let it all wash back like the tide, and then you say, "Oh, I've got it."

It is the capacity of the mind to surround the whole when only a part is given.

(Jolley, n.d.)

The Jolley archive,¹³ a collection of papers, has sat quietly in a file on a shelf in various studies of my own for about twenty years, during which time Jolley continued teaching and writing, I read her books, and she lived out her final years. Initially, I kept the papers and was drawn to reading her poetry, short stories and novels perhaps because, as for many readers, there are aspects of the author's history and biography which resonate with my own. I have experienced, for example, similar events, thoughts and feelings Jolley (1993) describes in her non-fiction book *Diary of a Weekend Farmer*.¹⁴ I have also have long admired the way Jolley successfully combined her family, professional and creative life because this is something I aspire to. In 2008, as I planned an

¹³ This file, like some others that undoubtedly have been kept by past students, contains writing by Jolley which has not been published or preserved elsewhere. The Curtin University Archives do not include a collection of Jolley's teaching materials. For related discussion and information about archival collections relating to Jolley's writing and life see *Guide to the Papers of Elizabeth Jolley in the Mitchell Library*. See also Bird (1991) and Dibble (2009).

¹⁴ In this book Jolley chronicles, through journal entries and poetry, her experiences of semi-rural life at her property in Wooroloo in the hills near Perth. When I read this book, I too had recently moved with my family to live on a similar property in the hills at Darlington, a place where many artists have chosen to live over the past hundred years or so. It was my observation that Jolley had, at times, Romantic responses to the landscape of the hills and to her cottage, which seemed to mirror my own. Many Romantic writers, thinkers and artists have been drawn to pastoral settings. At other times, she wrote of difficulty and disappointment, weather, and encounters with snakes and other wildlife which are a feature of hills life.

installation of drawings to conclude my undergraduate studies, I happened to open the file and start reading. I discovered an archive of teaching about poetry: notes, copies and marginalia which, because it was Jolley's intent as a teacher, seemed to contain enormous potential for informing and inspiring creative work. These documents were potentially helpful in the development of my creative process—in effect, my thought as I looked forward to developing an honours project was that I planned to be her student. What did she have to teach me?

The Romantic Fragment

Reading these papers, I began to see that Elizabeth Jolley appeared to employ notions of the fragment in various ways in order to make creative work in which readers could participate creatively,¹⁵ and that perhaps, she understood the fragment as an idea in poetry that stretches back to the nineteenth century. For example, it is arguably the Romantic fragment Jolley refers to when she writes: "It is the capacity of the mind to surround the whole when only a part is given." Sophie Thomas (2008, p. 21), in her book *Romanticism and Visuality: Fragments, History, Spectacle*, explores the meanings of fragments in the nineteenth century, during which time the fragment became wildly popular due to its place in the aesthetic discourses of the picturesque and the sublime, and their associated viewing practices. Thomas (2008, p. 21) describes the fragment as inhabiting a potentially wide range of materials, visual, textual, architectural and literary, which by leading us "to a confrontation with the materially invisible," may also "direct our attention toward the elusive, the incomprehensible, and the ideal."¹⁶

¹⁵ For Jolley, reading was a creative act. I am referring to Jolley's concept of "sophisticated spaces", which will be outlined in chapter two.

¹⁶ Thomas (2008, p. 21) also points out the place the fragment had for antiquarians and archaeologists, an observation which may be of importance for recent accounts of the

The fragment remains a key conceptual idea of interest to many artists today¹⁷ and exists on a trajectory originating from Romantic thought, perhaps beginning with Friedrich Schlegel's writings about poetry and art, contained today in a collection known as the "Athenæum Fragmente." Richard Kramer (1997, p. 134) in his article "The Hedgehog: Of fragments Finished and Unfinished," translates a number of Schlegel's aphorisms which have relevance for my creative work:

Many works of the ancients have become fragments. Many works of the moderns are fragments at birth.

A fragment, like a little work of art, must be quite separated from its surroundings and complete in itself-like a hedgehog.

Other poetry is complete, and can thus be thoroughly analysed. Romantic poetry is still in the process of becoming, indeed that is its characteristic essence, that it forever only becomes, and can never be completed.

These are among the most famous of Schlegel's aphorisms (Kramer, 1997, p. 134) which Thomas (2008, p. 25) also draws on to explain how for Schlegel, the fragment contained an idea or a project, an embryo which was both complete and incomplete. For Schlegel, she explains, the fragment was "like a miniature of art," containing a positive, future-oriented kernel (Thomas, 2008, p. 24–25). The fragment was never complete, but rather, would always be in the process of becoming. Through the Jolley archive I find that this is so. These fragmentary writings appear to contain the seed-potential for new creative work. The Jolley archive contains ideas with positive future-oriented kernels—

archive and the discipline of history.

¹⁷ The imaginative possibilities of fragments and the archive have long been of interest to many conceptual artists, from Marcel Duchamp and Andy Warhol to Ilya Kabakov, and On Kawara (Enwezor, 2008; Merewether, 2006). Within this conversation, the Romantic fragment is also an idea that remains of interest to artists today. For example, in *Washed Up* (2000), contemporary artist Simryn Gill collected fragments of shells and detritus found on the beach and invited the viewer to consider the history of these found objects (Gill, 2000). Gill's work recalls understandings of the fragment and human responses to fragments because the work invites viewers to bring their own subjectivities to an interpretation of these found objects.

the potential creative work of the future—but these ideas also connect us to the past, and to the positive future-oriented kernels of past ideas. That is, the Jolley archive suggests to me ways in which it might be possible today to participate in a linked conversation, the first chain of which was, I argue, Schlegel's writing on poetry and art in the 1790s.¹⁸

The Fragment in the Archive

The past decade has seen a multitude of creative formulations of the archive across many disciplines. Much of this conversation has emerged as an effect of Jacques Derrida's 1995 book *Archive Fever: A Freudian Impression* (Manoff, 2004, p. 11). Derrida's book is a psychoanalytic reading of the archive and a critical study, commenting on the "substantive role the archive plays in the construction and realisation of the state" (Freshwater, 2003, p. 733), challenging the archive's status as a symbol of truth and alerting us to the way the archive is shaped by social, political and technological forces. For many scholars in the wake of *Archive Fever*, it seems, the archive is a place of paradox of which Derrida (1995, p. 8) asks "where does the outside commence?" Voss and Werner (1991, p. 1), in their introduction to a special issue of the journal *Studies in the Literary Imagination*, entitled "Towards a Poetics of the Archive", explain: "It is both a physical site—an institutional space enclosed by protective walls—and an imaginative site—a conceptual space whose boundaries are forever changing," and at the same time, "the history of the archive, on the one hand a history of conservation, is, on the other hand a history of loss."

These concerns background my plans for an installation of creative artworks to be

¹⁸ In his foreword to a translation of Schlegel's fragments, Gasche (1991, p. xiii) quotes Schlegel's conception of the "system of fragments", which is itself made up again of "a chain or garland of fragments."

installed at Spectrum Project Space, a gallery which (as a facility of Edith Cowan University) is both an institutional site and a space of creative imagination. In response however I plan, in the light of the many creative and compelling recent interpretations and representations of the archive described by Manoff (2004, p. 11), to investigate the archive as a place containing the potential for new creative work. The Jolley archive and the first of Schlegel's aphorisms¹⁹ suggest to me it might be possible, through the fragment, to participate in a conversation about the archive.

The archive has also been described by Carolyn Steedman, in her book *Dust: The Archive and Cultural History*, as a place of paradox. That is, for Steedman (2002, p. 80), the archive is on the one hand, a prosaic place of paper and ink and dust in the form of fragments of historical material, and on the other it is one of those oneiric spaces described by Gaston Bachelard (1958) in his book *The Poetics of Space*.²⁰ The archive is interpreted in varying ways for many reasons, but perhaps another reason is that it is made up of fragments, which have qualities described and understood by the Romantics, and promoted by the Victorians. The discipline of history through archival research was established in the 1830s (Freshwater, 2003, p. 730), a time when interest in history and the fragment in poetry and writing, through the work of the Romantics, had become wildly popular (Thomas, 2008, p. 21). History, and the archive as a place of truth about the past,²¹ was established on the premise that artefacts and documents in

¹⁹ Kramer (1997, p. 135) relates this aphorism to the paradoxical aspect of the fragment by accident and the fragment as a quality in Romantic art in his discussion. The archive perhaps contains these qualities. This notion has informed my work *What happened in the Pursuit of Dust* (see chapter 3). I have combined fragments of ink on paper with archival tape.

²⁰ Bachelard's book, is a work of philosophy about the home and the imaginative possibilities of spaces within it. For example, the book contains chapters about drawers, chests and wardrobes, corners, nests and shells. Steedman argues that the archive might be seen as a similar creative space containing the potential for new creative work. A place for dreaming, for historians and writers and others—a place of unopened boxes containing, who knows what? A writer's treasure chest perhaps?

²¹ The archive, once firmly established through a tradition of archival research, has been

the archive were evidence of the past and could be interpreted through scientific method (Freshwater, 2003, p. 730).²² However, perhaps historians, in responding to artefacts in the archive, have responded to those artefacts as not only simply evidence but also as Romantic fragments. That is, perhaps the Romantic fragment is connected in important ways with the archive and the discipline of history. Indeed, Alun Munslow (2006, p. 3), in his book *Deconstructing History*, describes the narratives of history as “story-shaped.”²³ The narratives of history described by Munslow and others (Freshwater, 2003; Steedman, 2002) might be seen as creative responses to the seed potential of the fragment. That is, although the history of the archive, is a history of conservation, which has also been conceived as a history of loss, understandings of human responses to the fragment, stemming from the Romantics and recent critiques of the discipline of history, lead me to believe it might be possible to engage with the archive and the past as a place of hope from which new creative work may be made.

Dust and the Archive

The fragment is also connected to dust. Through the fragment, my research led me to discover dust in the archive: the presence of which physically connects us to the past through its particles and at the same time unites the past to us through the particles we leave behind. Carolyn Steedman argues for an examination of the materials of the archive in order to make connections with the everyday lives and experiences of

increasingly questioned (Freshwater, 2003, p. 730). That is, it is increasingly argued that history, despite a methodology borrowed from the natural sciences, is essentially a literary discipline in which historians refer to archival evidence in the creation and imposition of particular narrative forms on the past (Munslow, 2006, p. 3).

²² Freshwater (2003, p. 730) points out that before the 1830s, history was understood by other means. For example: through epic poetry, historical plays, novels and journalism. See also Lowe, D. (1982).

²³ Or, as Steedman (2008, p. 18) writes: “‘history’ exists in the head of the historian, in the words on the page, and in the conceptual imagination of readers when those words come to be read.”

unrepresented people of the past. Steedman (2002, p. 11) recalls both the fragment and Derrida (1995) when she writes in the context of the archive: “an absence is not *nothing*, but is rather the space left by what has gone.” She tells us that it is often what is missing from an archive that has the most to tell us about history. She urges us to critically examine what is absent, arguing that the history of every day life, and experiences of people who do not appear to be represented, can be found in the materials of the archive in a number of ways. That is, Steedman’s central thesis is, that it may be possible for us to discover what is absent from the official record and to make connections with ordinary people of the past, by researching the history of the materials of the archive. The archive is a place consisting of paper, ink and dust arising from a history of human labour and life,²⁴ and the materials of the archive, incorporate literal traces, particles of dust, of ordinary people from history. This is an argument for the possibility of hope in the archive since, For Steedman (2002, p. 164), this dust is “about circularity, the impossibility of things disappearing, or going away, or being gone.”

This is an idea of importance to my project. Artist and Zen Buddhist scholar, Xu Bing explores a similar conception of dust, as well as the material nature of dust in his work *Where Does the Dust Itself Collect?* Xu Bing (Wilson, 2004) describes dust as “one of the most stable of materials. It’s very peaceful, it never changes. So dust is a very Zen idea.” Xu Bing collected dust from the streets of New York following the attack on the Twin Towers on September 11, 2001. His photograph of dust blown into the shape of a

²⁴ Steedman’s account of the dust of industrial England reminds me of Jolley’s (1992, p. 110) account of the dust of her childhood: “Before the days of vacuum cleaners for everyone I had to take the rugs outside, hang them over the line and beat them. This was satisfying. To clean the stairs, which were covered with linoleum of the brightly patterned sort, I simply sat on the top tread and slid down collecting the dust on my person. Our house was always very dusty, red brick dust and black coal dust. We lived in a street that ended in the slag heaps from a coal mine. There was a brick works to one side. Beyond the brick kilns there was a bone and glue factory. When the wind was in a certain direction it was advisable to keep the windows closed.”

miniature cloud (see Figure 3) recalls both dictionary definitions of dust (see footnote 6) and Steedman's argument. That is, it recalls the clouds of dust which arose over New York (which tragically included particles of ordinary people who had been in the buildings at the time) as well as the cloud as a symbol in Chinese art which has been described as "representative of the breath of mountains, and symbolic of the life-spirit or chi that animates nature" (Allen, 2009).²⁵ Hope arises from the idea (recalling Steedman) that the victims of 9/11 live on, represented by the chi.

Archival researchers encounter dust in the archive²⁶ and the physical migration of dust seems to me to be a good metaphor for what happens when archival researchers interpret the documents in their care. That is, archivists bring with them their own histories and ideas and leave behind their interpretations and so become part of the history of that document. The migration of dust is also a metaphor for a dialogue about poetry started in 1790, and for my own research project. Elizabeth Jolley (1991, p. 97) employed a similar metaphor when she wrote: "Perhaps the writer can be looked upon as a sort of sieve through which particles of one culture pass to be a part of another culture."

In the studio, and at my desk, I handle papers written on and held by Elizabeth Jolley and think of our collective dust, perhaps even skin cells mingling on the page. I look at her handwriting and read her words and find ideas which mingle with my own, which I then try to interpret and understand through the manipulation of materials. It is my aim to create something like this metaphorical connection between my work and the viewer

²⁵ The photograph was one of the starting points for a series of short videos which I plan to include as a component of *Thank You (two words)*. I experimented with blowing dust clouds myself and photographed the process.

²⁶ Steedman (2002, p. 17) argues that dust in the archive can indeed give you a fever. The book is something of a reply to Derrida's (1995) *Archive Fever*.

in my installation. I ask “what do we bring with us to an exhibition, what do we carry away with us – where does it go?” That is, it has been my plan to create a space of discovery, a space containing fragments with which viewers will engage and make new meaning. Through the fragments of the past, by making new creative work, it might be possible for me to engage in discourse in which Jolley participated through her creative work and teaching. Additionally, within my installation, the viewer will be led to a scrap of paper under a microscope, containing the words “Thank You”, written by hand in ink on paper by Elizabeth Jolley: it aims to involve the viewer in a conversation of dust.

The Writer's Approach to Death - Ragtime, by E.L. Doctorow

By this stage in the story we know that Coalhouse's chances of survival are limited. His misfortunes have been related in the same detached, dispassionate style as that which is used to describe his death.

Throughout the whole book events are given the status of historical fact, in a style which is journalistic at times, in which characters' whole names are often used, and particular details of geography or politics, sometimes real and sometimes fictional, are included for an authentic feel. There is room, however, for subtle irony, such as the capital F in "New Yorks Finest", and Coalhouse's fatal smile, and there is a certain tragic note achieved by the blandness of: "The body jerked about the street in a sequence of attitudes as if it were trying to mop up its own blood." The calculated, brutal murder of this innocent, persecuted musician is not greeted by the outraged uproar of the offended populace, but by "The horses [which] snorted and shied."

an
excellent
observation

good use
of quotation

assignment very well done.

A selection of most interesting suitable examples

7.5+

EL

thank you

thank you
my mother said:
(2 separate words
for thank you)

Figure 1



Top: Figure 2
Bottom: Figure 3

Chapter Two

Material Thinking and Elizabeth Jolley's Creative Process

She saw the young man standing in the dark. He seemed to be leaning rather than standing, the storm holding him up in its force. He was an indistinct outline, blurred because of the rain. It was as if he had come into existence simply because someone, hopelessly lost among words, had created him in thoughtful ink on the blotting paper.

Elizabeth Jolley
Woman in a lampshade
(cited in Salzman, 1993, p. 11)

The installation *Thank You (two words)*, will contain the results of multiple studio explorations I have undertaken throughout the course of my project, involving the practical application of theory to an exploration of the materials ink, paper and dust. Estelle Barrett (2007, p. 1) proposes that artistic practice may be viewed as the production of knowledge, or philosophy in action.²⁷ Among the emergent methodologies of practise-based research described by Barrett, which draw on her rationale, are the artistic processes described by Paul Carter in his essay "Interest the Ethics of Invention" and in his 2004 book *Material Thinking*.²⁸ Carter (Barrett & Bolt, (eds.) 2007, p. 15–16) describes the process of "material thinking" as a method of critical enquiry distinguished by the material mediation of the process of invention. Carter (2007, p. 15) describes invention, "the state of being that allows a state of becoming to emerge," as conditional on "a perception, or recognition, of the ambiguity of appearances." Carter (2007, p. 15) describes the process of invention as a double movement of decontextualisation, in which "new families of association and structures

²⁷ For a discussion on art as knowledge see Eisner, E. (2008).

²⁸ Barrett and Bolt's (2007) stance on creative research, particularly the role of the exegesis, differ in important ways to Carter's conception of practice-based research. Further, Carter's concept of "material thinking" differs in important ways to Bolt's notion of "materialising processes." See also Bolt's (2004) book *Art beyond representation: The performative power of the image*.

of meaning are established.” For Carter (2007, p. 16), this double movement characterises any conceptual advance and represents the critical difference between creative research and other forms of critical enquiry—what is pulled apart is put back together again in new ways. For Carter (2007, p.16), practice-based research is a method which allows unpredictable and differential situations to influence what is found through the exploration of materials in which particular properties are inherent. I have drawn on this concept in each of the various creative research strategies I have employed.

“The quick note”

A practice-based research approach also makes possible the integration of real life experiences²⁹ into the research project. As part of my creative research I have researched the creative practice of Elizabeth Jolley by trialling aspects of her work habits and creative processes for myself. Jolley often worked on her writing late at night or as early as four-thirty in the morning (Willbanks, 1992, p. 116). I have also worked to this timetable and employed her notion of “the quick note” in various ways. That is, throughout the day I have made “quick notes”,³⁰ then worked on the development of those notes as artworks in the early hours of the morning or late at night—as she did. A photograph of Elizabeth Jolley sitting at her desk shows her using separate sheets of unlined writing paper, “Quink”³¹ and a nibbed pen. Aiming to make a material connection between my work, the Jolley archive and Jolley’s creative process I set

²⁹ Bolt’s (2004, p. 4) conception of practice-based research draws on Michel de Certeau’s 1994 book *The Practice of Everyday Life*.

³⁰ Throughout the course of the project, I too amassed a great number of small fragments of paper containing my “quick notes” as drawings, ink blots and writing, but I also used photography as a kind of quick note.

³¹ “Quink” or “quick drying ink” is writing ink developed in the 1930s. Australian artist Joy Hester also worked in “Quink” ink (Backhouse, 2004).

myself up in the same way. I thought about Jolley dipping her pen in the ink and placing her thoughtful ink³² on paper. I copied out her notes, learning to form and join letters as she did, as I absorbed words written about poetry. I imagined her working in the early hours of the morning in her home, as I was, trees silhouetted against a dark sky and the light shining into that darkness through the window. I allowed the ink to fall and splash on the paper, to run, dribble, and pool. I then responded to these stains and dribbles in various ways. For example, I blotted the page with another sheet of clean paper or with one already stained with ink, or by adding water to the ink I created washes which pooled and dried leaving other textures, blots and stains on the paper.³³

I began, through this exploration of materials in a particular space, to experience a number of effects. I stopped planning and making active decisions, and instead repeatedly pressed sheets of paper coated in ink against other sheets, creating effects that seemed to me suggestive of the light outside, of where I was, or of other places and times. I became mesmerised by the process, and the ink and the things I seemed to see in it. Lost children,³⁴ landscapes, skyscapes, seascapes, weather, and far away imaginary places which might once have existed, but did not, and which might perhaps exist in fiction. I saw castles, explorers, cliffs, mountains and an expedition by camel

³² I used a variety of inks, including "Quink." Jolley might have noticed its particular qualities such as the fact that when water is added, black separates into greens, blues and yellows and bleeds through to the reverse in mottled, yellow stains. It is quite unpredictable.

³³ Jolley used coloured pens to edit her work. Kavanagh (1989, p. 449), interviewing Jolley, asked about editing with coloured inks and in response she said: "I write in longhand and I cram the page as I'm writing. My husband...suggested I leave spaces between the lines and at the sides, so I could just scribble in the change on that piece of paper with a green or a red biro or with a pen and not cross out so heavily, so that I could see what was there originally." In response, I have used a selection of coloured inks. Some of these inks were given to me by a friend. A number of these inks are French and quite old, and are possibly mapping inks in particular colours. I think of Jolley mapping out her work.

³⁴ The blots began to remind me of the figures of children I had drawn throughout my undergraduate studies. There is a tradition in Australia of lost children in art (Knox, 2009).

train. In other words, I was daydreaming.³⁵

Perhaps I was recreating for myself something like Jolley's experiences? Jolley created characters and landscapes in ink on paper inside her house, while her family slept and it seems she also created for herself a quiet poetic space, a space for dreaming and creative work described by Gaston Bachelard (1958). For Bachelard (1958, p. 6), "the house allows one to dream in peace [and] is one of the greatest powers of integration for the thoughts, memories and dreams of mankind."³⁶ I was daydreaming too, and making connections through ink and paper with the ideas accompanying my studio research. This seemed to be happening to me through the exploration of particular materials in a particular space. Dreams and ink blots³⁷ go together of course, and I seemed to be discovering through this experience why so many writers and thinkers and artists throughout history have thought so. I was also discovering in a material way that perhaps for Jolley, and for me too, ink may be used to create quick notes which are, either as writing or as blots of ink on paper, something like a fragment. They contain a kernel of potential for new creative work. They invite the imagination to participate.

³⁵ This studio exploration of ink and paper led me to explore ideas from a tradition of making blots which also extends back to the Romantic period, and to the drawings of Victor Hugo. The drawings of Victor Hugo suggested ways in which I might make connections between the history of Romantic ideas about art, the Jolley archive, and to developing further the ideas I had begun to explore in my undergraduate work: the figure in a landscape of the imagination. I imagined Victor Hugo, pausing and, seeing a blot on the blotting paper which invited his imagination to see other possibilities in the ink, tipping his coffee dregs or the ashy dust from his pipe into it to see what happened. For more information on the history of blots, see Cramer (1997), Kuntz (1966), and Vine (1999).

³⁶ Steedman (2002, p. 80) writes of experiencing engagement while reading of the archive while conducting research as a historian.

³⁷ I am referring here to the history of psychoanalysis: dream analysis and the ink blot's association with psychoanalysis through the Rorschach Test. For related discussion see Carter (2004, pp. 16–43) and his discussion of his collaboration with the artist John Wolseley. Much of Wolseley's work arises from the history of blotting. He is an artist whose work with coloured ink and fragments of paper has informed my work in the studio.

Sophisticated Spaces

Brian Dibble (2008, p. 253) in his biography of Jolley, *Doing Life*, describes how for Jolley, writing “was a ‘stepping off into imagination’ from experience and memories [and] that readers took a comparable step into imagination.” Jolley’s methods assisted in the creation of what she referred to as “sophisticated spaces” for readers. These “sophisticated spaces”, created by the juxtaposition of narrative events (Dibble, 2008, p. 253), are an example of the way Jolley’s writing seems connected to Romantic understandings of the fragment. They seem to arise from a method of inventing and reading fiction which parallels Paul Carter’s concept of invention through “material thinking.” That is, Jolley’s working method was intended to encourage new systems of meaning to emerge for both writer (in the process of writing) and for the reader. Indeed Jolley writes for her students: “As in Poetry, the essence of fiction writing lies in the moulding of real experience with imagination, awareness and invention bringing about the production of something unexpected. The word ‘novel’ means something fresh, something new.”

I have also responded to the many statements Jolley made about her working methods, such as:

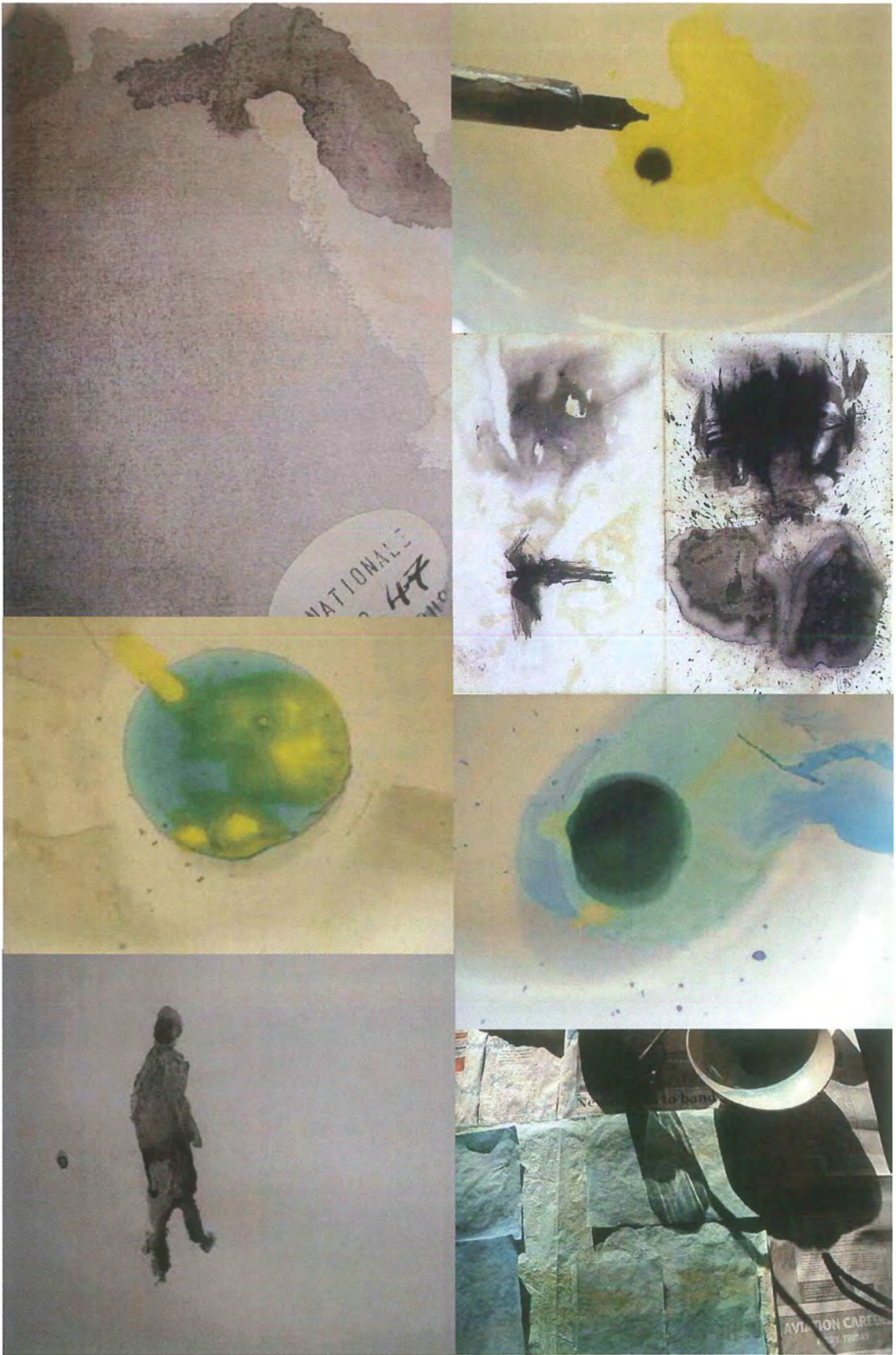
I have lots of little bits of paper that I will clip together and then I can spread them out. I also have another method. I have a manila folder that I open out, and I might make little squares and write little bits in there so that the pages are actually resting on what is like a map of the structure of the book. (Willbanks, 1992, p. 120)

Jolley provides clear pictures of her working method, and in response my artworks have taken the form of collages or archival books and folders containing fragments of drawings or writing on paper, rearranged in different ways. From these larger sheets of paper, which I had selected because it had similar qualities to the paper in the Jolley

archive, I had planned to create fragments of paper in different shapes, but I had come to think of these sheets, folded in half and torn, as pages. Pages freed from a book of my imagining³⁸ which might then be recombined in new ways in order to connect and communicate key ideas and to engage the viewer. That is, my studio research has linked Jolley's use of "the quick note", her scraps of paper and manner of working these together, to a working method for making art. This method has its own history: the history of collage.³⁹

³⁸ Contemporary artist Valeska Soares (Knighton, 2008) created a wall installation of dedication pages from old books.

³⁹ The artistic practice of collage has links to Romantic understandings of the fragment. For example Kurt Schwitters' artistic practice, including his collages, have been described as evidence of Romantic themes in his work (Museum of Modern Art, 2009). Contemporary visual artists continue to employ the fragment and collage.



Clockwise from top left: figures 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10.

Chapter three

Thank You (two words)

*"True ease in writing comes from art, not chance;
As those move easiest who have learned to dance."
(From "An Essay on Criticism" by Alexander Pope)*

*Elizabeth Jolley
The Art of Poetry (n.d.)*

The artistic technique of collage parallels Elizabeth Jolley's method of working using "the quick note," and the way she arranged and rearranged her writing, creating juxtapositions and "sophisticated spaces" for readers in the construction of her short stories and novels. That is, Jolley employed a kind of collage in her writing by collecting fragments of observations and overheard conversations and reorganising this material to create her fiction. A character in Jolley's novel *Foxybaby* (1987, p. 96) puts it this way: "The story will come together from these fragments. This is how the story is made, from little scenes and the thoughts and feelings of people, their ideas and wishes." This is also how I have come to see the pulling together of key ideas that have accompanied my studio research. I also envisage that this will be my approach to the walls and spaces of the gallery in the installation of the visual works I have made in order to create *Thank You (two words)*.

Throughout the course of my research, I have undertaken a number of studio investigations. The artwork *What Happened in the Pursuit of Dust*, a wall installation and collage of fragments of ink on paper, is a manifestation of an evolving⁴⁰ aspect of my studio research which I envisage will be somewhere present in *Thank You (two*

⁴⁰ I refer to the Romantic unfinished project which arguably stems from Schlegel's conception of the fragment: "... it forever only becomes, and can never be completed" (Kramer, 1997, p. 134).

words). I have explored the idea of an arrangement of individual fragments containing ink blots and stains a number of times throughout my research, most recently in the exhibition *Diagram* at the Junction Art Gallery Middle Swan in October 2009 (see Figure 11). In chapter two I wrote about the way I came to think of the fragments I had created in the studio as pages from an imagined book. Initially I had pinned these ‘pages’ to the wall in a grid in an attempt to create one image. It soon became clear that this arrangement was in opposition to the idea of dialogue between writer and reader suggested by Jolley’s concept of “sophisticated spaces,” and in opposition to Schlegel’s conception of the fragment. Ben Robertson (2007, p. 623), in his review of Christopher Strathman’s book *Romantic Poetry and the Fragmentary Imperative: Schlegel, Byron, Joyce, Blanchot* (2006) writes that for Strathman:

Fragmentary writing...creates the same kind of exigency as does Socratic dialogue. A monologue establishes a rhetorical situation in which information is passed in one direction, and this type of situation implies that the thought process behind the discourse is complete. In contrast, a dialogue invites participation, interruption, contradiction, digression; as a consequence, it is inherently fragmentary. Moreover, its disjunctive nature fosters additional thought about the subject at hand.

Like Strathman (Robertson, 2007, p. 623) I am interested in “how the fragmented-ness of a literary work—whether the work itself is a fragment or whether it is fragmentary—creates different kinds of dialogue and thus encourages continued thought.” I am also interested in how this might be achieved in visual art through the manipulation of materials. For *Diagram* I therefore returned to my exploration of the way Jolley reconfigured her writing, drawing on a number of descriptions of her editing process. For example:

I realised later on that if I really wanted to write a story seriously I’d have to have separate pieces of paper. It seems a really naïve thought, but it did come to me as a kind of profound thing, that you needed separate

sheets of paper and folders. In fact it was my husband who said: 'Don't try to cram everything on one bit of paper'. I'd start right up here and I'd fill up the whole page and there was nowhere to write in. He would say: 'Spread your work out,'—he just said that once, having glanced across—'Spread it out so you can work in between lines.' I did start to do that, and would often write in between with different coloured pens so that I could keep the original thing, and then pick up what I had written in, and decide later on, in the rewriting, what I was going to use. That was his idea. It seems very stupid that I didn't think to simplify things a bit in that way (Grenville & Woolfe, 1993, p. 160).

This description, of coloured pens, lines and separate sheets of paper details the process of mapping out a story with materials, and suggested to me ways I might more successfully make connections with the key ideas accompanying my studio research and the Jolley archive. For *Diagram* I therefore arranged and rearranged the separate pieces of paper over a period of three days with Jolley's description of her editing process in mind. I also added a number of elements I had developed in the studio, fragmentary digressions perhaps, in order to test out ways I could relate these fragments for the viewer to the connections I have made throughout my studio research. One result, I was informed by viewers of the work, was that the arrangement had begun to look something like a map, perhaps a charting of a fictional landscape.

“The Little Dance”

In her essay “The Little Dance in Writing,” Jolley (2006, p. 267) describes how an author can lift material which is dark, depressing or difficult with a moment of optimism, humour or kindness in order to be more truthful. Jolley (2006, p. 267) describes the “little dance” as “something that helped me with my writing, helped me to see around my characters, not to overdo one aspect of their lives.” As part of my plan to trial aspects of Jolley's creative process and with a view to how I might communicate this experience in the gallery, I planned to create an experimental space in the studio. Thinking of aspects of Jolley's life, including the enormous amount of time she must

have spent at her desk, I procured a desk which is old and heavy and worn – a fairly utilitarian, factory-made English desk from the era in which Jolley grew up – it speaks of time, the time and place that it comes from and because it is a desk for working at and has a patina which indicates it has been well used, it also speaks of the hours a writer must spend at her craft, sitting at a desk writing.

To get the desk to the studio, it had to be completely disassembled. Later, its component parts, arranged haphazardly in the studio, began to look more interesting to me than they would have if they had been reassembled in the usual way. The result was that as I moved the parts around, I began to think of a life (Jolley's life, for example, spent working at a desk writing poetry and stories), which has also been disassembled and packed away. The rearranged desk began to take on a new and truthful, sad meaning. As I positioned the pieces of the desk in a new way, I began to see that it was important to "lift" the arrangement. I imagined an archive of Jolley's possessions, tucked away in a back room, or shed (or, romantically, attic). I began to think of discovery in the archive, and of stories of an old trunk or biscuit tin in someone's shed that was found to contain important photographs or letters, and of bringing *her* back in a similar way. I began placing objects, elements linked to Jolley's work such as pages of her writing in the drawers, a chair for her to sit on, and the microscope with her writing, so that someone else coming into the space could also 'find' her.

I also began pinning strips of facsimiles of Jolley's writing to the ceiling above the desk. These pinned fragments, Jolley's ideas on strips of paper seemed to float and I was reminded of Jolley's description of the experience of reading poetry: "the meaning seems to float, to some degree, free of what seems to carry it...and then you say 'Oh, I've got it'"(n.d.). These strips of paper also seemed to be something like the quills of

Schlegel's Hedgehog (see page 10): each an idea containing a future-oriented kernel, and the end of the sentences projecting into space.

Through "material thinking," that is, the process of exploring materials (the desk, paper and ink) in the studio, a double movement occurred. That is, through the process of disassembling and reassembling, I found new understanding. I had been thinking of the archive as a place of hope, and something like Jolley's "little dance" sprang naturally from the experience, from thoughts and feelings produced through reflection while working with materials. These feelings and the process of material thinking might also be explained by Louise Bourgeois' (1998, p. 142–143) description of assemblage:

Assemblage is different than carving. It is not an attack on things. It is a coming to terms with things. With assemblage or the found object you are caught by a detail or something strikes your fancy and you adjust, you give in, you cut out, and you put together. It really is work of love. But there is something else in the assemblage, there is the restoration and reparation. Mind you that is what my parents did, they restored and repaired tapestries, so there is a common attitude. To repair a thing, to find something broken, to find a tapestry torn apart with big holes in it and destroyed and step by step to rebuild it – making an assemblage is that. You repair the thing until you remake it completely.

Hope in the Archive

Another aim of my research has been to produce an installation of creative visual work which participates in a recent conversation in the visual arts about the archive. Ulrich Baer (2008, p. 54)⁴¹ argues that artists' responses to the archive are often overly melancholic (see footnote 12). Baer reaches this conclusion as a response to the bombing of the twin towers in New York on September 11, 2001 and to his later discovery, in an archive in Prague, of private love letters written by the poet Rainer

⁴¹ Shelley Rice (2008, p. 10–11) reviews two recent exhibitions at the Centre for Photography in New York in which Derrida's *Archive Fever* and the current interest in archives are examined for implications in the directions in contemporary art.

Maria Rilke (1875–1926).⁴² Baer (2008, p. 58) writes that the Prague archive, containing fragments of ink on paper⁴³, that is, Rilke’s love letters, allowed him to see the archive as a place from which to make creative work. Baer (2008, p. 56) argues that “There are also archives of joy and life, and it is sometimes possible to exhume hope from among the ashes.” My project asks whether it might be possible to discover glimpses into other lives which offer us hope and a sense of connectedness to others as well as starting points for our own creative projects, and whether this is something that fragments and spaces in the archive can do if we have the opportunity to reflect and fill them with our own interpretations and meanings.

I hope to communicate this possibility through the artworks I have created and in the manner in which I present them in the spaces of the gallery. For example, a number of the fragments I have created in response to the Jolley archive, aim to speak of discovery in the concrete spaces of the archive. These small fragments are also a response to Friedrich Schlegel’s (Thomas, 2008, p. 25) description of the fragment as “like a miniature work of art.” I also aim through the fragmentary nature of these small works and my use of the ink blot to engage the viewer’s imagination,⁴⁴ and in doing so to talk of the creative potential of fragments. At the same time, through their arrangement in archival folders, I aim to make links between Elizabeth Jolley’s manner of working, the Romantics and the archive.

⁴² Baer (2008, p. 58) describes Rilke as one who “sought to find transcendence in modernity through the figure and experience of love.” Elizabeth Jolley used Rilke’s poem *Liebeslied* as the epigraph to her final novel *Lovesong* (1997).

⁴³ Baer describes Rilke’s love letters as “creating a sense of a beyond in descriptions of everyday things and experiences through the careful manipulation of ordinary language.” The Jolley archive contains photocopies of Rilke’s poetry, and I wonder whether this notion of the “beyond” in the everyday is what Jolley was referring to when she wrote “wonderfully ordinary” in the margin of a student’s creative work.

⁴⁴ For Gaston Bachelard (1958, p. 149): “Imagination in miniature is natural imagination which appears at all ages in the daydreams of born dreamers.”

Inspiration through reading is to be found in the archive. In my own case, in a collection of handouts on the writing of poetry, written for students by Elizabeth Jolley in the 1980's at Curtin University of Technology in Western Australia. Throughout the course of my research I have found others who have also experienced this. For Jacques Derrida (1995, p. 21) inspiration was found in the Freud's former home, now a museum, in a book given to Sigmund Freud by his father. For Carolyn Steedman (2002, p. 29–31), this joy was found in the writing of Hester Thrale, a writer whose voice Steedman models in her own work. For Elizabeth Jolley (see footnotes 42, 43) and others, including Gaston Bachelard (1958, p. 8) and more recently Ulrich Baer (2008, p. 58), it was the poetry and the letters of the poet Rainer Maria Rilke which gave them hope and inspiration.

Rather than dwelling on loss in the archive, I am encouraged by these writers and artists to look for what may be salvaged. These writers found art in the archive, the presence of which “alters the materiality of the archive, undoing its allegedly cemetery ethos and immersing it in communal forms of life, vividly,” perhaps showing us that “the archive begins to seem more womb (site of unborn art, unpublished manuscripts, nascent ways of being embodied in print) than tomb” (Roberts, 2002, p. 302). As Baer (2008, p. 56) points out to understand the archive as a place of loss but also of joy, is a precarious undertaking, but an archive in Prague, containing Rilke's love letters (that is, ink on paper), allowed Baer, to see the archive as a place from which to make creative work. Although the archive has been seen as a place of loss, it is also worth considering the paper on which Rilke wrote words, through which we might feel a connection with the everyday humanity of the past. In the light of the arguments made by Steedman (2002) I would argue that the labour and dust of ordinary people, who have never been represented in any archive, supported this creative work: the placement of ink on paper

by a man who devoted his life to thoughtful and poetic communication about human life. The dust of ordinary people is on the paper on which Rilke wrote, and is contained in it. This evidence of hope in the archive also evokes for me Jolley's device of "the little dance in writing." She wrote (2007, pp. 267–268):

...simple rules are in my head when I teach. Teaching has helped me to write in that I have learned to read and to be aware of overwriting or writing in a particular style that is not brought to a satisfactory state. I feel the world is full of evil things and that in writing one can perhaps find acceptance. The little dance in writing is very important. Students, if they become involved with the problems of the world, may stay there and not see beyond the pain and suffering. I have found that students like to 'put the world right' in their writing, and so I use exercises to help them understand the little dance in writing...

I have wondered if this idea, Jolley's "little dance," could be applied when making visual art, and when approaching the archive...

beaming almost, not saying anything either but not taking his blue eyes off Don's uncertain face. Both the man who had pushed him into the car and the one who was driving were dressed for the office, looking very smooth, and at least one of them was wearing an expensive after shave - the scent filled the car - but for once Don didn't seem to mind. The car

Wonderfully
Ordinary

- ✓ was obviously new, and running beautifully, the suspension absorbing
- ✓ every last vibration from the road, and the impression of luxury was
- ✓ complemented by the fact that there was almost no engine noise at all.

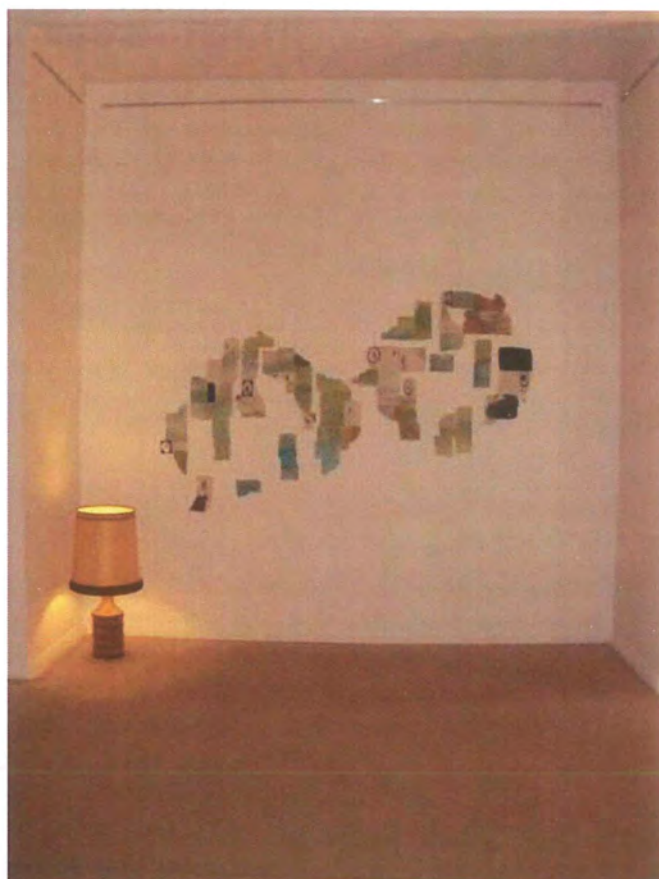
Don felt a powerful urge to sleep, but he fought it off, turning to his captor and saying: Where are you taking me? He meant to speak with an edge to his voice, he meant to sound indignant, threatening. He remembered a warm afternoon a long time ago by the river, when his children were younger, and the sun was friendly on his shoulder. What's going on, what's all this about, he said, trying to be angry. He saw

Exceptional

himself in another car, with a young woman who was his wife, and his voice sounded to him calm, even polite. He felt himself getting confused. The young man next to him smiled and put his finger to his lips, then he reached forward to touch the driver on the shoulder. Don looked out the window of the car as they banked around in a graceful curve, over the tile roofs of houses, and he could see gardens, backyard pools, driveways, and then his own house, unmistakably his own, with the big gum tree in the front yard, the red painted concrete of the driveway, and the lawnmower, still running by the rose bed, and beside it the body of a man, his own body, spread out full length and motionless on the freshly mown lawn.

Very well written (a plain prose
remark but
thank you I mean every
word of it
7.5
EJ.

Figure 11



Top: Figure 12
Bottom: Figure 13

Conclusion

In Australia our writers come from various backgrounds. There are a large number of distinctive voices. Fresh vision seems boundless. If we look beyond our shores and if we look back over the centuries of writing we can see that we are a part of the continuation of a tradition and a destiny for which there is no explanation. Walt Whitman wrote in 1855:

A child said, what is the grass? Fetching it to me with full hands; How could I answer the child?...I do not know what it is any more than he.

Jolley (1991, p. 100)

In my visual research I have used the methodology of “material thinking” through practice-led research in order to develop an installation of contemporary visual artworks made from paper, ink and dust. This approach has allowed me to research a variety of evidence including, but not limited to, the documents contained within a small archive of writing by Elizabeth Jolley, and to engage with the Jolley archive in new ways. I examined Jolley’s teaching notes in the light of connections made in the literature between archives, the Romantic fragment and dust, and at the same time made new connections through the studio exploration of specific materials and spaces. That is, my studio research has thus far aimed to reveal the kernel—the seed potential in fragments which may be found in the archive—by responding to the Jolley archive through the creation, in the studio, of fragments and by trialling the creation of spaces in the gallery which might parallel creative spaces in the archive.

Elizabeth Jolley and the archive:

Elizabeth Jolley’s teaching career was an important aspect of her life and work which arguably has, to date, been inadequately represented in the scholarly record. Jolley’s teaching notes have not been researched before and are instructional about making art. They reveal rare thoughts and glimpses of a life spent in the thoughtful pursuit of

communicating poetically to others. They have been an important resource for my developing creative practice and might have the potential to be of interest to other students and creative practitioners beyond Jolley's original intentions. It seems to me that the archive of Jolley's writing has the potential to continue teaching students and others beyond her lifetime. I argue that this is part of the seed-potential of the archive of Jolley's writing for students. As one result, my own work might reveal that what may be found in an archive may sometimes be glimpses into the lives of others as well as starting points for our own creative projects. This is knowledge I believe an engagement with poetry and visual art can provide. In doing so, by responding to the potential of fragments in the archive through creative work, it might be possible to participate in a dialogue with the creative minds of the past in new ways.

It may be debated whether a collection of undated teaching notes constitutes an archive worth investigating, or whether such a collection points to a lacuna in the record of Elizabeth Jolley's life which for some good reason has escaped official preservation. However, for Steedman (2002, p. 68), the archive: "is made from the selected and consciously chosen documentation from the past and from the mad fragmentations that no-one intended to preserve and that just ended up there." Perhaps these papers simply illustrate one instance of a general tendency in the archive. It seems that it is often chance that determines whether something is archived. Ulrich Baer (2008, p. 54) also suggests: "What belongs in an archive? Everything that someone does not wish to forget and everything that someone believes will hold the key to the future."

Fragments

I have written that throughout this project, I have worked at different times of the day and very early in the morning as Jolley did, sitting opposite a window while I worked. I

have used the word illuminate a number of times. For the Romantics, poetry was the lamp which illuminates objects, and the poet was both mirror and lamp, reflecting “a world already bathed in an emotional light he has himself reflected” (Abrams, 1953, p. 52). Elizabeth Jolley has been a character in the landscape of my imagination, sitting at her desk, with her lamp on, writing, amongst many other things, her book “Woman in a Lampshade.” She is illuminated by her lamp.

I have documented my experience of living Elizabeth Jolley’s timetable and following her creative process, and my own studio research, using photography.⁴⁵ I thought of Jolley, composing stories of characters in interior domestic space, whose state of being was often illuminated by their relationship to outside elements, that is, the landscape in which they were set. She wrote in her handout “The Art of Poetry” (n.d. p.2):

The writer uses invention from his own heart and mind to compose characters and events found in observation. He may use events in his own life and relate these to glimpses of other people’s lives. And he may use the appearance of the landscape and the changing of the seasons to show his characters and their thoughts and their feelings. And of course, his own thoughts and feelings may often be revealed in the process of invention.⁴⁶

I myself was set in a landscape.⁴⁷ I was often very aware of the outside world while working inside. As the morning starts for example, the light changes, weather happens,

⁴⁵ At the same time, these versions of ‘quick notes’ have also aimed to make connections to the key ideas dust, fragments and the Romantic fragment.

⁴⁶ Maria Suarez-Lafuente in her essay “Selves and others in Elizabeth Jolley’s narratives” (Bird & Walker, 1991, p. 16) explores this two way process by which in the writing of fiction the author explores ‘others’ and at the same time explores the self. In an interview with Ray Willbanks (1992, p. 126) Jolley said of her use of landscape elements: “...the landscape in Australia...can be so menacing and frightening, at the same time so beautiful and magical...You can parallel the characters’ thoughts and feelings by the external things and that makes it stronger to me...Landscape, trees, weather, they’re all a bit ordinary, but they are important.” It seems to me that Jolley’s description of her use of landscape elements in her writing might also be seen as an observation of everyday life.

⁴⁷ See footnote 14.

birds start up, and I was often drawn to go outside to take photographs.⁴⁸ What has emerged from these photographs has been a possible reflection of Jolley's creative process, a reflection of me and my experiences and perhaps, my own position on the trajectory of Romantic thought is a little clearer. That is, it has become clearer to me what I brought with me to this project, and what attracted me to the Jolley archive in the first place. I am excited to think of the possibilities for future research the insights I have gained open up for me.

The meaning of Schlegel's aphorism "A fragment, like a little work of art, must be quite separated from its surroundings and complete in itself—like a hedgehog" has been puzzled over by a number of writers and theorists.⁴⁹ Because the hedgehog is covered in pointy spines, or quills, and perhaps for other reasons too, Schlegel's hedgehog has been interpreted as aggressive.⁵⁰ I have thought of fragments, and Schlegel's hedgehog, a great deal throughout this project. I have asked myself if dust might be something like the points of a hedgehog's quills: indexes to new work, new thoughts. And then, recently, while taking photographs and video on my property as part of my creative work, I discovered an echidna. Hearing me, the echidna hid under a pile of sticks, and curled up to protect the kernel of its body: quills in soft greys blending perfectly with the dry leaf litter and wood. Then, as I watched and waited very quietly, camera in hand, it unfurled its quills. Each point, like the tip of Schlegel's quill dipped in ink, reached

⁴⁸ As a development of this idea and of the photographs I took as "quick notes," I have also shot a number of short videos with a view to projecting them in varied combinations on the wall of the gallery as a component of *Thank You (two words)*. These short videos, recorded moments in time of my experience on my own property during the time of my research, also aim to connect with the key ideas that have accompanied my research.

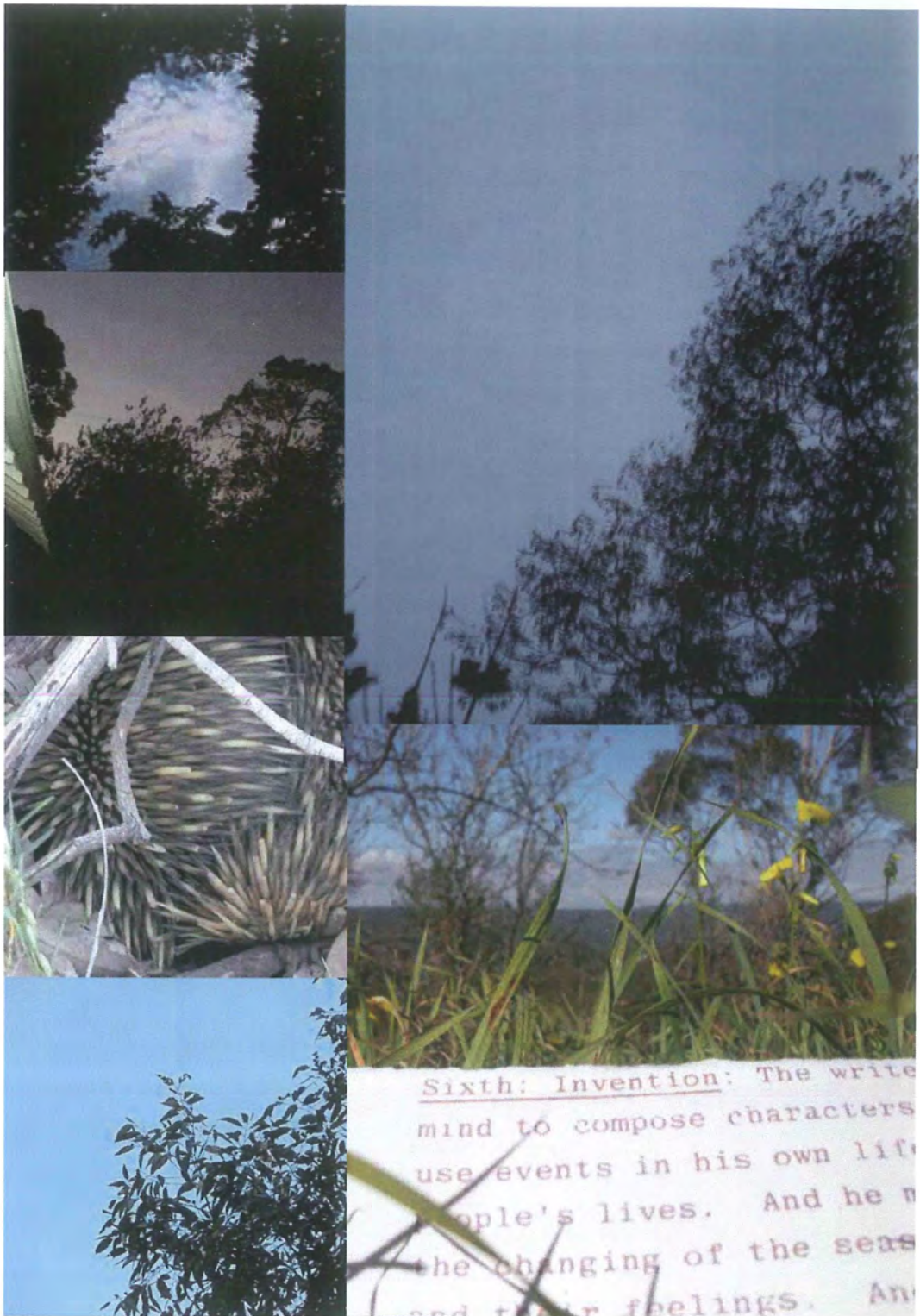
⁴⁹ As an indication of the intrigue created by Schlegel's use of the hedgehog metaphor, see (Kramer, p. 148).

⁵⁰ Charles Rosen (cited in Kramer, 1997, p. 148) writes: "Like its definition, the Romantic Fragment is complete (this oxymoron was intended to disturb, as the hedgehog's quills make its enemies uncomfortable): separate from the rest of the universe, the Fragment nevertheless suggests distant perspectives. Its separation, indeed, is aggressive: it projects into the universe precisely by the way it cuts itself off."

out in the many directions made by the animal's body as the little antipodean fragment transported itself through the bush. It trundled magically on its way. There was nothing aggressive about it. I looked. It just *was*.

My creative work has drawn on Schlegel's conception of the fragment in a number of ways. I envisage that it will continue to reflect this concept. It is thus far an unfinished project, in the process of becoming. The installation of these artworks will be an important part of the project. I envisage a continuation of "material thinking" as I respond to the space at Spectrum and I consider the possibility that some unexpected results will occur. It may be that in the space of the gallery, some of the connections I have made throughout my research and the writing of the exegesis will become stronger, while others may fade. I have seen the writing of this exegesis as a process of combining and recombining fragments, the installation *Thank You (two words)* will aim to do so in another language.⁵¹ I imagine them both as part of a conversation of dust.

⁵¹ See Milech & Schilo (2008, p. 8).



Clockwise from top left: figures 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19

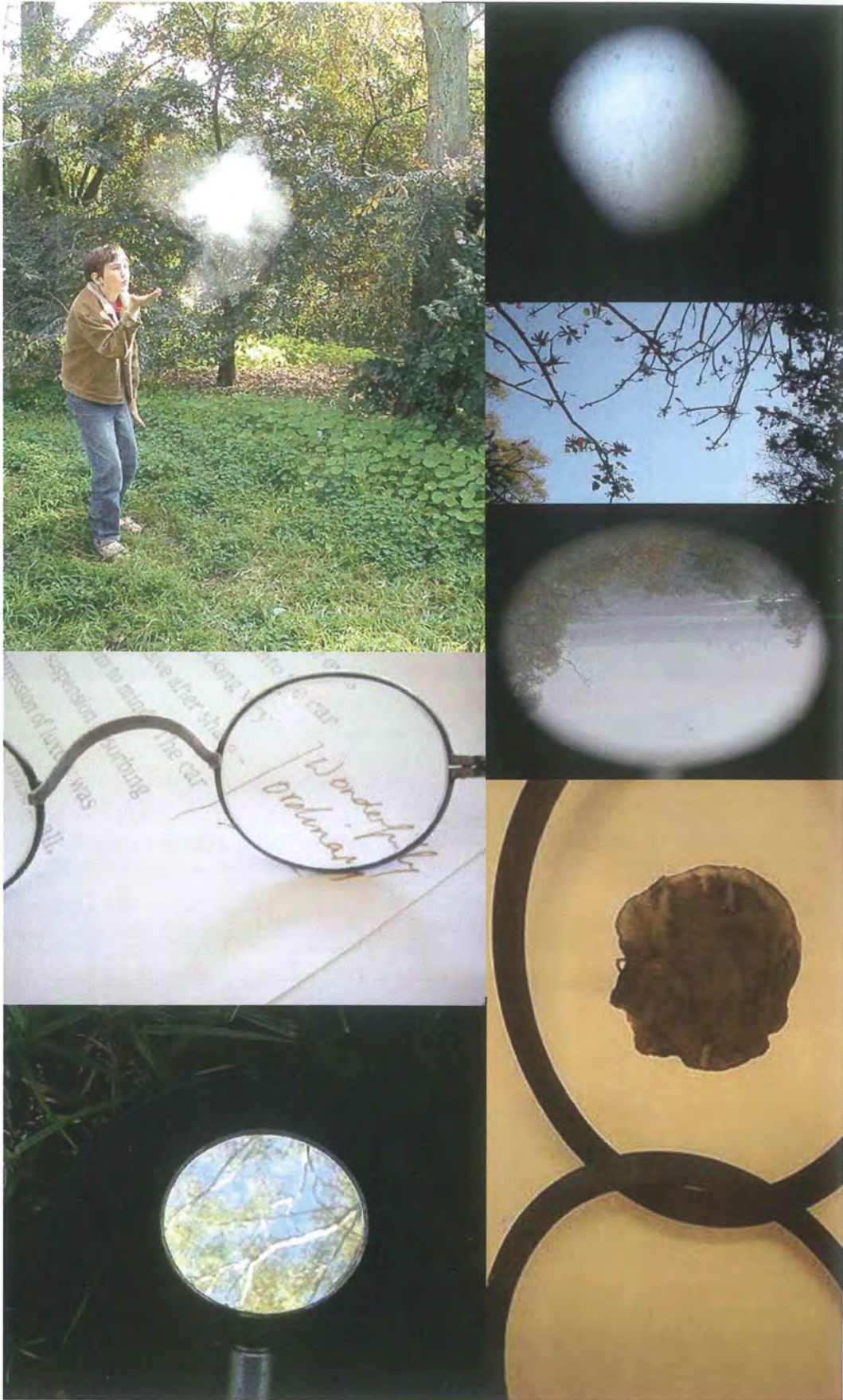


Figure 20

List of images

Fig.1. Jolley marginalia on student assignment (n.d.)

Fig. 2. Andrea Wood. *Quick Note 1*. 2009, artist's own image.

Fig. 3. Xu Bing. *Where does the dust itself collect?* Retrieved October 12, 2009, from <http://www.nytimes.com/2004/07/11/arts/art-ashes-to-ashes-dust-to-art.html>

Fig. 4. Andrea Wood. *Quick Note 2*. 2009, artist's own image.

Fig. 5. Andrea Wood. *Quick Note 3*. 2009, artist's own image.

Fig. 6. Victor Hugo. *Composition with taches*. Ca. 1875 (Rodari et al 1998).

Fig. 7. Andrea Wood. *Quick Note 4*. 2009, artist's own image.

Fig. 8. Andrea Wood. *Quick Note 5*. 2009, artist's own image.

Fig. 9. Andrea Wood. *Quick Note 6*. 2009, artist's own image.

Fig. 10. Andrea Wood. *Quick Note 7*. 2009, artist's own image.

Fig. 11. Jolley marginalia on student assignment (n.d.)

Fig. 12. Andrea Wood. *Quick Note 7(Diagram)*. 2009, artist's own image.

Fig. 13. Andrea Wood. *Quick Note 8*. 2009, artist's own image.

Fig. 14. Valeska Soares. *After Images*. Retrieved 3 June 2009 from <http://www.artslant.com/ny/articles/show/1315>

Fig. 15. Andrea Wood. *Quick Note 9*. 2009, artist's own image.

Fig. 16. Andrea Wood. *Quick Note 10*. 2009, artist's own image.

Fig. 17. Andrea Wood. *Quick Note 11*. 2009, artist's own image.

Fig. 18. Andrea Wood. *Quick Note 12*. 2009, artist's own image.

Fig. 19. Andrea Wood. *Quick Note 13*. 2009, artist's own image.

Fig. 20. Andrea Wood. *Quick Notes*. 2009, artist's own image.

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Appendices

A selection of student handouts from the archive of Elizabeth Jolley's writing for students, included by kind permission of Mr Richard Jolley.

Appendix 1a

Elizabeth Jolley

Sometimes you read or listen to an utterance that is spread over time and you catch the meaning either at the end or, if you are smart, half way through. The meaning seems to float, to some degree, free of what seems to carry it.

If you read a poem that really means something to you, you will stop at that poem, you don't turn to the next or do anything else. You just sit there and let it all wash back like the tide, and then you say, "Oh, I've got it."

It is the capacity of the mind to surround the whole when only a part is given.

Appendix 1b

On the Writing of Fiction Elizabeth Tolley

The fiction writer reflects the writer's surroundings, the society, the community, the landscape and the social issues. The work contains, as well, aspects of the human personality, the hopes, the wishes and the fears in human life. Human survival and human ~~responsib~~ responsibility are of importance.

The writer looks back and looks forward, care must be taken with accuracy over details when looking both ways.

~~the~~ As in poetry, the essence of fiction writing lies in the moulding of real experience with imagination, awareness and invention bringing about the production of something unexpected. The word 'novel' means something fresh, something new.

If you feel tempted to include the everyday item of food, for example, the hamburger, put it in juxtaposition with something unusual. Collective words, for example 'cosmetics, underclothes, pots and pans, bits and pieces' - make for dull writing unless they are used to prepare the way for some sort of surprise in the work.

Readers need to be surprised and involved. Thoughts need to be provoked. An expression of freshness is needed and a careful selection of words and phrases.

Spaces on the page should have a special reason for being there. Remember to use new paragraphs.

A different approach should be taken, if possible, towards well known "incidents," for example, domestic conflict, lost children/money/property, childbirth and so on. Remember that suggestion is more powerful than the straight telling of facts.

Appendix 1c

"True ease in writing comes from art, not chance;
As those move easiest who have learned to dance."
(From "An Essay on Criticism" by Alexander Pope)

THE ART OF POETRY

In his preface to Lyrical Ballads (1798-1805) the poet, William Wordsworth, wrote that "Poetry is the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings: it takes its origin from emotion recollected in tranquillity." At the time he was writing about modern poetry, that is, his own poetry which he was writing and of course the poems of Coleridge, the two poets were friends. He went on to write,

"Readers will perhaps frequently have to struggle with feelings of strangeness and awkwardness, they will look around for poetry but they should ask themselves while reading modern poetry if it contains a natural delineation of human passions, human characters and human incidents and should try to put aside their own pre-established codes of decision...." This sounds pompous but it is the man, Wordsworth, trying to tell people to see his poetry as a reflection of themselves and of their own times. He goes on to write, "They (the poems) will co-operate with benign (gentle) tendencies in human nature and will, in their degree, be efficacious in making men wiser, better and happier."

Poetry isn't something which is cut off from all other kinds of writing.

In order to be able to enjoy and understand poetry it is a good idea to look at the qualities which are a part of the writing of poetry, and of course, a part of the writing of interesting prose for a good short story or a play or a novel.

First: Observation: The poet needs the ability to observe and to really notice things as they are in themselves and as they are in relation to himself.

Second: Description. The poet needs to be able to describe what he has observed in such a way that the reader is able to receive a picture in his mind which he can keep there so that, even though he has not seen what is described, he feels that he is acquainted with what has been described.

Sometimes places are described or people, or people's feelings or lack of feelings for each other and for places. A sight or a sound or a fragrance may be all that is necessary for the poet to describe. One small thing only, from his own observation, might be enough to preserve for ever an image in the mind of the reader.

Appendix 1d

Third: Perception: The writer who is the more exquisitely aware has the wider perception. Perception in the writer brings about the ability to notice and to observe more closely certain things which pass unnoticed by those who are not writers. Perception enables or rather causes the writer to feel more deeply or more joyfully and perhaps more painfully things as they exist in themselves and as reacted upon by his own mind.

Fourth: Reflection: Especially reflection in tranquillity and in solitude brings to the poet the value of actions, images, thoughts and feelings. At the same time, reflection assists the power of perception.

Fifth: Imagination and Fantasy: The writer, in writing poetry, needs to be able to add to and alter his original thought and experience by his own creation and by using other associations to lift the ordinary thought and the ordinary experience into something memorable. (Please remember there are exceptions to everything I say.)

Sixth: Invention: The writer uses invention from his own heart and mind to compose characters and events found in observation. He may use events in his own life and relate these to glimpses of other people's lives. And he may use the appearance of the landscape and the changing of the seasons to show his characters and their thoughts and their feelings. And of course, his own thoughts and feelings may often be revealed in the process of invention.

Seventh: Judgement: The writer has to be able to exercise judgement; he has to be able to decide how and when various aspects of his own thought and observation should be used. He has to be able to decide on how much truth and how much imagination. And he has to make decisions about the use of words and phrases and the length of lines. Sometimes judgement is helped by natural feeling; the poet just knows what is right for his poem, and at other times it is a matter of planning and of contrivance - but it must never appear to be so!

All kinds of human behaviour are in poems. Like the painter whose mind is a storehouse packed with sunsets upon sunsets, the poet's mind is stored with impressions and with sights and sounds and meanings which deal with reverence and with responsibility and with love. The poet is concerned with all things which evoke the playful, the ridiculous, the amusing, the mad, the angry, the pathetic, the hopeful and the tender. His heart and mind are an eternal profusion from which he struggles to bring out some kind of simple beauty and order.

E. Elizabeth Jolley
Elizabeth Jolley

Robert Frost ^{Poetry} "The best words in the best order"

W. Auden "Poetry is memorable speech"