Reference number: MS 181

Guide to the Papers of Debra Adamson

Academy Library

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Summary

Collector: Debra Adamson
Title: Papers of Debra Adamson
Date range: 1974-1989
Reference number: MS 181
Extent: 14 cm (2 boxes)
Abstract: The bulk of this collection comprises personal material of the Australian poet and writer Robert Adamson, which was collected by his ex-wife Debra Francine Adamson, née Smith.

Scope and Content

The papers include correspondence, literary drafts, an interview, reviews of his work and photographs. There is a manuscript draft of “Catch the wild fishes”, written jointly by Robert Adamson and Dorothy Hewett. The collection also includes material from the literary magazine *New poetry*, which Robert Adamson edited for some years.

Organization

Special Collections staff has imposed the series arrangement for this collection to describe and preserve context and relationships.

Biographical Note

Robert Harry Adamson was born on the 17 May 1943 at Neutral Bay, Sydney, and has lived on the Hawkesbury River, on and off, for most of his life. He spent his earliest years in Neutral Bay and was educated at Neutral Bay Primary School, North Sydney Boys High and Mount Penang Training School for Boys. While in corrective institutions he educated himself and developed his interest in writing, especially poetry.

Adamson is one of Australia's leading contemporary poets, and is a successful writer, editor and publisher. He is well known for his poetry, which has been published widely in Australian and in American literary magazines and anthologies, and translated into several languages. He has organised and produced poetry readings, delivered papers, lectures and readings at literary festivals throughout Australia. He has been writer-in-residence at Australian universities, and was President of the Poetry of Australia, 1970-1980. He was instrumental in organising tours by both Robert Duncan and Robert Creeley to Australia in the 1970s.

He became a member of the Sydney literary scene in the late 1960s and was a significant influence on the rise of the 'New Australian Poetry' in the early 1970s. He joined the editorial team of *Poetry magazine* in 1968. The magazine underwent a change of editorial direction that included a change


During the course of his career, Adamson has received a number of grants and fellowships as well as publication subsidies for his own books, his magazine, and for the books published through his publishing ventures from the Literature Board of the Australia Council. These have helped him to pursue his career as a full-time writer.

He has been awarded the following prizes for his works: New South Wales Premier's Literary Awards, Kenneth Slessor Prize for Poetry, 2002, shortlisted for *Mulberry leaves : new and selected poems 1970-2001* NBC Turnbull Fox Phillips Poetry Prize, 1990, winner for *The clean dark* New South Wales State Literary Awards, Kenneth Slessor Prize for Poetry, 1990, winner for *The clean dark* Victorian Premier’s Literary Awards, C. J. Dennis Award for Poetry, 1990, winner for *The clean dark* Writers’ Fellowship, The National Parks and Wildlife, 1984 check this WA Sesquicentenary Literary Competition, Poems by Australian Writers Not Including Western Australians Award, 1979, joint winner for “Growing up alone” Grace Leven Poetry Prize, 1977, winner for *Selected poems*

Adamson publications and performances include:
*The imitator* (1969)
*Canticles on the skin* (1970)
*The rumour* (1971)
*Swamp riddles* (1974)
*Cross the border*, etching by Garry Shead (1977)
*Selected poems* (1977)
*Where I come from* (1979)
*The law at heart's desire* (1982)
*Zoo*, a play with Dorothy Hewett, commissioned by the Australian Theatre for Young People, 1984
The clean dark (1989)
Wards of the state (1992)
The brutality of fact (1993)
Waving to Hart Crane (1994)
The language of oysters (1997)
Meaning (1998)
Black water : approaching Zukofsky (1999)
Reading the river : selected poems (2004)

References:
Robert Adamson curriculum vitae
The Oxford companion to Australian literature, 2nd ed. (1994)
The bibliography of Australian literature. A-E (2001)
AustLit Australian Literature Gateway database, 2003
Ozlit: Australian Literature Resources on the Net, Books & Writers Database, 2003
Book covers

Administrative Information

Access
The collection is available for research.

Restrictions on Use
No copying is permitted without the permission of the copyright owners.

Preferred Citation
[Manuscript Item], Papers of Debra Adamson, Academy Library, UNSW@ADFA, MS 181, Series [Number], Folder [Number].

Provenance
The Academy Library purchased the collection from Debra Adamson in 1990.
Additional Information

Related Material
Further material relating to Robert Adamson is located in the Guide to the Papers of Robert Adamson at MS 149 and in the Guide to the Papers of Garry Shead at MS 288.

Separated Material
Further papers of Robert Adamson are held by the National Library, in Guide to the Papers of Robert Adamson at MS 5713 and in the Papers of Cheryl Creatrix at MS 6422.

Series List and Descriptions

Series 1 Correspondence, 1978-1989

This series comprises business and personal correspondence with Robert and Debra Adamson. The bulk of the correspondence consists of letters written to Robert Adamson, and generally concerns Adamson's writing and publishing activities during the period 1979-1983. There are letters from editors and contributors regarding publication of *New poetry* and Adamson's poems in various literary magazines, anthologies and newspapers. The personal letters are mainly from Robert Adamson to Debra Adamson.

Folder 1
Business correspondence regarding *New poetry*, 1979-1982

Including David Brooks, Sylvia Kantaris, Literature Board of the Australia Council for the Arts, Kate Llewellyn, Eddie Woods, Roger Mackell of Gleebooks, Michael Heyward and Peter Craven of *Scripsi*

Folder 2
Business correspondence, 1979-1983

Including Angus & Robertson, Australian Broadcasting Commission, Collier Macmillan, Yasuko Gushikata, Literature Board of the Australia Council for the Arts, *Overland*, Oxford University Press, *Quadrant, Stand magazine*, the *Age* and William Collins
Folder 3
Personal correspondence with Robert Adamson, 1978-1989

Including letters from Robert Adamson to Debra Adamson, Cheryl and Kate; draft of a letter from Debra Adamson to Tom Shapcott; personal references from R. F. Abbey, Clive A. Evatt, Dulcie Stretton and James Tulip; manuscript copy of Robert Adamson's will, 26/1/1982

**Series 2 Literary Works by Robert Adamson, 1974-1985**

This series comprises drafts of unpublished poems and typescript drafts and newspaper cuttings of published poems. Also included is a typescript of the screenplay “Catch the wild fishes”, written jointly with Dorothy Hewett.

Folder 1
Manuscript and typescript drafts of poems by Robert Adamson, 1974-1985

Including:

Folder 2
Photocopy typescript draft of “Catch the wild fishes”, written by Robert Adamson and Dorothy Hewett, 16 p. Original concept from *Wards of the state: an autobiographical novella*, by Adamson (1992)

**Series 3 Miscellaneous Papers, 1974-1983**

This series includes journals and newspaper cuttings of interviews with Adamson, together with criticisms, articles and other writings regarding Adamson and his work.

Folder 1
Annotated typescript draft of an interview with Robert Adamson, 58 p. (first part of p. 1 missing), c. 1975-1976
Including Adamson's early life; Francis Webb influence; his poetry and publications; Poetry magazine and its transformation into New poetry, criticism of the magazine; the creation of the magazines Leatherjacket and Beyond poetry; Australian and American poetry and poets published by Adamson; Australian artists and Artists for Labor

Folder 2
Cuttings of book reviews and advertising flyers for poetry readings by Robert Adamson; Prism Books - list of books published, 1971-1982 and brochure; invitation to the launch of The law at heart's desire; photocopy of poetry by Robert Duncan; Currency Press invitation, 1974-1983

Series 4 Photographs, 1976-1985

This series comprises mounted photographs of Robert Adamson and friends at various functions.

Box-folder 1
Robyn Nevin and Robert Adamson at the launch of The law at hearts desire, held at Glover Cottage, Sydney, 1982
Brett Whiteley and Robert Adamson at the launch of The law at hearts desire
Garry Shead, 1984
Robert Adamson and Bob Debus receiving National Parks and Wildlife Literature Board grant, 1984 (2)
Robert Adamson at Dymocks, 1982
Robert Adamson, Sydney Harbour, 1982 (2)
Juno Gemes, Michael Wilding, Robert Adamson, Balmain, 1985
Tim Storries and Robert Adamson at Brett Whiteley's home
Harry, Robert and Betty Adamson
Robert and Debra Adamson, Mosman, 1979