Reference number: MS 0012

Guide to the Papers of Erica Bell

University of Sydney Library
University of Sydney

Sydney
2000

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### Summary

**Collector:** Bell, Erica  
**Title:** Papers of Erica Bell  
**Date range:** ca. 1986 - 1989  
**Reference number:** MS 0012  
**Extent:** 2 boxes; .60 linear metres;  
**Repository:** Rare Books and Special Collections Library, University of Sydney Library  

**Abstract:** Materials relating to Erica Bell's Ph.D. of 1989, including original interviews with contemporary Australian poets, letters from the poets, photographs and literary analyses by Erica Bell.

### Scope and Content

Original interviews by Erica Bell and other original material directly relevant to the interviews.

Collection includes a copy of the questions (5 pages) sent to all sixteen poets who participated in the 1989 interviewing project for the Ph.D (not including Les Murray who was interviewed in 1986 as part of an Honours Thesis and was asked other questions). Of the sixteen poets who were part of the 1989 interviews, two had to respond in writing to the questions sent to them - Ken Bolton and John Jenkins. (BELL 1)

The list of standard questions each poet was asked suggest the breadth and significance of the interviewing project. The interviews offer autobiographical information, detailed information about poets' construction of the meaning of their poetry (particularly difficult poems which have eluded critical understanding), information about how poets see their writing in relation to key developments in Australian writing and poetry, detailed discussions of key individuals, cliques and forums for Australian poetry in the modern period, discussion of particular definitions of the new Australian poetry by John Tranter and others, poets' perceptions of the role...
of the poet and poetry in Australian society, as well as information about how poets see the mechanisms by which literary success occurs in Australia. The interviews offer a detailed retrospective of the modern period of Australian poetry by poets often associated with what has been called the new Australian poetry: more than that, poets were asked the kind of questions which could, and did, provoke disagreement with existing critical understandings of the period.

**Administrative Information**

**Access**
Special provisions, access conditions and restrictions apply governing the use of, photoduplication or publication of the items described. Readers should consult with the Library for further information concerning these conditions.

**Restrictions on Use**
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**Preferred Citation**
[Name of item], Papers of Erica Bell, ca.1986-1989, MS0012, Rare Books and Special Collections Library, University of Sydney Library.

**Provenance**
The items listed were collected by Erica Bell.

**Series List and Descriptions**

**Series One: Material Relating to the Interviews**

Bell 1 Copy of Interview Questions sent to the poets.

5pp.

Master Tapes.
The collection includes an electronic copy of all unedited interviews (except the Les Murray, Martin Johnston and Nigel Roberts interviews). The collection includes C90 cassette tape copies of broadcast quality master tapes of all interviews except the Nigel Roberts and Martin Johnston interviews - Les Murray interview only ever existed on C90 tape to begin with.

Cassette Tapes

Bell 2 Interview with Les Murray 25th-29th August 1986.

140pp.

Set of 6 C90 cassette tapes with typescript.

This is the only interview not recorded on broadcast quality tape.

4 Track Reel to Reel Audio Tape

Interviews were conducted roughly around a standard set of questions and include readings of some poems.

Bell 3 Interview with Alan Wearne 1st May 1989.

40pp.

Audio tape with Typescript

Recorded at Newcastle during Wearne's writer-in-residence at Newcastle University.

Bell 4 Interview with Gary Hutchinson 13th June 1989

29pp.

Audio tape with Typescript

Recorded at Carlton Melbourne

Bell 5 Interview with Robert Kenny 12th June 1989

32pp.

Audio tape with Typescript

Recorded at Fitzroy Melbourne
Bell 6 Interview with John Tranter, 20th May 1989

73pp.

Audio tape with Typescript.

Recorded at Stanmore Sydney.

Bell 7 Interview with Robert Adamson, 16th June 1989.

69pp.

Audio tape with Typescript.

Taped in the presence of Juno Adamson at Cheero Point near Brooklyn on the Hawkesbury River.

Bell 8 Interview with Jennifer Maiden, 29th April 1989.

41pp.

Audio tape with Typescript.

Recorded at Penrith Sydney. Also includes a 21 page edited copy of the original interview with annotations by hand by Jennifer Maiden.

Bell 9 Interview with John Forbes, 11th June 1989.

52pp.

Audio tape with Typescript.

Recorded in Melbourne during his writer-in-residence at Deakin University.

Bell 10 Interview with Philip Hammial, 17th June 1989.

34pp.

Audio tape with Typescript.

Recorded in Marrickville Sydney.

Bell 11 Interview with Rudi Krausmann, 30th April 1989.

45pp.
Audio tape with Typescript.

Recorded at Paddington Sydney.

Bell 12 Interview with Rae Desmond Jones, 17th June 1989.

32pp.

Audio tape with Typescript.

Recorded at Summer Hill Sydney.

Bell 13 Interview with Kris Hemensley, 12th June 1989.

46pp.

Audio tape with Typescript.

Recorded in Melbourne.

Bell 14 Interview with Laurie Duggan, 12th June 1989.

47pp.

Audio tape with Typescript.

Recorded in Melbourne.

Bell 15 Interview with Nigel Roberts, mid-June 1989.

Audio tape only.

Recorded in Sydney.

Bell 16 Interview with Martin Johnston, 17th June 1989.

30pp.

Audio tape with Typescript.

Recorded in Darlinghurst Sydney. [The interview with Martin Johnston was recorded shortly before his death, in the home of his estranged wife, while Martin was suffering from alcoholism].
Letters From The Poets

Bell 17 Ken Bolton, n.d.

2pp.

Handwritten letter.


Bell 18 Ken Bolton, n.d.

7pp.

Handwritten letter

Probably late 1989. Responding in writing to the standard set of interview questions (also two cover sheets discussing the published work and availability for interviewing of John Jenkins, as well as my letter to Ken Bolton which details and slightly modifies the standard interview questions).


3pp.

Handwritten letter.

Three page handwritten letter explaining his attitude to literary criticism in Australia and why he will not consent to being interviewed.

Bell 20 Kris Hemensley, 15 October 1990.

2pp.

Typed letter.

Explaining Kris Hemensley's attitude to the interviewing project and his recent literary activities.

Bell 21 John Jenkins, October 15 1989.

10 1/2pp.

Typed letter
Responding in writing to the standard set of interview questions (Jenkins was overseas when interviewing took place).


Two postcards, one four page letter and a sheet with poem.

Handwritten letters.

Two postcards, one four page letter and a sheet with the poem "The Young Woman Visitor" with comments by the poet, all explaining the background to the interview and Les Murray's attitude to being interviewed 1986-87.

Bell 23 Rudi Krausmann, 28th February 1990.

2pp.

Handwritten letter.

Bell 24 Alan Wearne, n.d.

3pp.

Handwritten letter.

Three page handwritten letter undated (probably early 1989) offering details about his recent writing (not yet published) and explaining that he has persuaded a number of Melbourne poets to participate in the interviewing project.


2 letters.

This and the following (Bell 25 to Bell 40) items consist of brief letters written around 1989 of a page or less from poets explaining their whereabouts and willingness to be interviewed, or their response to a transcript of the interview, or comments about their poetry and Australian poetry generally, as well as information about manuscripts and other records of the period such as diaries in their possession.

Bell 26 Juno Adamson (for Robert Adamson), 1989.

1 letter.
   2 postcards/1 letter.
Bell 28 Laurie Duggan, 1989.
   3 letters.
Bell 29 John Jenkins, 1989.
   6 letters/4 postcards.
   3 letters.
   5 letters.
   1 letter.
   (Missing.)
Bell 33 Tim Thorne, 1989.
   1 page letter.
Bell 34 Alan Wearne, 1989.
   1 letter/2 postcards.
Bell 35 Rudi Krausmann, 1989.
   2 letters/1 postcard.
Bell 36 Rae Desmond Jones, 1989.
   1 letter.
   2 letters.
1 letter/1 postcard.

(He was never interviewed.)


1 letter.

(He was never interviewed.)

Bell 40 Brenda Beaver for Bruce Beaver, 1989.

1 letter of 1 1/2 pages.

Explaining why Bruce Beaver cannot be interviewed.

Bell 41 Administrative Information for interviews.

Bell 42 Photographs

Photographs of Les Murray and sites visited with the poet which he says
are the setting of his poetry and/or sites of significance for his family. 16
photographs taken in 1986 (not included in the Honours thesis). (Negatives
included of all Les Murray photographs.)

Literary analyses by E. Bell summarising the interview project


26pp

A discussion of the findings of the interview project, highlighting the factors
influencing the formation of the new Australian poetry. Seminar presented
to Queensland University English Department.

Bell 44 Erica Bell. “The New Australian Poetry”: (draft of a book in

49pp

A discussion of the modern period of Australian poetry and how groups of
poets came to be located outside the dominant definitions of the new
Australian poetry which draws heavily upon the evidence of the interview
project. [Some overlap with the introduction of the thesis, although the
argument is quite different since it concerns the mechanisms by which
other groups of poets and poetries (concrete poetry, women's poetry, street
poetry) came to be located outside the new language poetry in Australia. In contrast, the introduction describes the different poetry cultures which developed post 1968 by way of contextualising and contrasting the features of a new language poetry in Australia associated with John Tranter and others.

**Series Two: Literary analyses by E Bell about the poets interviewed**

Bell 45 "'Those Gods made Permanent': Some Language Poetry in Australia 1968-88".


With regard to the relationship of the thesis to the interview collection:

It must be emphasised that, while the collection includes a copy of my Ph.D thesis, that thesis hardly utilised the primary material (interviews etc) I collected in the course of my study. The interviews were completed in the later stages of my Ph.D research: this meant that the questions I asked were ones that would be informed by knowledge of "gaps" in information on the period. It also meant I collected a vast amount of material that my already written thesis could not accommodate. In any event, the author was dead in that English Department and few academics believed as I did that the critic researching living poets had a kind of duty to collect and generate records that could be preserved for future study. I also thought (and it informs all the interviews) that the writer of a literary work can offer a very interesting reading of that work, a reading which is worth recording. However, when writing my thesis I avoided references to anything living poets had said in line with the orthodoxy that frowned upon such references to a writerly authority.

Thus my Ph.D thesis is a series of detailed textual analyses of the poetry associated with John Tranter's construction of a new Australian writing which is informed by Derrida but it includes only a few references to the interviews. As such it is a thesis useful to researchers who want to read detailed and convincing analyses of difficult poetry of the period (often book length poems) which I felt represented the key achievements of this generation of poets. I used the interview material to help me avoid errors in textual interpretation, and correctly name more obscure literary and other references in the exegesis of difficult poems, as well as check many factual statements in the thesis which the poets told me other critics had got
wrong. The six hundred odd pages of interview transcripts have not been read by anyone other than myself and one or two other poets (with the one exception of the Tranter interview although a severely truncated version of the John Tranter interview was published in Southerly in 1991).

Bell 46 "'The Mouthless Image of God': Philosophical threads in Les Murray's Poetry and Prose".

Unpublished dissertation submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements of a Master's Qualifying Degree at Queensland University 1986. Thesis includes 26 colour photographs which, as scope content in this thesis, are illustrations of sites of significance in Les Murray's poetry (the poet drove me around Bunyah and pointed to features of the landscape which were the subject of specific poems). Unlike the Ph.D thesis, this thesis was submitted with an appendix presenting the transcript of the interview. The body of this early thesis weaves some of the interview material into textual analyses of Les Murray's poetry.

**Series Three: Other items included in the collection which are relevant to the Ph.D thesis**


Bell 48 Photographs

23 large photographs (A4 to A5 size).

Photographs

Photographs of Robert Adamson taken by Juno Adamson, which also show the Hawkesbury River settings of Robert Adamson's poetry, as well as other Australian poets and writers (Richard Tipping, Dorothy Hewitt, A.D. Hope).

Books and Journals

(Some possibly rare books included here.)

Bell 49 After the Rage: South Australian Women's Art and Writing. Edited by Tess Brady and Jenny Boult. (South Australia: Tutu Press, 1983).

Bell 51 *Chimera: Journal of the New Writers’ Group*. (Brisbane: Sheson Press, 1983).


[A selection of writings from issues 1 to 19 of Hemensley's journal *The Ear in a Wheatfield*]

Bell 54 *Fighting Arts (Godhead) A Meuse Anthology*. (Sydney: Published around 1978).

(Contains writing by John Forbes, John Tranter and other poets of the period).


[A book of photographs of Carlton with an introduction by Garrie Hutchinson].


[A play in a book of plays entitled "Short Plays for the Australian Stage" which includes plays by Barry Dickens and Margo Hilton.]


[This was the last issue edited by Krausmann, probably early 1985.]


Bell 75 “925”. Issues 11 to 20 [nine issues bound], n.d.

[This journal was a free magazine published by a worker's collective and was important to the treatment of Australian street poetry in my thesis: it is a bound volume full of poetry, illustrations of poets, and details about the activities of street poetry groups: the journal evolved out of a series of weekly poetry readings organised by Thalia at the Universal Cafe in Fitzroy, Melbourne in 1978. Apparently the journal continued for five years or twenty issues.]


Collection of 5 editions of “Dark City” anthologies of poetry workshops conducted by Maiden in Blacktown, Sydney.


Bell 79 Jennifer Maiden. The Terms. (Sydney: Hale and Iremonger, 1982).


Bell 81 Missing Forms. (Melbourne: Collective Effort Press, 198-).

[This anthology of concrete poetry in Australia was edited by Peter Murphy. It was important to my thesis because it is the most comprehensive collection of concrete poetry I uncovered, given to me by Garrie Hutchinson who has had some association with concrete poets in Melbourne. Both Missing Forms and the bound copies of 925 are records of particular kinds of poetry cultures and poetries which form an interesting interface with groups of better known Australian poets who have emerged in the last twenty years].

Manuscripts

Rae Desmond Jones.

6pp.

Typescript

Bell 82 Original Manuscripts of poems "rubick's cube"

Bell 83 Original Manuscripts of poems "the empty beach"

Bell 84 Original Manuscripts of poems "talking blues"

Bell 85 Original Manuscripts of poems "the soldier"

Bell 86 Original Manuscripts of poems "In memoriam donovan clarke"

John Forbes.

Poems, Typescript A4 pages
Bell 87 "Tranteresque"

Bell 88 "The History of Nostalgia"

Bell 89 "Middle Age"

Bell 90 "Night Shift"

Rudi Krausmann: three of his plays

16 A3 pages

Hand-edited galleys

The third play, "Everyman", not included here.

Bell 91 The Word.

Bell 92 "The Perfection"

Bell 93 Bill Marshall-Stoneking and Nigel Roberts. "The Ern Malley Half-Hour: A Treatment".

Typed first draft

Typed first draft of a text in the genre of a proposal for a television program which comments upon the relationship of Australian poetry to popular culture and includes references to other poets of the period.

Les Murray. Copies of typed drafts of dated poems

Typed drafts

Copies of typed drafts of dated poems given to me in 1986 by Murray prior to their publication.

Bell 94 "Fastness"

Bell 95 "The Dream of Wearing Shorts Forever"

Bell 96 "Forty Acre Ethno"

Bell 97 "The Climb Down"

Bell 98 "Hearing Impairment"
Bell 99 "Midwinter Haircut"
Bell 100 "Lotus Dam"
Bell 101 "Leaf Spring"
Bell 102 "The Kitchens"
Bell 103 "The Milk Lorry"
Bell 104 "At the Aquatic Carnival"
Bell 105 "Roman cage Cups"
Bell 106 "Bats' Ultrasound"
Bell 107 "The Edgeless"
Bell 108 "The China Pear Trees"
Bell 109 "1980 in a Street of Federation Houses"
Bell 110 "The Mecaethon 1950"
  (This poem is difficult to read in parts because of poor copying.)
Bell 111 "The Butter Factory"
Bell 112 "The Kitchens"
Bell 113 "Joker as told"
Bell 114 "Inverse Ballad"
Bell 115 "Infra Red"
Bell 116 "Cumulus"
Bell 117 "The Lake Surnames"
Bell 118 "Tropical Window"
Bell 119 "When Bounty is Down to Persimmons and Lemons"
Bell 120 "At Thunderbolt's Grave in Uralla"
  (This poem is difficult to read in parts because of poor copying.)
Bell 121 "Relics of Sandy"

Bell 122 "Poetry and Religion"

Bell 123 "Nocturne"

Bell 124 "At Min Min Camp"

Bell 125 "Poems and Poesies"

A photocopy of an early typed draft, heavily annotated in Murray's handwriting, of the essay "Poems and Poesies" which is the most significant exposition of Murray's attitude to poetry that exists to date (12 pages) given to me by the poet in 1986.

Bell 126 John Tranter: Original List of Poets to be included in anthology New Australian Poetry, n.d.

1 page A4.

Photocopy

Photocopy of one A4 sheet showing the original list of poets John Tranter considered including in his anthology New Australian Poetry. The list shows that, for example, Tranter originally considered including Mark O'Connor and John Millet in this anthology. The ticks next to the poets' names on this list are by Tranter and probably indicate a further short-list. The list was given to me by Tranter in 1989.

Alan Wearne. Manuscripts

Manuscripts sent to me in early 1989 of work not published in his books: in my opinion these works are of considerable literary merit and are themselves worth a research project, as they are at least equal to Wearne's successful book The Nightmarkets:

Bell 127 "Nothing but Thunder"

(typed poem of 29 pages)

Bell 128 "Though Not for Amateurs: thoughts on hubris or the lack of it."

An essay on "Nothing But Thunder" titled which at the time Wearne informed me would appear in Island Magazine - the essay gives the background to the writing and genesis of that narrative poem - it is 10 typed pages long.
Bell 129 "Seeing Other People"
   (typed poem/play of 21 pages)
Bell 130 "Poem for Melanie"
   (typed poem of 5 pages)
Bell 131 "The Months in the Country"
   (typed poem of 2 pages)
Bell 132 "Still Talking about Jazz"
   (typed poem of 3 pages dated early 1977)
Bell 133 "Wayman"
   (typed poem of 1 page)
Bell 134 "May June July 1977"
   (typed poem of 1 page)
Bell 135 "Jane, Running"
   (Typed poem of 2 pages).
Bell 136 Poems by other poets translated by Alan Wearne from the original French.
   8 pages.

Miscellaneous

   With photographs and biographical sketches of writers who, as explained in the introduction, produced a new writing in Australia. The catalogue is dated 1983.

Bell 138 They dared to live! The generation of '68.
Advertisement of John Tranter's New Australian Poetry with around 1000 words describing the new poetry in humorous terms. A4 page of typed text with illustration.

Bell 139 Advertisement for John Forbes' magazine *Surfers Paradise* issue no 2.

Around 60 typed words.

Bell 140 Advertisement for "The Seventh Annual General Balmain Reading of Prose and Verse" (10 December 1972).

A4 typed sheet of paper listing poets.

Bell 141 A handwritten list by Garrie Hutchinson of places in Melbourne and addresses where poets socialised and read their work in the late sixties/early seventies.

Six places listed on an A4 sheet of paper (some, like La Mama, are well known, others, like "johnnie's Green Room" are less well-known. One place - the Pram Factory has disappeared and is now the site of a supermarket). [Missing.]

Bell 142 Curriculum vitae for Garrie Hutchinson listing his literary and other works.

Three A4 typed pages.

Bell 143 Mark O'Connor. Poems (typescript).

A mini anthology of poems from the books *Reef Poems* (UQP, 1976), *The Eating Tree* (Angus & Robertson, 1980), and from the not yet published “Selected Poems”.

Bell 144 Martin Duwell. A Possible Contemporary Poetry.

Interviews with thirteen poets from *The New Australian Poetry* (St Lucia, Queensland, Makar Press, 1982).


Bell 146 “An Inflection of Silence and Other Poems”.

Edited by Christopher Pollnitz. (Newcastle, NSW, University of Newcastle, 1986).
Bell 147 Martin Johnston. Cicada Gambit. (Sydney, NSW, Hale & Iremonger, 1983).


Bell 149 Les A. Murray. The Daylight Moon. (Sydney, NSW, Angus & Robertson, 1987).

Bell 150 Les A. Murray. The People's Otherworld. (Sydney, NSW, Angus & Robertson, 1983).