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**What would Dorothea say?**

Neil Wynes Morse, Melbourne

Until recently I believed that bookplates were an ‘accessory after the fact’, in that they were unimportant when considered in relation to ‘The Book’. My recent change of mind was due to a serendipitous purchase of Ferson’s *Bookplates* and a consequent Google search.

Then, when Santa<sup>1</sup> delivered David Pearson’s *The Book as History* and I read it ‘over Christmas’ ‘down the coast’, I felt I had to further investigate his statement that:

*‘Bookplates have a long history, going back to the 15th century, and many thousands of owners have used them. Book labels ... have also been extensively used – like bookplates these are printed on separate pieces of paper and pasted into books, but are made using letterpress rather than by engraving.’<sup>2</sup>*

I acknowledge that the statement was made in the legend to a number of illustrations in the page, and is not reflected in the textual matter of the book. In my books there are numerous bookplates, but they are not engraved. Does this make them book labels?

So I sought Mr Pearson’s direct advice *via* the following question:

On page 98 I believe you differentiate between ‘bookplates’ and ‘book labels’ based upon their method of production, i.e., respectively, engraving and letterpress. If this is so, what are the correct terms for similar items produced by, say, lithography, photography or linocut?

Mr Pearson responded:

The distinction between bookplates and book labels is expressed differently by various writers in this area and I don’t think there’s one simple story. Anything that’s

small and non-pictorial will sometimes be called a book label, no matter how it was made, while something relatively large (though not necessarily engraved) may be called a bookplate. I went into this in a bit more detail, and set out my own stall, in my *Provenance research* book, and if you have access to that, have a look at pp82-83.<sup>3</sup> The letterpress/engraved distinction does of course become much harder to apply with 19th/20th century production processes than it is with pre-1800 ones, but I think Brian North Lee’s definition of a bookplate as ‘a design conceived as a whole and achieved by engraving, etching or some other reproductive process’ makes sense and allows us to call anything created by a primarily illustrative technique (rather than a text-oriented one) a bookplate - so I would class etched, lithographed, photographed and linocut items as bookplates. There’s always a grey hinterland of small labels, purely textual, made by one of these processes, and I suggested in *Provenance research* that we should call these ‘engraved book labels’ – whether this is a cop out, or a neat compromise, I will leave you to judge!

The *Provenance research* reference states:

*The definition of book labels, and their distinction from bookplates, is not altogether clear, and the standard authorities do not offer satisfactory clarification. ... Brian North Lee’s definition ... offers a more satisfactory basis for distinction and the present writer prefers to define a bookplate as something printed from an engraved plate, or metal or wood, which incorporates the entire design, and a book label as something made up from separate pieces of moveable type and type ornaments.’<sup>3</sup>*



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I have some difficulty with the Pearson interpretation as set out in the legend, but appreciate the Lee definition, and the general dilemma. In the light of the aforesaid, what is the design shown below? <sup>4</sup> I think it is a label. What would Dorothea say?



Bookplate or book label in pen and ink for Dorothea Mackellar.

[1] I gratefully acknowledge the contribution to this note of my mother-in-law, Dawn Ellmoos Ward.  
 [2] Pearson D, *The book as history*, London, The British Library; New Castle, DE, Oak Knoll Press, 2008. Note to illustrations on p98.  
 [3] Pearson D, *Provenance research in book history: a handbook*. London, The British Library, 1994.  
 [4] Pasted into a copy of the Adelphi edition of Norman Douglas's *Fountains in the sand*.



Bookplate for Harry Houdini from the Alma Collection, bookplates, vol. I, SLV

### Some bookplates in the State Library of Victoria

Christine Bell, Melbourne

As well as collections of bookplates by well-known Australian artists, there are a number of small non-Australian bookplate collections in the State Library of Victoria. An album of 96 German and Austrian plates contains many for a Dr Oskar Leuschner, as well as several for people interested in music. Most are process (photogravure), and they bear the names of artists important in histories of European bookplate production in the early 20th century – Alois Kolb, Matilde Ade, Amadeus-Dier, Hans Bastanier, and Franz Stassen. Interestingly, several of the plates turned up in etched formats in the Gartner Collection.

There are two small albums of bookplates collected by Will Alma, a Melbourne-based professional magician who left his entire magicana collection to the State Library prior to his death in 1993. He collected plates made for a number of European and American professional and

amateur magicians, including one for Harry Houdini. Some of them have been designed by the subjects themselves, in rather an amateurish fashion. To those unversed in the history of magic and magicians, they would appear to be a rather eccentric group. But they form only a small part of a much larger collection of books, posters, and magician's equipment to stage the *Buzz Saw Illusion*, the *Elastic Lady*, the *Protean Cabinet*, and the alarmingly titled *Electrocution Mystery*. Alma stipulated that the equipment and practice of these tricks was to be of benefit only to other magicians and professional researchers – no browsing for the idly curious in this part of the Alma Collection.

In 1909, Ludwig Louis Politzer arrived in Melbourne from Naples. He was born in Vienna in 1875, and had spent some time in Munich. Listed as an art dealer on the passenger manifest, he began a correspondence with several important

literary and artistic figures in Australia, including Nettie Palmer and Norman Lindsay. Lindsay's letters to him make it clear that Politzer continued to import German language publications on art and photography. Lindsay advised that his German suppliers should wrap any book containing illustrations of nudes in newspaper so that the customs or 'imbecile officials' in the local post office would not be able to see the contents easily. Politzer was also asked to type parcel labels as his handwriting was very distinctive – Lindsay felt that staff at the local Springwood post office would open anything addressed in his hand. By 1925, Politzer had imported a collection of Austrian and German bookplates, 100 of which he exhibited in Melbourne in March. Bernard Hall, Director of the National Gallery of Victoria grudgingly agreed to purchase seven, not as examples of bookplates, but as prints.

Despite urgings from bookplate collector RH Croll to acquire the whole collection, Hall refused to do so, although he did buy another seven from a second exhibition in October 1925. The entire collection was eventually acquired in 1936 through Felton Committee funds. Politzer had selected examples by artists who were highly regarded, collected and published by the Munich-based art critic and historian, Richard Braungart. Nine of the plates are for him and his wife Jeanette, and several of the artists represented in the collection were initially associated with both the Munich and Vienna Secessionist movements.

Politzer regularly offered the Trustees books, pottery, works of art and reproductions, but with little success. Hall seems to have been irritated by him, which was not unexpected, since Hall had little time for dealers, collectors and the Felton Committee. Politzer also translated the letters of explorer Ludwig Leichhardt, compiled a centenary publication in 1934, drew up bibliographies of Dutch and German publications on and in Australia, and at the time of his death in 1954 had applied to the Commonwealth Literary Fund for financial help in compiling, with Professor AP Elkin, a bibliography of titles relating to Australian Aborigines. Politzer died on 1 May 1954, and is buried in the Brighton Cemetery, Melbourne.

[This information is taken from Christine's forthcoming article in the La Trobe Journal – Ed.]

## Auckland report

The June meeting of the Auckland Ex Libris Society took place at Kinder House, Parnell, Auckland. President Jennifer Lamm welcomed all present including some subscribers who were eager to collect their copies of *Biographical journeys: 100 favourite bookplates*, by Ian Thwaites, after the book launch. The president introduced Ian Thwaites and extolled the arrival of this real jewel of a publication about bookplates. She spoke about Hilda Wiseman and her

contribution to the bookplate world, and mentioned Percy Neville Barnett whose large collection of bookplates is held by the Auckland War Memorial Museum Library. The Auckland Ex Libris Society contributed to the purchase of this collection in 1956.

Jennifer told the gathering that Ian Thwaites and Rie Fletcher had been honoured with Honorary Life Membership of the Auckland Institute and Museum at the end of last year. Ian thanked John Denny of Puriri Press for the production of this beautifully printed and hand-bound little treasure. The text and illustrations are a delight to read and savour the information about the individual plates and their owners and artists.

The celebration afternoon tea was more sumptuous than usual. Bob Langholm and Simon Misdale bought gifts for Ian, John Denny and Rie Fletcher. Bob Langholm, our honorary life-member, spoke about Ian's contribution to bookplate literature. We are proud of Ian and his devotion to the bookplate world and we are sure that many more people will be aware of how good

it is to have a personal bookplate and the interest that a bookplate can arouse.

[This is an abbreviated version of the minutes of the Auckland Ex Libris Society meeting of 28 June 2009, with thanks and apologies to the Society's president and secretary. A review of *Biographical journeys: 100 favourite bookplates* by Andrew Peake appears elsewhere in this issue of the Newsletter – Ed.]

## Apology

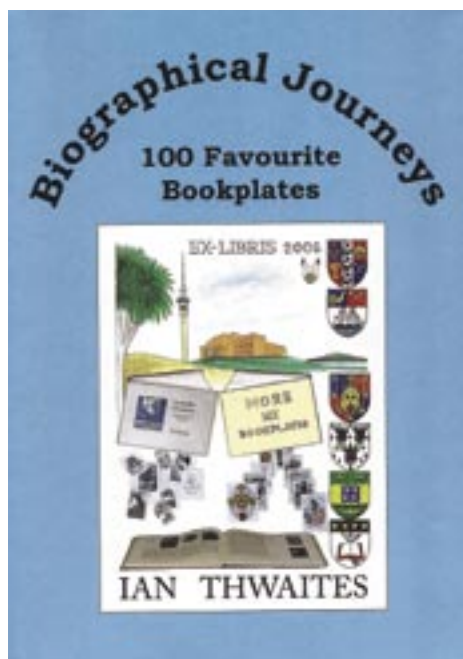
Unfortunately the printer had difficulties reproducing some of the bookplates used to illustrate *Newsletter* no. 13, and I neglected to ask for a proof before the print run was completed. This particularly affected the images used in our Designer profile No. 5: Jennifer Rogers, and led to Jennifer's designs printing very darkly with poor detail, compared to the fine line and delicate detail in the original wood-engraved bookplates sent to us by the artist. We have reprinted the Hiyama bookplate below.



Wood-engraved bookplate by Jennifer Rogers for Kaoru Hiyama, 2009

## Book Review

By Andrew G Peake, Adelaide



*Biographical journeys: 100 favourite bookplates*, by Ian Thwaites, printed for subscribers by Puriri Press, Auckland, 2009, pp230, NZ\$100

This is Ian's third publication, with a bookplate theme, and follows on from *In another dimension: Auckland bookplates 1920-1960*, which was published in 2001 and updated in 2002, and *75 years of bookplates: Auckland Ex Libris Society, 1930-2005*, in 2005. Both were printed at the Puriri Press and appeared in a limited edition and quickly sold out. This publication too is in a limited edition of 100 copies, so if you want a copy, you will need to be quick.

*Biographical journeys* is similar in many respects to a publication I was given at the Fredrikshaven Bookplate Congress in 2004, *Swiss Ex-Libris 1900-1999*, edited by Benoit Junod, commemorating a century of bookplates in Switzerland. It too had over a hundred bookplates, illustrated in colour with a short biography of the artists and owner, although in this case in both English and French (or German).

However, Ian's publication has very comprehensive biographies of both the artists and the owners of these 100, primarily New Zealand, bookplates. Many

of the biographies are of individuals for whom there are unlikely to be any other biographies – they are in the main unlikely to warrant biographies in *Who's who* or similar publications. Ian has gone to extraordinary lengths to ferret out details of the owners and artists to flesh out the story.

New Zealand's renowned bookplate artists are well represented, such as Hilda Wiseman, who is represented by no less than 17 designs, Ronald Holloway, E Mervyn Taylor and Jim McCready. Australian artists too are well represented, as by the 1930s bookplate art was becoming international, and many artists were receiving commissions from across the Tasman, Europe and North America. As a consequence a number of Australian artists are included such as Ella Dwyer, Adrian Feint, George Perrottet, DH Souter and WS Percy. These artists too receive a comprehensive biography.

While many of the plate owners are deceased, as many are still alive, some are memorial and collection plates and a few library plates. Each plate is accurately described, both in medium and dimensions and also dated. Most are from the twentieth century, though there are two nineteenth century plates, including one die-sinker plate for William Charles Cotton c.1840.

There were a few 'disappointments'. I found that the subject of my favourite Australian bookplate, Tom Mills, with a superb art nouveau plate by DH Souter, is in fact not an Australian, nor did he have any Australian connection. Jim McCready, probably the most prolific New Zealand bookplate artist, did not have a plate and biography in his own right, having modestly declined the opportunity, although the publication has a couple of his designs. A plate for Robert Turnbull was included; unfortunately, however, a better plate did not come to light until after the book had gone to press.

Finally there is a comprehensive index as well as the biographical details providing further reference material.

## Designer profile

No. 6: Philippa Webb

*I have been described as an artist who portrays a world of pattern and colour in a decorative, somewhat naïve manner – often with a touch of humour. I always seek pleasure from my work and never portray sad subjects, hoping that viewers will share my belief that our world can be peaceful, happy and serene.*

*As a professional artist all of my skills as a designer, writer, printmaker calligrapher and bookbinder are utilised in the production of my limited edition Artist's Books. All five of these have been purchased by National and State Libraries in Australia and institutions in the UK and USA.*

*The bookplates for these books include a blank space in order for me to write the purchaser's name on them, at the time of purchase. However, I also produce commissioned bookplates which include the commissioner's name. These are produced as a result of consultation with the client concerning theme, size of edition, physical size and of course price. My preferred technique is lino relief print, printed in black. Hand colouring of a small detail, as in my Kookaburra bookplate (shown), is another possibility.*

*I would be happy to answer any further queries via my email at [philippadon@optusnet.com.au](mailto:philippadon@optusnet.com.au)*

## Notes and happenings

XXXIII FISAE International Ex Libris Congress, Istanbul, 25-29 August 2010

Professor Doctor Hasip Pektas, President of the Istanbul Ex-libris Society, writes:

*It gives me great pleasure to invite you to Istanbul for the 33rd FISAE International Ex-libris Congress. Istanbul is not only a geographic bridge between Europe and Asia, it is at the same time a cultural crossroads. In 2010, you will have an opportunity to explore its*





Above: Lino relief print with hand coloured detail by Philippa Webb for herself  
 Below: Lino relief print by Philippa Webb for the National Library of Australia



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PjWebb imp.

*unparalleled history and environment, while experiencing the unforgettable tastes of the Turkish cuisine, returning to your nations with a feeling of contentment.*

*Regarding your accommodation while in Istanbul, you will be able to choose from many economically priced alternatives. You will be able to reach the Congress which will be held at Faculty of Fine Arts, Isik University at the Maslak Campus relatively easily by metro, as it is close in proximity to the city center. You will not only be participating in an Ex-libris congress while in Istanbul, you will also have the opportunity for an unforgettable summer vacation.*

1st International Ex Libris Competition – North Cyprus 2010

We have received notice of this competition with a closing date of 15 March 2010, for up to 5 designs in any technique, executed between 2007 and the closing date. Prizes will be awarded in various categories with a value of up to €1000. Further information may be obtained from the Editor or via email from Professor Senih Cavusoglu, Eastern Mediterranean University at [senih.cavusoglu@emu.edu.tr](mailto:senih.cavusoglu@emu.edu.tr)

Publications recently come to light

1 **TIFFIN, CHRIS.** Father Hayes' literature collection. *Fryer Folios*, vol. 2, no. 2, Dec. 2007, pp18-20.

A major collection in the University of Queensland, including a significant booplate collection (not the subject of the article) but illustrated with 2 designs found in books within the collection, by Timothy Cole (USA) and Lionel Lindsay.

2 **KING, RICHARD.** Adrian Feint's bookplates, in, Richard Heathcote (ed.), *Adrian Feint: Cornucopia*. Adelaide, Wakefield Press, 2009, pp32-5

From an essay first published in *Newsletter* no. 8, reproduces 5 of Feint's designs with a portrait of the artist. The book as a whole covers varying aspects of his life and work, with extensive illustrations in colour, and was published to accompany the exhibition at Carrick Hill, Adelaide.

I would like to continue the theme of bookish questioning and perhaps controversy raised by the author of the front page article in this issue, and at the same time make reference to recent discussions in these pages on the themes of 'what is a bookplate?' and 'should bookplates be removed from books?' The label shown here marks books donated by authors and then bought as a way of raising money toward a Chair of Australian Literature at the University of Sydney, and could well be described as a type of bookplate. Many bookplates exist marking donations — this one has the additional feature related to fund raising for a particular (and literary) cause. It is pasted onto the front free endpaper of *Where the Incas trod*, by Nuri Mass, published by the Writers' Press, Sydney in 1956, and with illustrations by Celeste Mass. Now, should this interesting bookplate be removed from the book which carries it and which is in good condition? Tho' I considered this question for a fleeting moment, my 'nay' decision came down to the fact that the author and illustrator, and a third person whose name I cannot decipher, have placed their signatures in green ink below the bookplate. Incidentally, the Writers' Press was conducted by Nuri Mass at Summer Hill (Sydney); the University of Sydney Chair of Australian Literature was inaugurated in

1963 with Professor GA Wilkes its first appointee, and the first in Australia. MF

A snippet from Wikipedia

In the United States, bookplates replaced book rhymes after the 19th century.

A book rhyme is a short poem or rhyme that was printed inside the front of a book or on the flyleaf to discourage theft or to indicate ownership.

Book rhymes were fairly common in the United States during the 18th and 19th centuries, but the printing of bookplates pushed them out of use.

One of the most common anti-theft warnings was:

*If this book you steal away,  
What will you say  
On Judgment Day?*

And here, an example of an identification rhyme:

*Everytown is my dwelling-place  
America is my nation  
John Smith is my name*

The end line has several variations,

*And Christ is my salvation*  
or;  
*And heaven my expectation*

## Editorial

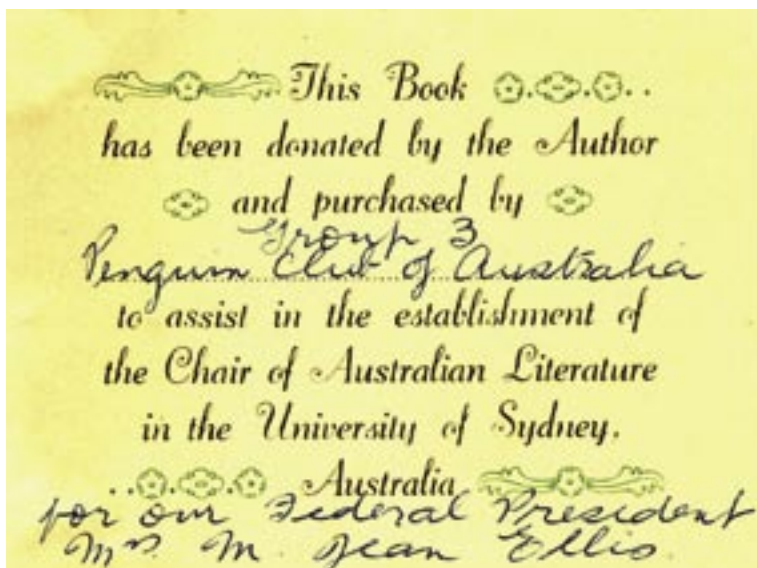
Although I am the most unsuperstitious person, I have to say that *Newsletter* no. 13 was, coincidentally, marred by poor reproduction of the finely detailed, black and white wood engravings of Jennifer Rogers who featured in our latest Designer profile. At Jennifer's most reasonable request, we have republished one of her beautiful designs in this issue.

I record, as always, my thanks to the contributors: Neil Morse for quoting eminent book historian David Pearson and thus proving that anyone can get tied in a knot when trying to pin down bookplate terminology; Christine Bell for bringing to our notice two of the many separate bookplate collections held by the State Library of Victoria; Philippa Webb for a statement about herself in the Designer profile series; and Andrew Peake for his review of the latest bookplate book from Auckland member, Ian Thwaites.

Bookplate events continue to occur in Australia and New Zealand, notably the Feint exhibition at Carrick Hill, Adelaide, with accompanying book, and across the Tasman the publication of the Thwaites book. Bookplates and books about bookplates continue to come up for sale, whilst around the world there are exhibitions and competitions. And don't forget that the next international bookplate congress under the FISAE banner is to be held in Istanbul in August 2010.

Finally, your Committee is currently working on a date and program for the Society's 2009 Annual General Meeting and we hope to advise you of the details soon after the this Newsletter appears in your mail box.

MF




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Any bookplate designer wishing to be the subject of a Designer profile or to have work reproduced in the *Newsletter* should contact the Editor on 02 9428 2863 or by email. The Society's website may be found if you go to [www.stoplaughing.com.au/bookplatesociety](http://www.stoplaughing.com.au/bookplatesociety)

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