What a piece of work
It’s rare for different genres to appear on a Miles Franklin Award shortlist: it’s even rarer when partners appear on the same shortlist. This year we have a bit of both. Among the six shortlisted titles are The Prosperous Thief, by Andrea Goldsmith, and Wild Surmise, by Dorothy Porter. The latter marks Porter’s second appearance on a Miles Franklin Award shortlist, hers being the only verse novels to have appeared to date. The other shortlisted titles are An Angel in Australia, by Tom Keneally; Journey to the Stone Country, by Alex Miller; Moral Hazard, by Kate Jennings; and Of a Boy, by Sonya Hartnett. This year’s prize is worth $28,000. The judges — Hilary McPhee, David Marr, Mark Rubbo, Dagmar Schmidmaier and Elizabeth Webby — will put the authors out of their misery on June 12.

Celebrating Mietta O’Donnell
ABR fondly remembers Mietta O’Donnell, who died in January 2001. Mietta’s contribution to food culture and to the arts in general was second to none. It’s difficult to think of an Australian writer who didn’t perform in her famous Lounge — often many times. Several veterans will gather in Melbourne on July 5 and 6 to take part in Readings@Miettas 2003, which also celebrates thirty years of Readings@Readings. Participants will include Richard Flanagan, Michelle de Kretser, Alex Miller and Shirley Painter. Full details are available on page 7.

Raising money for people with MS
Multiple Sclerosis is the most common disease of the central nervous system among young Australian adults. To help raise money for support services and clinical research, the Multiple Sclerosis Society is organising another MS Readathon. Last year’s raised $2.2 million. From June 16 until July 25, more than 40,000 children across Australia are expected to participate in this huge reading programme. For more information about this admirable fund-raising event, contact Emma Eyles, the Publicity Officer, on (02) 9646 0600 or eeyles@msnsw.org.au.

Changes at ABR
ABR has attracted some splendid new volunteers in recent months. Joining loyal Eamon Evans are Matthia Dempsey, Christy Dena, Emily Fraser, Lolla Stewart and Robyn Tucker. Meanwhile, our editorial advisory board continues to grow, the latest recruits being Ilana Snyder, Associate Professor in the Faculty of Education at Monash University, and Bruce Moore, Director of the Australian National Dictionary Centre in Canberra. This month, our inestimable Assistant Editor, Aviva Tuffield, goes on maternity leave. Anne-Marie Thomas will replace Aviva until she rejoins us in early 2004. Anne-Marie is no stranger to acronymic organisations, having worked for OUP, CUP and MUP.

Bon pillage!
Remember that mordant cartoon in the New Yorker during the first Gulf War in which thousands of medieval knights set off on a Crusade while a maiden at her castle window shrieked: ‘Bon pillage!’ We thought of this when we heard about the appalling events at Iraq’s National Museum, the Mosul Museum, and the National Library and Archives a few days after US troops took control of central Baghdad. Various curators and archaeologists, many of whom had warned the Pentagon of the risk of looting and vandalism well before the recent war began, have described the collective losses as calamitous. The local media seem to have lost interest in this story, but not the feisty and exemplary Art Newspaper in London (edited by Anna Somers Cocks), which analyses the events in its May issue and lists some of the losses, which include most of the 170,000 items held in the National Museum. ‘It is … inexplicable that the American forces did not regard its protection as a major priority when occupying Baghdad,’ the Art Newspaper writes. Everyone agrees that one US tank and a few Marines would have prevented the ransacking. Yet US Defence Secretary Donald Rumsfeld was sanguine as ever: ‘Free people are free to make mistakes and commit crimes and do bad things.’ The banality of his rhetoric is matched only by the ruthless disregard for world culture.
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Letters

ABR welcomes letters from our readers. Correspondents should note that letters may be edited. Letters and e-mails must reach us by the middle of the current month, and must include a telephone number for verification.

Tim Bowden on Denis Warner
Dear Editor,
I write to point out a singularly unfortunate error in Brian McFarlane’s otherwise thoughtful and indeed generous review of my autobiography, Spoiling Through: An Irreverent Memoir, in the May edition of ABR. By using the phrase ‘the egregious Denis Warner’, your reviewer has confused the distinguished Australian foreign correspondent and author with Russell Warner, an ABC executive with whom, to put it bluntly, I did not get on, for reasons clearly stated in my memoir.

Denis Warner is not only a friend, but a man who has been something of a role model for this aspiring reporter, as acknowledged on page 217.

Tim Bowden, Sydney, NSW

The non-rich PhD
Dear Editor,
Although I lack a PhD in psychology, may I be permitted to suggest that Gideon Haigh’s preoccupation with PhDs is bordering on the unhealthy? His review of Mark Westfield’s book on the HIH collapse (ABR, May 2003) contains, on my count, his third ‘shot’ in the last few issues of ABR at what a dear and now departed friend of mine, an Army Colonel who ‘did one’ in his retirement, used to call ‘Doctor (Non-rich Variety)’.

To be fair to Gideon, his previous complaints have been about the inability of people with PhDs to write, whereas this time he’s merely suggesting that they’re crooks. But I do wonder why Gideon thinks that someone with a PhD in economics is guilty of ‘pretence’ in calling himself ‘Doctor’?

For the sake of ABR readers, I hope that Gideon is never asked to review a book on the history of Nazism, because I’m certain he could not overlook that ‘Herr Doctor’ wrote a PhD thesis on romantic drama and liked to be called ‘Dr Goebbels’.

(Dr?) Frank Bongiorno, Armidale, NSW

Clive James and genocide
Dear Editor,
What purpose (or whose purpose) does Clive James think he is serving in culturing the complaint about genocide entering the vocabulary of Australian history? A review of Best Australian Essays 2002 (‘A Big Boutique’, ABR, May 2003) is seized as an occasion to trail, one way and then back again, the battered but still bloody red herring of Turks massacring Armenians in order to slap it over John Pilger and presumably all the rest of us who have seen Australian relevance in the concept of genocide. The catastrophe brought to Aboriginal peoples by European acquisition of the continent was arguably genocidal and certainly a matter for consideration rather more considered than Keith Windschuttle has offered. To promote Windschuttle in this context is either ingenuous or disingenuous; the references to genocide in his book are clearly for polemical purpose only. James knows about propaganda, and about demagogy. He must be aware of the political context in which Windschuttle is finding fans; perhaps they are fans he would like to have, too.

The Best Australian Essays project — like ABR in recent times — has done much to focus public interest on issues at the heart of Australia’s history. The most serious issue of Australian history deserves Clive James’s better judgment.

Tony Barta, Kew, Vic.

Paying attention
Dear Editor,
Clive James didn’t pay much attention in his school grammar lessons if his review in the May issue is to be believed. He seems to think that he was taught to ‘parse a sentence’. Very unlikely, unless he had a sadistic teacher who kept him in for inattention and told him to ‘parse every word in this sentence’. What ‘the old Australian school system’ taught was actually ‘parsing and analysis’. You started with the useful exercise of analysing a sentence into its constituent clauses. Even the delicate task of deciding whether an adversial clause was one of reason, purpose or intention had some (non-grammatical) merit of teaching fine distinctions in meaning. After analysis, one delved into the more controversial and apparently contradictory process of ‘parsing’ some of the words. The theory behind parsing was absurd, with confused definitions of the ‘parts of speech’, e.g. ‘A noun is the name of a person, place, or thing’. Mercifully, in practice students learned to parse (if they did) by following, in an apprentice-like fashion, the teacher’s own procedure, which was to identify the finite verbs and then identify the other ‘parts of speech’ by their relationship to the verbs. A student who failed to grasp the difference between parsing and analysis was a rarity. Some teachers even required a different set of ruled tables for the two processes.

Come to think of it, ‘paying attention’, though beloved of teachers, was a strange phrase, chiefly because it suggested that attention was a marketable commodity, where the cost was borne by the students. I wonder often what the teachers buy one half so worthless as the goods they sell may have sprung into some students’ minds.

Grammar can be an exciting adventure into the curiosities of language. With two recently published comprehensive grammars of English available, one hopes that one or other is on the shelves of any teacher tackling the subject.

Ken Goodwin, Indooroopilly, Qld
In February 2002 the National Library acquired sixty photographs and twelve colour transparencies by Trish Ainslie and Roger Garwood. The images are from six separate series: *Birdmen of Big Dog Island* (showing mutton birding on an island in Bass Strait); *Broome series, 1979* (shots of Broome residents, including pearling industry workers); *New Norcia Olive Oil* (the series from which this month’s cover image is taken, showing the olive groves at New Norcia and processes by which oil is extracted); *Kangaroo Shooters* (a series of colour transparencies); *The Salmon Run* (showing fishermen at Cheyne Bay, Western Australia); and *West Coast Shackers* (a series about the people and their shacks built on Crown land on the Western Australian coast).

Trish Ainslie and Roger Garwood have been collaborating as photographers and journalists since 1988. Their first publication, *Off Like Flies*, was released in 1990. In all, they have collaborated on eleven titles, including *Land’s Edge*, which has a text written by Tim Winton. They have been active in documenting disappearing Australian lifestyles, and a number of their publications marry images and text from particular Australian regions. In the last twelve months, they have been working on developing a new series about Australia’s favourite places.

Garwood, Roger, 1945—
Benedictine Monastery at New Norcia, Western Australia
photograph: b&w; 44.5 x 30.5 cm, sheet 60.8 x 50.4 cm
Pictures collection, an23491687
National Library of Australia
Contributors

**Don Aitkin** is a former Vice-Chancellor and President of the University of Canberra. His books include *Stability and Change in Australian Politics*.

**Dennis Altman** is Professor of Politics at La Trobe University and author of ten books, most recently *Global Sex*. Two of his books, *Rehearsals for Change* and *Defying Gravity*, will be republished next year.

**Martin Ball** is currently working with the Australians at War Film Archive, a project that will interview 2000 veterans of Australia’s Defence Forces.

**Rod Beecham** is a Melbourne reviewer.

**Tony Blackshield** is an Emeritus Professor of Law at Macquarie University and co-editor of *The Oxford Companion to the High Court of Australia*.

**Michael Brennan** is a Sydney poet and reviewer.

**Ian Britain** is Editor of *Meanjin*.

**Paul Brunton** is Senior Curator, Mitchell Library, State Library of New South Wales. His edition of the diaries of Miles Franklin will be published next year.

**Chilla Bulbeck** is Professor of Women’s Studies at the University of Adelaide and has published widely in the areas of Australian and cross-cultural feminism. She is presently Visiting Professor of Australian Studies at Tokyo University.

**Madeleine Byrne** is a journalist with a special interest in politics and literature.

**Sarah Mayor Cox** lectures in Children’s Literature and Literacy at La Trobe University, Bendigo.

**Mark Cully** is a writer and researcher on socio-economics based in Adelaide.

**Johanna de Wever** is a Melbourne reviewer.

**Greg Dening** is Adjunct Professor at the Centre for Cross-Cultural Research, Australian National University.

**Kristie Dunn** is a Melbourne-based writer and lawyer.

**Chris Edwards** is the author of *Utensils in a Landscape. A Fluke: A Mistranslation of Stéphane Mallarmé’s ‘Un coup de dés’* will be published this year by Monogene.

**J.S. Harry’s** many collections of poetry include *Sun Shadow, Moon Shadow*.

**Margaret Robson Kett** has been a Young People’s Services Librarian for twenty-five years and currently lives in Western Australia.

**David McCooey** lectures in literary studies at Deakin University and frequently reviews poetry titles in *ABR*.

**Kim Mahood** is the author of *Craft for a Dry Lake*, a visual artist, part-time art lecturer and occasional reviewer.

**Brenda Niall’s** latest book is the award-winning *The Boyds*.

**David Nichols** is a researcher, writer and historian based at Deakin University.

**Peter Pierce** is Professor of Australian Literature at James Cook University, Queensland.

**Robert Reynolds** is an Australian Research Fellow at Sydney University and the author of *From Camp to Queer*.

**John Rickard** is an honorary professorial fellow at Monash University. His work on the Deakin family has given him an interest in the history of spiritualism.

**Moira Robinson** often reviews children’s books in *ABR*.

**Peter Ryan** is a former Director of Melbourne University Press and author of *Fear Drive My Feet*.

**Amanda Smith** presented *The Sports Factor* on ABC Radio National from 1995 to 2002. She is currently working on a feature series for Radio National called *Great Lovers*.

**Ceridwen Spark** is a research associate at Monash University.

**Lolla Stewart** is an educator, freelance reviewer and fiction writer.

**Daniel Thomas**, now living in Tasmania, was an art-museum curator and director in Sydney, Canberra and Adelaide, and has known James Gleeson since 1958.

**Stephanie Trigg** is Associate Professor of English at the University of Melbourne.

**Nicola Walker** has just returned to Australia after ten years as an editor on the *Times Literary Supplement*.

**Shirley Walker’s** most recent publications are *Roundabout at Bangalow: An Intimate Chronicle* and, as co-editor with Ken Stewart, *Unemployed at Last! Essays on Australian Literature to 2002*, a Festschrift for Julian Croft.