

250 and all that!

Welcome to the 250th issue of *ABR* — or, rather, to the 250th issue of the magazine in its present guise. Some readers may be unfamiliar with the first series, which appeared between 1961 and 1973. It came out of Adelaide under the editorship of Max Harris, Rosemary Wighton and, for a time, Geoffrey Dutton. Kerryn Goldsworthy — herself an Editor for two years in the mid-1980s — writes fascinatingly about those early *ABRs* in her article ‘The Oily Ratbag and the Recycled Waratah’ (page 23). Like Kerryn, we celebrate the original begetters of *ABR*, and everyone else who has made the magazine such a success since the present series began in 1978. Independent magazines have never been more vital than now, when a remarkable (even eerie) editorial consensus obtains in the major Australian newspapers. We look forward to bringing you more cogent, questioning writing in coming years, and we trust you enjoy the 250th issue.

First of the Forums

ABR’s highly successful season of *ABR* Forums is underway again. The next one will take place on Tuesday, April 15, at the usual venue: fortyfivedownstairs. Our partners on this occasion will once again be Readings in Carlton and the admirable Mietta Foundation. The topic is ‘The Dark Side of Economic Reform’. Michael Pusey and Clive Hamilton — authors of two major new books, *The Experience of Middle Australia* (CUP) and *Growth Fetish* (Allen & Unwin), respectively — will be in conversation with Robert Manne, the Chair of *ABR*. Full details appear on page 5, and bookings are essential. Meanwhile, we look forward to announcing similar events in Adelaide and regional Victoria in coming months.

April is the cruellest month

For writers and scholars seeking funding, April is an important month. The National Library of Australia is calling for applications for the 2004 Harold White Fellowships, while the State Library of Victoria has inaugurated eight Creative Fellowships to explore the SLV’s collections. The deadline for both awards is 30 April. For details on the Harold White Fellowships, contact Graeme Powell at the NLA on (02) 6262 1258, or visit www.nla.gov.au/collect/fellows.htm; and, for the SLV’s Creative Fellowships, call Dianne Reilly on (03) 8664 7182 or e-mail: dreilly@slv.vic.gov.au.

Lunch with a Freedom Rider

On 16 April, at 1 p.m., the ACT Writers’ Centre is holding a Literary Lunch with Ann Curthoys, who participated in the 1960s Freedom Rides and is now Manning Clark Professor of History at ANU. To book, call (02) 6262 9191 or e-mail: admin@actwriters.org.au.

Broken Song

At the State Library of NSW on 28 April, at 12.30 p.m., Barry Hill will discuss his book *Broken Song: T.G.H. Strehlow and Aboriginal Possession*. Contact the library on (02) 9273 1516 for further details and bookings.

Poets and platters

Poetry and wine seem to go together, and not just in Canberra. On 22–23 April, at 7 p.m., South Australian poets including Geoff Goodfellow, Rory Harris and Nan Witcombe will read from their work as part of the Barossa Vintage Festival. The cost (\$30) includes supper and, yes, a glass of wine. To book contact Nicole Bitter on (08) 8563 2595, or e-mail: info@langmeilwinery.com.au.

Shifting the Centre

The nachos around the Nicholas Building in Swanston Street, Melbourne, must be delectable: everyone is moving there. Two months ago, ‘Advances’ reported that Collected Works had relocated to the first floor of the Nicholas Building. Now that excellent little bookshop has a new neighbour: the Victorian Writers’ Centre. Who’ll be next? The shift hasn’t diminished the Centre’s events programme. One coming highlight is ‘A Writers’ Weekend in Daylesford: The Art of Storytelling’, with Arnold Zable. This will take place on 10–11 May. To book, call the VWC’s new number, (03) 9654 9068, or e-mail: info@writers-centre.org.

ABR Rules OK!

One of our readers has drawn our attention to a series of graffiti that has appeared around Melbourne. This one appeared in St Kilda. ‘Advances’ neither knows how it got there nor endorses the method, but it applauds the sentiment.



Salty quarterly

Any new poetry magazine deserves a boost from us, and *Saltlick Quarterly*, whose first issue (‘Autumn 2003’) has just been published, looks good. Poets include Jennifer Harrison, Alex Skovron, Kris Hemensley, Jill Jones, Judith Beveridge and Anthony Lawrence. The Editors — Clint Greagen, Luis Gonzalez and Paul Croucher — describe the new magazine as one in which ‘first-class, unpublished poetry is given space to speak for itself without being contextualised by literary politics, cheap manifestos etc’. A one-year subscription costs \$42. Enquiries to 104 Rennie Street, Coburg, Vic. 3058 or e-mail: saltlickquarterly@optusnet.com.au.

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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.

Brett's T-shirt

Dear Editor,

There is much to enjoy in the March issue of *ABR*. I found Patrick McCaughey's 'A Sketch Portrait of Fred Williams' particularly illuminating and moving. A fine record of a deep friendship, rare in the annals of art writing in Australia. Also, John Mateer's 'Diary' reflections on a symposium at Edith Cowan University, inspired by the American philosopher Arthur Danto's 'The Abuse', give us notice of imaginative conversations and events coming from the west.

Barry Dickins claims in *Black + Whiteley* that he went in search of Brett Whiteley. One can only say that, if that's the case, Dickins didn't find him. The Friends grow weary of writers poring through the entrails of our memories. Each year Whiteley's absence is more acutely felt among us, the absurdity and weight of his untimely loss heavier. All this for reasons totally absent from these narratives. Writer and reviewer here both miss what they cannot find or comprehend.

Edwina Preston, who apparently writes on art, describes the portrait of Whiteley on the cover of this book as 'a cover pic', then, in the following paragraph, demonstrates her inability to read the photograph. Of course, in this highly informed discourse, the photographer's name is not cited in this careless discourse. The portrait session from which the cover portrait for *Black + Whiteley* is chosen took place in 1987. Preston mentions a T-shirt. Brett designed it and chose to wear it for the portrait session, yet its message, '96% Love', also seems to have escaped both writer and reviewer.

In contrast, your cover portrait for the March issue — Meryl Tankard, photographed by Régis Lansac — was accompanied on the title-page by generous textual information about both subject and photographer.

In the USA, *Aperture Journal*, now celebrating its fiftieth year, regularly features great writing on photography, often by known writers, poets, historians and photographers. If a writer wanted to research the subject, they could begin there. Jack Kerouac's introduction to Robert Franks's *The Americans* remains as vital a piece of writing today as it was when it was written in 1957.

Writing about an artist's life or work is surely a serious project that requires deeper research and engagement than either the author of this book or its reviewer have come up with in this so-called 'search for Brett Whiteley'.

Juno Gemes, Sydney, NSW

Missing victim

Dear Editor,

Kerryn Goldsworthy's review of the revised edition of K.S. Inglis's *The Stuart Case* (*ABR*, February 2003) was an even-handed appraisal of a very thorough book about a shocking crime. Whether the Aboriginal Max Stuart actually raped and

murdered the nine-year-old Mary Hattam was a bitterly fought issue, but, as Goldsworthy rightly notes, it seemed that the victim was 'barely seen for the dust'.

I researched the case for the screenplay of *Black and White*. I interviewed most of the survivors, including Don Dunstan and Detective Turner (both now dead), as well as lawyers and relatives. I went to Ceduna and made the walk that Stuart made on that fateful day. I became convinced of two things. Firstly, the chronology of Stuart's walk was very much in keeping with the prosecution's allegations that it was possible for it to fit into the times many witnesses gave. Secondly, after all the evidence I heard and read (admittedly some of it not allowed in a court of law), I came to the conclusion that there had to be some doubt about Stuart's innocence. My producer and director had a different view, hence the two versions of the brutal violation in the movie. But I also thought that presenting the two versions was probably a good idea, as they reflected the divided views of the community at the time. The irony of the whole case was that, if Stuart hadn't been Aboriginal, he would certainly have been executed.

What began to prey on my mind was that Mary Hattam had been overlooked. It was a hideous and obscene crime. For many drafts of the screenplay, I opened the story with Mary Hattam's voice and closed it with her voice, because I didn't want her to be forgotten. My producer and director didn't like this idea and the scenes were tossed out (as was their right to do so), something I regret to this day, as I do Robert Carlyle's dismal performance.

Louis Nowra, Elizabeth Bay, NSW

Spooky

Dear Editor,

Despite Angus Trumble's mystification, no supernatural power was involved in the airborne opening of Ann Galbally's book *Charles Conder* (*ABR*, March 2003) — just the laws of physics. All paper these days is machine-made, which means that the wood fibres tend to line up more in the longitudinal plane than the transverse one in the process. That's why it is easier to tear a newspaper down the page than across it. Books are printed with the paper orientated so that the grain is vertical, meaning that the pages bend most easily in the plane parallel to the spine. Sometimes the printer gets it wrong, so that after the book is bound the pages are stressed. The pages won't turn over easily and tend to become convex or concave in the vertical plane, which means they fan out.

My guess is that your reviewer had such a book. The pages were controllable in the sea-level humidity, but when they became dry at high altitudes they fanned out like a porcupine's quills — a physico-chemical reaction that proved to be perfectly reversible.

Richard Travers, South Yarra, Vic.

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Simon Catterson is a Melbourne reviewer.

John Coates retired as Chief of the General Staff, Australian Army, in 1992. His books include *An Atlas of Australia's Wars*.

John Connor is a PhD student at the University of NSW at the Australian Defence Force Academy, and the author of *The Australian Frontier Wars, 1788–1838*.

Oliver Dennis is a Melbourne reviewer.

Kristie Dunn is a lawyer and freelance writer.

Martin Duwell teaches at the University of Queensland.

Chris Edwards is the author of *Utensils in a Landscape*. Like most of the poems in that collection, 'The Awful Truth' is built around (mis)quotations — from, in this case, Richard Schikel's *Cary Grant: A Celebration*.

Morag Fraser is a freelance writer and former Editor of *Eureka Street*.

Kerryn Goldsworthy was Editor of *ABR* from 1986 to 1987 and remains an Editorial Adviser. Her essay 'After the Academy', first published in the June/July 2002 issue of *ABR*, reappears in *The Best Australian Essays 2002*.

Robin Grove choreographed for Ballet Victoria and was on its board of directors for many years. As well as teaching literature at the University of Melbourne, he is currently involved in dance research projects with the VCA.

Warwick Hadfield reports on sport for Radio National.

Ian Holtham is Senior Lecturer at the Faculty of Music, University of Melbourne.

Joy Hooton's many books include (with William Wilde) *The Oxford Companion to Australian Literature* (1994).

Clive James's poetry often appears in *ABR*. His long essay 'Our First Book' appeared as the La Trobe University Essay in the December 2002/January 2003 issue.

Virginia Lowe has been a university lecturer, a school and public librarian, and now runs an assessment agency Create a Kids' Book.

Michael McGirr is the fiction editor of *Meanjin*. His books include *Things You Get for Free*.

Geraldine McKenzie lives in the Blue Mountains. Her book *Duty* won the Dame Mary Gilmore Prize for the Most Outstanding First Book of Poetry 2001–2002.

John Martinkus is an investigative reporter and the author of *A Dirty Little War*. He also wrote *Paradise Betrayed: West Papua's Struggle for Independence*, the seventh *Quarterly Essay*.

Peter Menkhorst is a Victorian zoologist and author. He is currently preparing a revised edition of the late Graham Pizzey's *Field Guide to the Birds of Australia*.

John Monfries is a former Australian diplomat.

Thuy On is a Melbourne reviewer.

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

Peter Ryan is a former publisher and a constant reviewer.

Craig Sherborne is a Melbourne poet, playwright and journalist.

Gary Simes published his *Dictionary of Australian Underworld Slang* in 1993.

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Ruth Starke is an Adelaide writer and academic. Her latest novel is *NIPS Go National*.

Peter Steele has a Personal Chair at the University of Melbourne. His most recent poetry collection is *Invisible Riders*, and he recently published a collection of homilies, *Bread for the Journey*.

Carolyn Tétaz is a Melbourne reviewer.

Stephanie Trigg teaches medieval and modern literature in the Department of English at the University of Melbourne.

Michael Williams is a Melbourne editor and reviewer.