**Advances**

**Conversations at the SLV**
Literary evenings at the State Library of Victoria continue this year with Don Watson in conversation with Barry Jones on Tuesday, 18 March, and Robert Gray speaking to Lyn McCredden on Tuesday, 8 April. Both events are at the Village Roadshow Theatrette at 6.30 p.m. Bookings: (03) 8664 7016.

**Love and biography**
The State Library of New South Wales has another full events programme, including (on Thursday, 27 March) ‘Stella Bowen: Art, Love and War’, a symposium coinciding with an exhibition of the same name. Drusilla Modjeska, Ros Pesman and John McPhee will join Lola Wilkins, the curator. Peter Rose, Editor of *ABR*, will deliver the Inaugural National Biography Award Lecture on Thursday, 3 April. To book for these or other events call (02) 9273 1770.

**Celebrate Magic Pudding**
The NSW Children’s Literature Festival is on again this year at the Norman Lindsay Gallery in Faulconbridge in the Blue Mountains on 22 and 23 March, from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. There will be workshops and talks about children’s books for both adults and younger readers, by authors and illustrators including Morris Gleitzman, Emily Rodda and Kim Gamble. For bookings or more information call (02) 4784 3832 or visit www.nationaltrust.org.au.

**Narrative journeys**
On 11–12 April the National Library of Australia will host a conference on Travellers’ Tales, with presentations on ‘Bringing Them Home’ by Anna Haebich and Doreen Mellor, ‘Crossing Cultures’ by Barry Hill and ‘Creative Journeys’ by Ros Pesman. Bookings: (02) 6262 1122.

**Eureka!**
The successor to Morag Fraser as Editor of *Eureka Street* has been announced. Marcelle Mogg, currently the Editor of *Australian Catholics*, will take the reins at *Eureka Street* for the May issue.

**Future of the book**
There will be more discussions about the health of books and publishing on 22–24 April. RMIT University and Common Ground Publishing are hosting the International Conference on the Future of the Book at the Cairns Convention Centre, Cairns. Speakers will include Jason Epstein, founding Editor of *New York Review of Books* and author of *Book Business*, and Jan Fullerton, Director-General of the NLA. Bookings: (02) 9519 0303 or visit www.Book-Conference.com.

**Norfolk bound**
The adventurous will want to start saving for the inaugural Norfolk Island Writers’ and Readers’ Festival, which will be held on the island from July 19 to 26. Australians taking part will include John Marsden, Doris Brett and Jacqueline Kent. Antarctica must surely be next.

**Space race**
The theme of this year’s Reading Matters is Place, Space and Race. International writers will include David Almon, Deborah Ellis and Benjamin Zephaniah. Australian participants will include Boori Monty Pryor and Meme McDonald. Reading Matters is presented by the Australian Centre for Youth Literature. To book or make enquiries call (03) 8664 7014 or visit the ACYL website www.statelibrary.vic.gov.au/acyl/.

**Calling all authors**
Everyone knows that not all books written by Australians are published locally or readily available in this country. What readers may not appreciate is that it can be next to impossible to find out about them from their publishers. Many international conglomerates notify *ABR* about such titles (and send us review copies when we seek them), but not all of them. Some even refuse our requests for review copies, having decided, in their wisdom, not to import stock. It’s as if they don’t want to sell copies in the colonies. Scholarly works (ostensibly deemed marginal or unsaleable) suffer in particular. This strikes *ABR* as anachronistic — not to mention a tad provincial. *ABR* readers want to know about the widest variety of Australian works, wherever they are published, and irrespective of multinationals’ marketing plans. We encourage Australian authors publishing overseas to ask their publishers to send us information about their works, and review copies. If they won’t, let the Editor know and he’ll have a go on your behalf.
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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.

No more bang

Dear Editor,

Keith Windschuttle must be joking. R.H. Tawney remarked that ‘Historians need fewer documents and stronger boots’ — meaning that they should get out and about in the real world rather than devote themselves to sifting through official reports, statistics, police records etc.

Some years ago, I researched two books on our early explorers and pioneer graziers, plus a number of magazine features concerning the impact of white settlement on Kooris. In addition to months in the Mitchell and other libraries, this involved perusing newspaper files in country towns such as Kiama in NSW, Echuca in Victoria, and Alice Springs in the Northern Territory. All these sources were depressingly rich in firsthand accounts, reminiscences and memoirs of continuing, widespread atrocities against black men, women and children, from the shooting of a Koori by James Cook on 29 April 1770 in Botany Bay to a massacre in the late 1920s in the Northern Territory.

My ‘armchair’ research was backed up by some twenty years (at that time) of travel in rural and outback Australia. Carrying my notebook, camera and tape recorder, I have now spent fifty years in the bush. Endless conversations with graziers, drovers, doggers, shearers, fossickers, croc shooters, roo shooters, stockmen black and white have confirmed the sorry printed history I researched years ago.

Some examples: in 1820, Governor Macquarie recorded ‘my sense of outrage at the wanton and unprovoked shooting and dispossession of the poor black natives throughout the colony’. In 1827 Governor Darling reported on ‘the cold-blooded police shooting of natives’. George Anderson, in 1838, recounted the massacre of forty Koori men, women and children at Myall Creek. In 1842 the Whyte brothers of Portland, Victoria, shot fifty-one Kooris who had wreaked some sheep. In 1843 the Governor of South Australia was appalled by a report from the colony’s Missionary Society that Kooris ‘were being shot down … and their bleeding and ghastly heads exhibited on poles, as scarecrows to their fellows’. John Oxley, one of our earliest explorers, reported in 1817 on his contact with Kooris: ‘They are evidently acquainted with their dread of its appearance.’

Major Thomas Livingstone Mitchell appeared to spend more time shooting Kooris than exploring: ‘I halted the rest of the party suddenly beyond a hill to which the savages were likely to follow us. Attacked simultaneously by both [our] parties, the whole betook themselves to the river, my men pursuing them and shooting as many as they could. Numbers were shot in swimming across the river.’ In 1840 Lord John Russell reported to Sir George Gipps: ‘The colonist occupies a larger tract of land than he has the means to guard; his cattle stray, and are killed by natives; he collects a force and revenges the loss on the first tribe he encounters.’ In the late 1850s a published memoir of a drover mentioned an immensely fat Koori man: ‘He had been a eunuch since babyhood, it being the custom … for flash stockmen to shoot the old men and castrate the kids.’ In 1864 a manager of one of Sir Thomas Elder’s properties in northern South Australia wrote: ‘We want more men … more guns … it is now open war between blacks and us.’ A similar situation prevailed when the stuff-of-legend ‘kings in grass castles’ settled the Kimberley region in the late 1880s. After John Durack was speared in 1886, ‘punitive expeditions’ became the order of the day, one published letter from a settler declaring: ‘The only good Aborigine is a dead one.’ Police records admit to the killing of thirty-eight Kooris by Superintendent Lawrence and constables Pilmer, McDermott, Blythe and Spong. On another occasion, a police party led by sub-inspector Drewry shot sixteen Kooris.

In 1908 the Protector of Aborigines in the Northern Territory, Dr Cecil L. Strangman, visited isolated areas where settlers told him that Kooris had been ‘severely punished for offences against civilisation’. In many districts, Strangman found no original inhabitants at all. The few he did reach cowered in the bush until they were convinced Strangman’s party carried no guns. ‘Their pitiful cries of “no more bang” told a tale of what back-country folk call a “lesson”,’ Strangman wrote. A memoir published in Dorrigo, NSW, in the early 1900s states: ‘Major Parkes and Fletcher surprised two blacks … Fletcher cut one down with a shotgun blast while Parkes rode after the other. Finally exhausted, the blackfellow turned at bay, whereupon Parkes … blew the top of his head off. Clogger and another man caught two more blacks in a gully. Disdaining to waste powder and shot, each unhooked a stirrup iron and used it to knock his selected victim to the ground … Each day brought its quota of natives shot, knifed or bludgeoned to death. Eventually, the Dorrigo Plateau became denuded of its dark-skinned inhabitants.’ In 1928 a punitive party led by constable George Murray shot dead more than sixty Kooris on Coniston station, Northern Territory.

Fifty years in the bush — listening to campfire stories by blacks and whites, reading published and unpublished memoirs and correspondence — have convinced me that all the above is merely the tip of the iceberg. Place names are another pointer to the past: I have crossed many a Poisoned Waterholes Creek. In 1963, while on a two-year assignment for National Geographic, I listened to drovers, black and
Why make it up?

Dear Editor,

I read with interest Bruce Sims’s review of Robert Lowe’s memoir, The Mish (ABR, February 2003). Lowe’s statement about Sunday shooting parties near Warrnambool, which was quoted and commented upon by the reviewer, I found remarkable. I am a fifth-generation white Australian, and a story about settlers going forth on the ‘Lord’s day’ to hunt Aborigines for sport is also part of my family lore. I heard this tale from my mother, Win Harvey, who is now in her late eighties. She heard it from her grandmother who was told it by her grandmother, Janet McMillan, who arrived in Melbourne in 1840 with her husband Samuel and three children from Scotland. The shooting parties were also apparently a Sunday diversion for early Melburnians camped along the Merri Creek. ‘Our’ story contains two details that are astounding enough to make even revisionist historians such as Windschuttle admit that there may be some truth in this ‘unreliable’ source. Janet McMillan tried to protect the fleeing ‘picaninnies’ by gathering them under her wide crinoline. She also said that some of the little children hid their heads in bushes, obviously thinking that if they could not see their hunters, the hunters could not see them. The men with guns shot them in their ‘little backides’.

It is perhaps ironic to note that Janet McMillan’s daughter, also Janet, married a Jack Lynch, a violent man who whipped his new wife while on their honeymoon, and who, family lore notes, also organised ‘hunting’ parties. He deserted his first family. His demise was recorded later in The Age: he was speared to death by Aborigines. This latter family anecdote is ‘verifiable’. So is the generational tree, the name of the ship upon which the McMillans made their passage, and the land titles pertaining to their settlement near Mansfield, Victoria. One wonders, like Sims, ‘why they would have made it up’, this story of merciless and murderous violence against ‘the blackfellas’.

Jeff Carter, Foxground, NSW

Miles Lewis responds to his critics

Dear Editor,

I am flattered that three correspondents have commented upon my review of Drew’s Touch This Earth Lightly and Beck and Cooper’s Glenn Murcutt: A Singular Architectural Practice (ABR, ‘Letters’, February 2003). Each merits some sort of a response.

Moya Costello understands my frustration with a lack of clarity and precision, but argues that much of Drew’s and Murcutt’s language is poetic, and that poetics is ‘a different process of knowledge garnering’. I have no argument with this where it succeeds, and where it is clear that the intention is poetic (though I doubt that what is garnered is best described as ‘knowledge’). But the mere fact that language is unintelligible does not, ipso facto, make it poetic. Certainly, Beck and Cooper’s writing, which was more my concern than Drew’s or Murcutt’s, in no way qualifies.

From the strongly partisan viewpoint of Evelyn Juers, a supporter of Beck and Cooper, anything I say is interpreted as offensive. However, when I state, ‘Here, for once, is an Australian architect who deserves to be studied and documented’, I mean precisely that. When I say that he has achieved an improbable international stature, I mean — and it is undoubtedly true — that Australian architects are hard put to achieve any sort of recognition abroad, and those who design mainly single houses are least of all likely to get it. Murcutt’s international profile is as pleasing as it is surprising, and I mentioned especially his popularity in Finland. When I say that Murcutt is apparently sincere and unassuming, I refer to the fact — and it is not a criticism — that there is under that genuinely attractive façade a solid core of ego. This is as true of Murcutt as of any successful architect, but in his case less easily recognised by the public.

Murcutt is an interesting and important architect, uniquely gifted as a sculptor in materials and space. This does not mean that one has to accept without question claims that his buildings are environmentally friendly, nor even the language in which he chooses to explain them. But my piece was not a review of Murcutt, whose status is unchallengeable, but of two books about him. A review should allocate praise and blame fairly, and it is a blinkered reader who assumes that the one is genuine and the other is not.

Lolla Stewart, Camberwell, Vic.

I first heard this story as a child, and often enough when my mother was going through old photographs and talking about her forebears. Win’s memory is now fragile, but she remains adamant about the source of the story and the location of this terrible event. I had assumed the incidents would have been recorded previously in some historical treatise, but Lowe’s comment ‘That you’ll never hear that from whitey’ has startled me into thinking otherwise. I have included it in my novel in progress, Acts of God, where it forms part of the protagonist’s family story heritage. It would seem that there are some historians who would assert that this is where it belongs — in fiction!

Lolla Stewart, Camberwell, Vic.
William Riedel is hung up on the Pritzker Prize, which is apparently well-known to palaeontologists. The fact that I had not heard of it before betrays my unfathomable ignorance, but the same was true of other architects to whom I spoke, and I am sure that the great majority of non-architects (other than palaeontologists) were in the same boat. Why does it matter?

Miles Lewis, Parkville, Vic.

**Brought to book**

Dear Editor,

In the last sentence of my review of Justine Larbalestier’s *The Battle of the Sexes in Science Fiction* (*ABR*, February 2003), a word got lost during the editorial and proofreading process. The sentence should have read: ‘Australians have written very few book-length critiques of science fiction.’ ‘Book-lengths’ vanished, creating an unfortunate error. Australians have a long tradition of intelligent and acerbic writing about science fiction, and have published numerous short critiques — indeed, two magazines still running that specialise in this area are *Science Fiction* (WA) and *SF Commentary* (Vic.). Rarely has this critical activity resulted in book-length studies of the genre, however.

Lucy Sussex, Brunswick, Vic.

**Copping it sweet**

Dear Editor,

I am becoming excessively weary of the maudlin responses of authors and their friends to reviews they do not like, and increasingly puzzled over your publication of same. There was an old Australian tradition of ‘copping it sweet’; perhaps it should be revived.

David Christie, Barwon Heads, Vic.
Our cover this month shows Australian dancer and choreographer Meryl Tankard. It is one of a series of thirty photographs taken by Régis Lansac, comprising portraits taken in Sydney and Wuppertal (Germany) in 1984 and 1988, and scenes from various productions (Banshee, Chants de Mariage, Kikimora, Two Feet, Songs with Mara, Nutti, Pile Up and The Underwater Cabaret) staged by the Meryl Tankard Company, 1989–1992. Tankard began her professional career with the Australian Ballet, subsequently working in Germany with Pina Bausch in the late 1970s and early 1980s. She was later director of the Meryl Tankard Company in Canberra, and the Meryl Tankard Australian Dance Theatre in Adelaide. Since 1999 she has been a freelance choreographer, with commissions including ones from Andrew Lloyd Webber and the New York jewellery house, Tiffany. She also created the choreography for the Sydney 2000 Olympics opening ceremony.

Photographer and set designer Régis Lansac, Tankard’s long-time creative collaborator, was born in 1947. In addition to performance-based subjects such as Circus Oz and the Flying Fruit Fly Circus, his photography has documented broader social themes such as anti-nuclear and anti-bicentenary demonstrations, Anzac Day marches, and the Sydney City-to-Surf race.

Régis Lansac (1947–) Portrait of Meryl Tankard, Wuppertal, 1984 gelatin silver photograph; 58.5 x 47.7 cm Pictures Collection, an23737549 National Library of Australia

Archived at Flinders University: dspace.flinders.edu.au
Contributors

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Christopher Bantick is a Melbourne writer.

Rod Beecham, formerly literary editor of *The Independent Monthly*, is a freelance reviewer.

Gay Bilson has written about food culture for many years. Once a cook and restaurateur, she now lives in country South Australia.

Michael Brennan is a Sydney poet and the founding director of Vagabond Press.


Simon Caterson is a Melbourne writer and critic.

Mary Eagle is a Canberra writer and curator.

Morag Fraser is the Editor of *Eureka Street* and a regular contributor to *ABR*.

Lisa Gorton is a freelance writer and reviewer.

Bridget Griffen-Foley is an ARC Queen Elizabeth II Fellow in Modern History and Politics at Macquarie University.

Philip Harvey is a Melbourne poet and librarian.

Evelyn Juers writes about art and literature, and co-publishes HEAT magazine.

Katrine Pilcher Keuneman is a Senior Fellow in Philosophy at the University of Melbourne.

Miles Lewis is an architectural historian, and Professor of Architecture at the University of Melbourne.

Patrick McCaughey is a former Director of the National Gallery of Victoria, the Wadsworth Atheneum and the Yale Centre for British Art. Later this year, Text will publish his memoir, from which his essay is drawn.

David McCooey is a poet and critic who lectures at Deakin University (Geelong).

John Mateer is a poet and art critic. His books include *Loanwords*.

Christopher Menz is Senior Curator, Decorative Arts (International), at the National Gallery of Victoria, and author of *Morris & Co.*, which is reviewed in this issue.

Heather Neilson teaches English at University College, Australian Defence Force Academy, Canberra.

David Nichols is a researcher, writer and historian based at Deakin University (Melbourne).

Allan Patience is completing a term as Visiting Professor in the University of Tokyo, and will then resume his appointment at Victoria University.

Edwina Preston is the author of *Howard Arkley: Not Just a Suburban Boy*.

John Rickard wrote *Australia: A Cultural History* and is a parishioner of St Mary’s Anglican church, North Melbourne.

Peter Robb, the author of *Midnight in Sicily* and *M.*, is currently finishing a book on Brazil.

Jennifer Rutherford is a U2000 Research Fellow in the Department of English, Art History, Film and Media at the University of Sydney. Her publications include *The Gauche Intruder: Freud, Lacan and the White Australian Fantasy*.

Brendan Ryan is a Melbourne poet.

Paul Salzman teaches English at La Trobe University. His new book, *Literary Culture in Jacobean England: Reading 1621*, will be reviewed in a coming issue.

Jason Smith is Curator of Contemporary Art at the National Gallery of Victoria. His book *Fieldwork* (co-authored with Charles Green) is reviewed in this issue.

Tony Smith has just finished his thirteenth successive year as a contract worker in Australian universities.

Daniel Thomas now lives in the Tasmanian bush; from 1958 to 1990 he was an art museum curator and director in Sydney, Canberra and Adelaide. His book *James Darling* is reviewed in this issue.

John Thompson co-edited (with Brenda Niall) *The Oxford Book of Australian Letters*.

George Tibbits is a composer and architectural historian.

Angus Trumble is a Harold White Fellow at the National Library of Australia in Canberra.

Chris Wallace-Crabbe is a Melbourne poet and essayist.

Elizabeth Webby is Professor of Australian Literature at the University of Sydney.