The cover image, drawn from the Pictorial Collection of the National Library of Australia, shows one of approximately 350 photographs taken by Fred Bareham, a professional photographer who documented Canberra businesses, industry and social occasions — here, the assembling of the American War Memorial in 1953.

The idea for the project was conceived in 1948 when the Federal Council of the Australian–American Association resolved ‘to establish a Memorial in Canberra in the form of a monument or statue, to perpetuate the services and sacrifices of the United States forces in Australia and to symbolise Australian–American comradeship in arms’. A committee was appointed, with foundation members including R.G. (later Lord) Casey (Federal President of the Australian–American Association) and Sir Keith Murdoch.

From thirty-two entries received in an Australia-wide competition in 1949, the committee chose Richard Ure’s design for an octagonal aluminium column topped by an aluminium American eagle, with victoriously upswept wings. The site, selected from eight possible locations, was at the apex of Kings Avenue, then bushland prior to the construction of the Department of Defence’s Russell offices that now flank the site. Construction proceeded in December 1952 and was completed in just over a year by the Sydney building firm McConell. The total height was approximately 78 metres, and the cost about £100,000. The Memorial was unveiled on 16 February 1954 by Queen Elizabeth II. Vice-President Richard Nixon represented the USA, on behalf of President Eisenhower. The Memorial’s inscription reads: ‘In grateful remembrance of the vital help given by the United States of America during the war in the Pacific 1941–45.’
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Tony Coady is Director of the Centre for Applied Philosophy and Public Ethics at the University of Melbourne.

Meredith Curnow has just resigned as Director of the Sydney Writers’ Festival.

Jean Curthoys, now retired, lectured in Philosophy at the University of Sydney for many years.

Hugh Dillon is a Sydney magistrate.

Gareth Evans, Australian Foreign Minister 1988–96, is now President and CEO of the Brussels-based International Crisis Group.

Morag Fraser is Editor of Eureka Street.

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Gideon Haigh has written many books on sport and business.

Susan Hawthorne is the author of Wild Politics and co-editor, with Bronwyn Winter, of September 11, 2001: Feminist Perspectives, both published by Spinifex this year.

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Joy Hooton is co-author of The Oxford Companion to Australian Literature (1994).

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Patrick McCaughey lives in New Haven, USA, and is currently finishing his memoirs.

David McCoey lectures in literary studies at Deakin University.

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Peter McPhee is Professor of History at the University of Melbourne. His latest book is The French Revolution 1789–1799 (2002).

Desmond Manderson now holds the Chair in Law and Discourse at McGill University, Montreal. He is the author of From Mr Sin to Mr Big: A History of Australian Drug Laws (1993).

Peter Mares’s book Borderline: Australia’s Treatment of Refugees and Asylum Seekers will be reissued in a revised edition next month.

Andrew Markus is Professor of Jewish Civilisation at Monash University.

John Martinkus’s most recent book is A Dirty Little War (2001).

Kate Middleton is a Melbourne writer.

Philip Morrissey is Lecturer in English at the University of Melbourne.

Richard Neville’s latest book, Amerika Psycho: Behind Uncle Sam’s Mask of Sanity, will be reviewed in a future issue.

Allan Patience, currently a Visiting Professor at the University of Tokyo, is Professor of Political Science and Asian Studies at Victoria University of Technology.

Peter Porter’s many awards include the Queen’s Medal for Poetry for 2002.

Wilfrid Prest, ARC Australian Professorial Fellow at the University of Adelaide, recently edited The Wakefield Companion to South Australian History (2001).

Lloyd Reinhardt taught philosophy at the Universities of Sydney, London and California.

John Rickard is an honorary professorial fellow at Monash University and the author of Australia: A Cultural History.

Tim Rowse’s new book, Nugget Coombs: A Reforming Life, will be reviewed in the October issue.

Craig Sherborne is a senior writer with the Herald-Sun.

Carolyn Tétaz is a Melbourne writer.

Helen Thomson is theatre reviewer for The Age.
Welcome to our many new subscribers who have joined us in the past couple of months, including a large number in NSW and the ACT, further evidence (if we needed it) of the value of our new partnership with the National Library of Australia. We hope you enjoy the September issue.

ABR subscribers receive, among other things, advance notice of ABR Forums and events. (If you haven’t already given us your e-mail address, please do so.) Those in Sydney and elsewhere in NSW may like to join us at 7.30 p.m. on Friday, 13 September when Neal Blewett will launch the September issue. The launch is part of Songlines, the Blue Mountains World Heritage Arts and Environment Festival, based in the Wentworth Falls School of Arts, and held over the first three weekends in September (enquiries to (02) 4782 7664 or www.songlinesfestival.com.au). The festival will include a series of conversations co-organised by Peter Bishop (a regular contributor to the ‘Author! Author!’ column, and ABR’s newest editorial adviser). The ABR launch will be followed by a conversation with historian Anna Haebich.

Further south, in a major new venture for the magazine, Peter Porter — one of the finest poets writing in English, and another regular contributor to ABR — will inaugurate the La Trobe University/ABR Annual Lecture, his topic being ‘The Survival of Poetry’. Full details appear on page 13. ABR subscribers are entitled to attend gratis (the cost for non-subscribers is $10), but bookings are essential, as this event will almost certainly sell out. We will publish Peter Porter’s lecture in the October issue.

Early last month, ABR attended, and greatly enjoyed, the Mildura—Wentworth Writers’ Festival, which attracted writers such as Peter Goldsworthy, Les Murray and David Malouf. La Trobe University, a sponsor of the Mildura—Wentworth Arts Festival, was represented, too. Professor Michael Osborne, the Vice-Chancellor, conferred an honorary doctorate on the Spanish writer Alfredo Condé, who then delivered a lecture in the salubrious Mildura Club. In October, the celebrated Peruvian writer Mario Vargas Llosa (pictured above in 1993, during his previous visit to the university) will deliver lectures at two La Trobe campuses: Bundoora and Mildura.

Traffic is bound to be congested on 5 September, when Professor Peter Doherty launches the first issue of this twice-yearly interdisciplinary postgraduate journal in the Gryphon Gallery, Graduate House, at the University of Melbourne. Contributors include Denise Harrison, Susan Hawthorne and Alison Lilley. All of them are in the running for the Traffic Prize, worth $1000, to be presented by Professor Peter McPhee.

Wagga Wagga Writers invite everyone to the launch of Take It As Red: A Collection of Stories and Poems from Young Regional Writers, which will happen at the Wagga Wagga City Library on 7 September. There is one condition: guests are asked to wear something red.

Our September 11 Symposium has attracted many lively contributions, none more so than Richard Neville’s (page 43). Neville will discuss his latest book, Amerika Psycho: Behind Uncle Sam’s Mask of Sanity, at Readings on 17 September. John Martinikus, another contributor to this issue, will appear at Readings on 20 September, when he will discuss his Quarterly Essay, Paradise Betrayed, with Tim Flannery.

Brenda Niall will discuss her book on the Boyds at the Sydney Institute (41 Phillip Street) at 6 p.m. on Tuesday, 17 September.

Barrett Reid (1926–95) — poet, librarian, editor and critic — bequeathed a substantial collection of modern art to Heide, where he lived for many years. (He is photographed above, left, with Sunday Reed and Laurence Hope, in 1946.) The current exhibition, ‘Making It New: The Barrett Reid Bequest to Heide’, runs until the end of November. On 8 September, Peter Burns, artist and architect, will give a talk entitled ‘Meeting and Working with Barrett Reid’.

Canberrans may be interested in ‘International Perspectives on Reconciliation’, a seminar organised by the Freilich Foundation, Reconciliation Australia and the National Library of Australia. This all-day seminar will take place at the Library on 21 September. Five days later, Fred Chaney will deliver this year’s Kenneth Myer Lecture at the National Library of Australia, at 6 p.m. His subject will be ‘Achieving a Fairer Australia’.
Dear Editor,

I want to respond to John Hirst’s rather avuncular dismissal of Rosemary Neill’s White Out (ABR, August 2002). John is an old friend, and I have often relied on his goodwill and good sense, but I disagreed with just about every sentence of his evaluation of O’Neill’s excellent book. In fact, I think his review exemplifies the kind of predetermined politicised response that Neill and other engaged analysts of the Aboriginal condition are up against. Some Aborigines and whites have been ‘speaking the truth’ about the devastating disintegration of some Aboriginal communities for years. What is ‘new’ is that more of us are beginning to turn from our absorbing in-house squabbles to listen to what they are saying. We are being made to hear that the earnest diagnoses and recommendations we have been making over the last three decades appear to be mistaken. It is not only that Aborigines are dying earlier. Now they are suffering more while in custody, but living in their ordinary world. If this is journalism, we could do with a great deal more of it in academe.

Hirst quickly invokes the old academic/journalist divide: ‘Neill proceeds as a journalist, quoting different testimony and viewpoints’, so implying no more than a modest authoritative intention. Over the last few years, I have accumulated an unruly file of material relating to the ‘Aboriginal problem’, and have flinched from the challenge of ordering it to usefulness. Neill orders her dispersed and disparate material excellently well. She quotes because she cares about accuracy; and, having quoted, she moves to expose the flaws in both analysis and logic that can vitiate good intentions when they proceed from a political mould. Even more valuable, she presents a range of research findings, many of them new to me, which focus squarely on painful because baffling issues, like the decline in Aboriginal literacy in the Northern Territory, and the higher incidence of suicide among Aboriginal males when they are not in custody, but living in their ‘ordinary’ world. If this is journalism, we could do with a great deal more of it in academe.

It was presumably the frank statement of these disquieting research findings that led Hirst to grant White Out residual virtue as ‘a good compendium of politically incorrect information’. The detachment of that response leads me to identify what has been journalists’ greatest contribution. In recent years, professional journalists such as Tony Koch, Paul Toohey, Stuart Rintoul and now Rosemary Neill have used their newspaper columns as trumpets to summon us away from our distanced debates and abstractions, to face the terrible actualities of the present.

Hirst then chides Neill for endorsing ‘positions on policy that are contradictory’, giving as evidence his gloss on her tentative recommendations: ‘sometimes more money appears to be needed; sometimes money is not the answer.’ But where is the contradiction in that? It sounds true to me. He also fuses over her failure to rehabilitate that antique term ‘assimilation’, with its trailing clouds of historical associations. I found Neill’s characterisation of assimilationist policies between the wars one of the fairest I have read — but why would we want to resuscitate that discredited term now, save to revive some old political battle? Hirst lists Neill’s ambitions: that Aborigines should live as long, have as much access to jobs and education, and enjoy as much physical security as the rest of us. Don’t we all want that? I think Hirst would allow that we do, but he sees, mysteriously to me, an unavoidable corollary: ‘the implication, then, is that Aborigines are to be coerced or cajoled into living according to the general community standards.’ He seems to assume that social discipline will have to be imposed on these reprobates.

These are extraordinary inferences to draw from the information Neill presents. One example only: of course some men are learning now from the failure of the grand, authoritarian, simple-minded policies of the past. Progress, if it comes at all, will come piecemeal and in a number of modest local forms, and will require the nurturing of gallant, necessarily fragile local initiatives. That is the lesson we are learning now from the failure of the grand, authoritarian, simple-minded policies of the past.

Hirst unveils his own solution in his last paragraph. Aborigines (and, presumably, the rest of us) cannot hope for betterment in the present situation ‘until the libertarian impulse has exhausted itself’. It would, therefore, seem our moral and political duty to go out and help exhaust it — not a recommendation I expected to hear from John. I don’t blame him for ducking the question of what’s to be done, but I admire Neill for having read, reflected and arrived at some tentative conclusions.

Before reading Hirst’s review, and knowing him to be a fair-minded man, I thought Neill’s title White Out to be a touch inflammatory. Now I recognise the force of the metaphor of us shuffling around in a fog of our own making. Brava, Rosemary Neill.

Inga Clendinnen, Horseshoe Bay, Qld

Inga Clendinnen responds to John Hirst

ABR welcomes concise and pertinent letters. Correspondents should note that letters may be edited. They must reach us by the middle of the current month. E-mailed letters must include a telephone number for verification.
Gideon Haigh responds to Paul Strangio

Dear Editor,

It’s curious that Paul Strangio should object so strenuously to my review (ABR, June/July 2002) of his Keeper of the Faith; curious because, if anything, I erred on the side of generosity, fully understanding the ordeal of first-time publication. I endeavoured even to spare him direct criticism by explaining his book’s weaknesses in terms of the systemic failure of imagination in academic publishing, rather than by reference to his own inadequacies. He repays me with a gross misrepresentation of my views, even a little personal abuse, and a self-regarding bleat exhibiting no comprehension of any of my criticisms. This is a new concept for me: that if you don’t like a review of your book, you simply write in with your own.

My response will be as economical as Mr Strangio’s is not. I did not describe Keeper of the Faith as immoral, inaccurate, tendentious, dishonest or dishonourable. I said it was boring. This is unavoidably a matter of opinion. But I’d submit that a book of 464 pages containing not a single intimate anecdote, provoking thought, arresting description, felicitous phrase or even unexpected word is, by any measure, dull; not least when it says instead, about the subject and about politics in general, is so utterly predictable. He asks for my response to his book’s ‘themes’, but what is there to respond to? There was a tension between Jim Cairns’s scepticism about parliamentary democracy and his choice of career as an elected official. There was a tension between Cairns and his leader Gough Whitlam because they came from different backgrounds and traditions. Oh, and he sympathised with the underdog because of his humble origins. And... well... there just isn’t much else. Hard-hitting, eh?

I’m clearly a new experience for Mr Strangio as a reviewer. I have no agenda. I’m neither an academic rival, nor his ideological nemesis. I approached Keeper of the Faith solely as a reading experience — and wouldn’t repeat the exercise at gunpoint. Mr Strangio’s assertion that I have ‘no head for a serious, sustained and unashamedly political narrative’, that I prefer ‘historical writing that is dilettante in style and non-challenging in content’, is simply the tired academic pretence that prolixity equals rigour, and monotony means objectivity. Now that he’s been published outside the academy, Mr Strangio should come to terms with the idea that his books will be read by different sorts of people (that’s what he should be hoping for, anyway). Some will not like his work. Will he throw a tantrum every time that happens?

Gideon Haigh, North Caulfield, Vic.

Wagga Wagga to the world

Dear Editor,

I read Gideon Haigh’s review (ABR, June/July 2002) of Paul Strangio’s biography of Jim Cairns with interest. When I got to his thoughtful aside about university presses — why the hell are they publishing so many PhDs? — I wanted to cheer. This may have been because I had spent the morning declin-
LETTERS

The colossal exceptions are when you read the proposal that really is a book, the author having worked hard to take it to another planet from where the PhD began. Your heart beats faster, and you think: ‘This really is good. We must publish it, pretty much as it stands.’ In reality, after ten years of looking at hundreds — maybe thousands — of proposals for revised theses, for me there have been a handful of these glorious moments. Perhaps some of the authors responsible for them have been from that exclusive cohort who set out to write a book, decide they may as well get a doctoral qualification out of it as well, and somehow get away with it.

More often than not, however, it’s better to decline the proposal outright and put everyone out of their misery. Occasionally, I’ll offer a bit of free counselling, saying, at least implicitly: ‘You’ve done it, you’ve done it competently, now move on.’ Invariably, the best practical advice is to turn the thesis into a journal article or two, enabling the author to reach specialists who really will engage with his or her work. A book that sells in small quantities and is seen as a discretionary purchase even by those who are experts in the relevant field or related to the author doesn’t help anyone.

So why do university presses continue to publish books that started out as PhDs? Very often we’re talking about a gap between what we truly thought an author could achieve and what was actually delivered. Thousands of hours of work by all parties may improve it, but not save it. Misplaced faith is a fact of life in all avenues of publishing, as files of cancelled contracts and overstocked warehouses will testify. There is also the weight of numbers. While I am hopeful that the message that a thesis isn’t a book is starting to sink in, it needs to sink in far and wide: in 2000, 27,886 students were registered for a PhD, according to DEETYA. Of course, they’re not all in the humanities and social sciences, where, unlike the sciences, getting a book from your PhD has, traditionally, been the assumption, but a fair proportion are. It’s too scary for me to do the sums and work out that if only a quarter of those who pass send me a proposal …

More often than not, though, some theses get published because university presses are following their mission: to disseminate knowledge, and to contribute to the cultural and intellectual life of the nation. It is not unreasonable to expect that a few of these tens of thousands of PhD students, some of Australia’s best and brightest, funded by the nation to analyse, read, debate and discuss, will produce a book from their work that sets part of the world on fire.

Looking at the bigger picture, it’s not news that the market for academic books is shrinking at a time when the number of books published continues to grow. Observers of academic publishing will have noticed the ground shifting in recent years. Fewer specialised monographs are being published, PhDs or not. More textbooks are now published by university presses than was the case a decade ago. And, encouragingly, university presses are publishing more general books, not always written by academics, or perhaps written by academics decidedly not writing for other academics. This, in some ways, is filling the gap left by many of the trade publishers as they find their traditional markets shifting as well.

So while we should celebrate the relatively few ex-PhDs that manage to transcend the constraints under which they were originally written, Gideon Haigh is right to plead that academic publishers be wary, very wary indeed. In general we are, but the academic culture in which we largely work doesn’t always share our perspective.

Phillipa McGuinness, UNSW Press, Sydney, NSW

Wither poetry in Melbourne?

Dear Editor,

What is the current place of poetry within our literary festivals? What opportunities do they offer poetry readers to relate to the diversity of fine contemporary poetry published in Australia today? Why — given their potential importance in offering poets access to a larger reading and book-buying audience — isn’t there a greater emphasis on poetry at our literary festivals? Should festivals forfeit access to Literature Board and other public subsidies unless they provide a programme of readings each day they operate? Should there be a minimum quota of poets (say, twenty per cent) among invited guests?

Some festivals, like the recent Sydney Writers’ Festival, deal with poets and poetry publishers in creative and inclusive ways. This May, the audiences for the several poetry-related sessions and readings at Hickson Road were large and lively. Not so this year’s The Age Melbourne Writers’ Festival. The above questions were provoked by a consideration of this year’s programme. The title of one panel talks of poetry publishing as a ‘dying art’, but no poetry publisher is listed among the panellists. This year’s programme gives the work of major poetry publishers hardly any space at all. Whilst the list of invited poets includes well-known ones, a mere five poets, including only one indigenous writer, will take part in five sessions in a programme representing hundreds of writers. At Paper Bark Press, we could not understand why the new work of a poet of Rodney Hall’s importance was not included in the same festival where his New and Selected Poems was due to be launched.

This narrow ‘take’ on poetry publishing is not what a publicly subsidised festival should be offering. Surely there is a legitimate requirement that these subsidised events should represent a wide array of literary publications.

Paper Bark Press is a serious publisher, in its sixteenth year, and values its reputation as an inclusive, open-minded and innovative publisher of poetry of the highest quality. That is why we are not prepared to put our authors into this festival. Paper Bark has decided that it will not proceed with

Over the years, Paper Bark has enjoyed a considerable history with the Melbourne Writers’ Festival and has, we trust, made a significant contribution. During the last ten years, we have launched a number of award-winning poetry titles there, and our poets have regularly participated in the festival. In 1999, for instance, Paper Bark launched five poetry titles at the festival. Of these titles, Peter Minter’s *Empty Texas* won *The Age* Poetry Award, Jennifer Maiden’s *Mines* was awarded the Kenneth Slessor NSW Premier’s Prize for Poetry, Peter Steele’s *Invisible Riders* was shortlisted for the Victorian Premier’s Prize, while Kevin Hart’s *Wicked Heat* was shortlisted for the Judith Wright Calanthe Award for Poetry. In the same year, *Pure and Applied*, by Gig Ryan, won the Victorian Premier’s C.J. Dennis Prize for poetry.

This year, there is no recognition that poetry is a vital and many-sided art with a wide readership and an active local publishing and reviewing scene. With such a failure to deal well and representatively with the poets, no wonder there is a question mark in the title of the session ‘Poetry for the People?’

Paper Bark hopes that our withdrawal from *The Age* Melbourne Writers’ Festival will stimulate discussion on the issues we have raised here.

Juno Gemes, Paper Bark Press, Sydney, NSW

**Missing children**

Dear Editor,

When my copy of *ABR* arrives, I always turn to the back pages (sad but true: children’s literature comes last) to read the latest in children’s books. On opening the August edition, I discovered adult fiction at the back. Could it be that children’s books had been promoted? But no, they weren’t there at all. Is this a one-off, or have reviews of children’s books been abandoned? I hope not. Good books for children are the foundation of a love of literature. I trust the review of Maurice Saxby’s *Images of Australia: A History of Australian Children’s Literature 1941–1970* (*ABR*, August 2002) was not a farewell to this category.

Take this letter as an enquiry with hope.

Errol Broome, Brighton, Vic.

*ABR* has certainly not abandoned its commitment to children’s book publishing, but we are reviewing our coverage, with a view to deciding how best to encompass such a buoyant, growing literature in the relatively few pages that are available. Pam Macintyre, in her review of *Images of Australia*, noted *ABR*’s ‘long and steady contribution to children’s literature’. Pam (co-author of *The Oxford Companion to Australian Children’s Literature*, and one of our editorial advisers) is contributing to this review process, along with others. The first of our new surveys of recent children’s books will appear in the October issue. Ed.

**Ned Kelly the Australian**

Dear Editor,

Alex McDermott (*ABR*, March 2002) makes a good case for a more nuanced assessment of the Kellys and their relations with police and squatters. At the same time, however, his suggestion of atavistic forces at work simply elaborates on the ‘mad Ireland made Ned’ analysis voiced twenty-five years ago by Manning Clark and, most recently, by Germaine Greer. Are we really to believe that the unsettled conditions of north-eastern Victoria prompted a reversion ‘to older ways of life’ that prevailed in Ireland before St Patrick and the English invasion, and that somehow survived in the imported folk memory? Can we accept that the same environment that John Molony and repeated by Greer that the Kellys were of Irish rebel stock. Central to the debate is the question of how Ned Kelly identified himself. Despite the rhetoric of the Jerilderie Letter (whose authorship is still problematic, to say the least) and its invocation of an Ireland that Ned never knew, Ned at no time called himself an Irishman. He was ‘a colonial’, ‘a native’ and, significantly, ‘an Australian’. The freedom he invoked was not that of the cattle-raiding bands of pre-colonial Ireland, but of a native Australian of Irish origin determined to build a new life.

Bob Reece, Fremantle, WA
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