

It began in the late forties and ended some 25 years later in the cathartic explosion of political activity that came with the women's movement and the green bans. In between there was the Push, a network of Sydney intellectuals whose anarchistic beliefs and uninhibited lifestyle marked them for the rest of their lives. Among those associated with it were Germaine Greer and Wendy Bacon, Eva Cox and Paddy McGuinness, Margaret Fink and Lillian Roxon, Robert Hughes and Clive James. For them and hundreds of others, the Push was a 'blowtorch to the belly'. In these edited extracts from her new book, **ANNE COOMBS** recreates the life and times of the Push.

The allure of THE PUSH

THEY WERE NOT LIKE THE BLOOMSBURY set. They were not rich or self-consciously elegant. They were not out to change the world, but to interpret it. The Sydney Libertarians, who were at the core of the Push, were politically radical without being either committed socialists or communists. Intellectually they were anarchists, but they didn't do much in the way of anarchist activity. They were tough, in a laconic fashion, opposed to the Church, the State, wowsers and censorship. They read and talked and argued constantly. They were also gamblers and larrikins, happiest at the pub and the race track. They were influenced not just by John Anderson (professor of philosophy

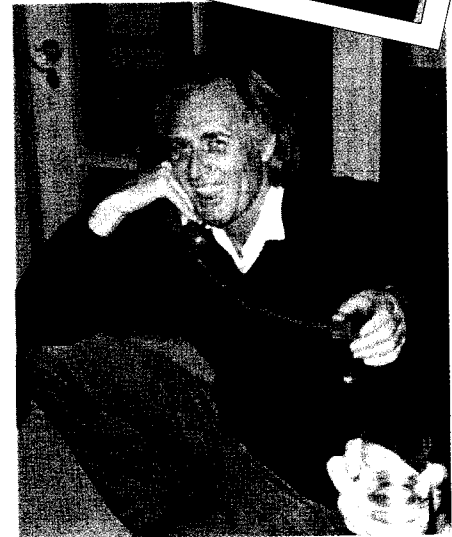
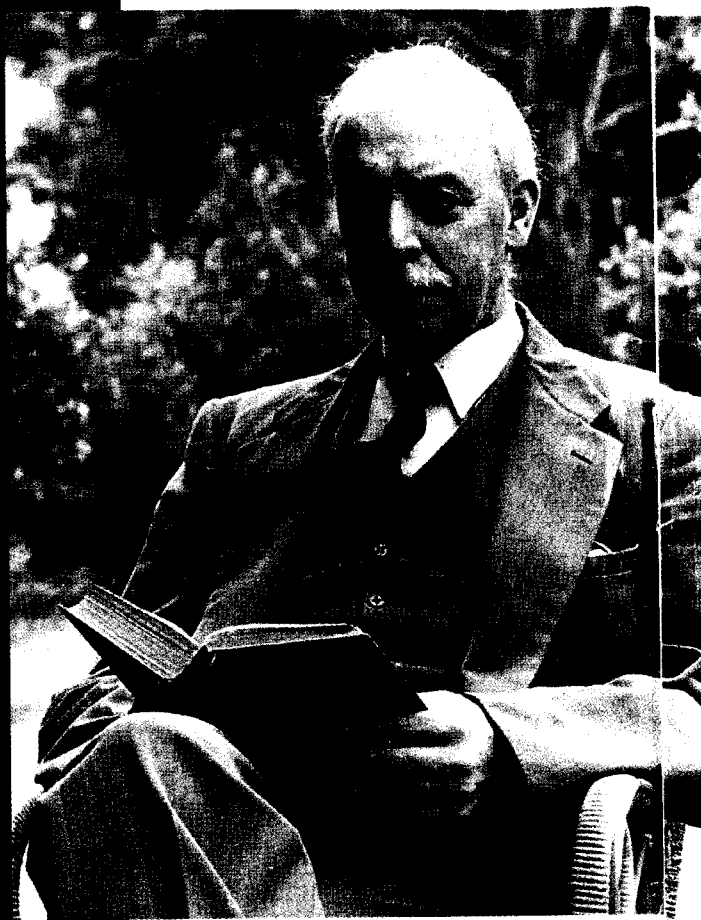
at Sydney University) but by a unique confluence of factors that included their youth, post-war uncertainty, the ready availability of jobs and a liking for the bohemian life. They were curious and took ideas from everywhere, but they were also strongly rooted in this country, in its habits and pastimes. The men and women of the Push believed in living out their ideas and forged ahead with the sexual revolution a good 15 years before the rest of society. The freedom to choose and change your sexual partners, without recriminations or jealousy, was central to Libertarian philosophy.

The tentacles of the Push spread out and encompassed a huge range of people from

the professions and the arts, largely through the pub scene. Scores of people from the Push have done their bit to shape, flavour and interpret the world we live in: academics, writers, painters, broadcasters, filmmakers, lawyers and politicians. But because of the beliefs that were at the heart of libertarianism, real fame rarely attached itself to Libertarians. For the most part, they refused to become involved in the pursuit of professional or political goals. They believed that such involvement inevitably meant making pragmatic choices or compromises that were not in line with one's principles; that there would be unforeseen results which would be to the detriment of freedom.

Robert Hughes wrote to me, "I certainly heard the basic message of Sydney libertarianism loud and clear – that you should never believe anything someone says merely because he/she is saying it. This has been of fundamental value to me as a writer. It was not, of course, invented in Sydney in the late forties, but in Athens about 2300 years before that. Nevertheless I first encountered it in Sydney through the medium of the Push."

People always ask about the Push: who are the famous people? What have they produced? Names like Hughes and Greer and Clive James can be rattled off if that is what is wanted. But what is striking about the Push is that these "names" are not actually the people who matter. They are not the ones who created the significance of the



Clockwise from top left: Professor John Anderson; Margaret Fink and Barry Humphries, 1957; Harry Hooton (right) and Bob Cumming; Darcy Waters; Robert Hughes; Roelof Smilde.

Push but the ones who were influenced by it; they are the ones who picked up a few ideas and attitudes and went off to the wider world and used them.

The Push was full of contradictions; perhaps this was the secret of its allure. It was an anti-intellectual intellectual movement, an anti-creative artistic movement, a non-activist social movement, a Philistine cultural movement. What mattered was that you were a good talker, a good drinker and companionable. What you did in your outside life – be it teaching, writing, labouring or being a bum – was irrelevant.

The ones who matter in the Push, with a few exceptions, are mostly unknown to the

general public. The leaders lived their lives by principles that guaranteed they would never make the cover of *Newsweek*. They were counter-culture before the term existed. They had put themselves outside the mainstream – it was part of the mystique of the Push. If you came upon it, or drifted on its periphery, you would hear stories about these people. They had a kind of glamour.

Two of the Push's leaders – the Princes of the Push – Libertarians Darcy Waters and Roelof Smilde, are, among the thousand or so people who were part of the Push over 25 years, famous, almost legendary. Beyond the Push, they were almost unknown. Yet who can say how such influence spreads?

From the beginning, women embraced the freedoms offered by the Push. The theory was that women were equal, and Push men thought they treated them as such. Many of the women now recognise that the equality was illusory, but few regret their years in the Push. For adventurous women the attractions were obvious; the costs less so. ▸

Each year, new young women gravitated to this milieu. Freedom, the conversations and the parties might have been the drawcards in the beginning. Later, the power and mystique of Push leaders drew them in.

"They were like stars, people you knew about before you even met them," says Margaret Fink. You became part of a network, a network that could tell you where rooms could be rented, or a good doctor found or who had the money this week and would give you some if you asked. Years later, when Fink was married and wealthy, she would hold parties to which all the old crowd turned up. She was a film producer by then, and a society figure. But at her parties the rich rubbed shoulders with old friends who were living in squats. Bankers and gamblers would converse while a waiter poured drinks. Differences in wealth, rank and profession were ignored. As one Libertarian who attended such a bash commented: "Money or lack of money was a thing left outside, like an overcoat."

WHEN DARCY WATERS ARRIVED AT SYDNEY University in the summer of 1946, the Golden Age of Andersonianism was coming to an end. Nineteen years of vigorous discussion had produced prominent poets and jurists

and a long line of philosophers, Perce Partridge, John Passmore and John Mackie among them. But by the late forties, Anderson was aging and becoming increasingly conservative. His anti-communism was so strident that he began to alienate his students. It was in this discontent that the seeds of the Push were sown. Waters was one of those who came under the influence of Anderson, learnt much from him, but finally had to part company.

Waters was a country boy from Casino with a passion for gambling. There was something of the cynical larrikin about him, even at 17, when he took up a scholarship to the university. He was typically Australian in his manner – laid-back, slow to anger – but atypical in his liking for discussion and his disregard for convention. He was also extraordinarily handsome: tall, blond, blue-eyed, broad-shouldered and, when he chose to be, totally charming, with a good singing voice. His long, rangy frame and his love of punting earned him the nickname "Horse".

The character of the university began to change, soon after Waters arrived. In 1947, there was an influx of mature men and women, several thousand returned service-men who had been

in touch with the wider world. Many had been radicalised by the war. Campus politics was lively and pervasive, with the major forces being the Student Christian Movement, the communist-dominated Labour Club, the Freethinkers and the Catholic Newman Society. Dick Klugman was both a Freethinker and a member of the Labour Club. He had overridden the communists sufficiently within the Labour Club to get himself elected president. A young Neville Wran was president of the Liberal Club. Lois Haydon and her sister Madelaine, who later married the philosopher David Armstrong, were members of the Freethought Society.

The Libertarian Society began with a series of meetings at the Ironworkers Hall in Lower George Street in the summer of 1950-51. The venue was an early indication of the changing focus of the new generation: from gown to town. One Freethinker who came to the fore at this time was Roelof Smilde: "We wanted to get downtown. We didn't want to be confined to the university. We saw the university as an enclave, as elitist." But not all the dissidents were in agreement with one another. There were early tensions between the radicals,

such as Waters and Smilde, and the less radical, like David Stove and David Armstrong. In between, or perhaps off on a tangent of his own, was the anarchist poet Harry Hooton.

Hooton was a street intellectual who loathed the elitism of universities. But even though he hated the university he was drawn to it for company and talk – his great passion. He sat with students under the same jacaranda tree, expounding and arguing, and it was there that Waters met him.

"Harry was so charming that people would do anything for him five minutes after meeting him." Already known as a poet, Hooton saw himself as an anarchist philosopher whose "line" was in direct contrast to the "Andersonian shit". He already had a following, people who called themselves Hootonians. Like the dissident Freethinkers, he couldn't stand cant, wowsers, moralism or pretension. But unlike them, he was an idealist, which marked him as utopian.

When it came to a discussion of what their new society should be called, Stove and the other less-wild-ones proposed using the term "democratic" in the name; Waters and Smilde wanted "libertarian"; Hooton wanted "anarchist". The less-wild-ones would not consider "anarchist", so "libertarian" won. Libertarian was a term used by young Spanish anarchists in the first half

of this century. It has romantic connotations, although some Libertarians would dispute that fiercely. Disgust with romanticism of any kind became one of the distinguishing features of libertarianism.

In October, the young philosopher Jim Baker gave a paper from the Libertarian perspective. He had been doing post-graduate work at Oxford and missed the Ironworkers meetings, but on his return sided with the Libertarians. He was to become one of their chief theoreticians. He argued that Freethought was not just a doctrine but a way of life. This was the sort of talk that made Anderson bridle. It was the Libertarians' insistence on living a free lifestyle that most irritated Anderson. To him, they were

"Stupid bitch!" she says of herself, recalling the event 40 years later.

THE WATERING HOLE IN THE FORTIES AND early fifties was the Tudor Hotel in Phillip Street, a warm, convivial, old-fashioned pub that was the hangout of journalists and actors as well as bohemian intellectuals. The Phillip Street Theatre was just up the road. So was *Smith's Weekly* until it folded. The licensee of the Tudor, Mr Betts, was tolerant of women drinking in the bar, then almost unheard of. The street was friendly and on a human scale. There were terrace houses and small office buildings, pubs and newspaper offices. People spent more time out. Sydney was a small city. You could hardly walk those

to the city, too late for Fink to go home. Her friend suggested they stay at Hooton's in Chippendale. "It was about three in the morning when we got there but Harry was still up. He was reading. He came to the door and – I don't care how corny it sounds – it was an electric moment."

She spent the night with her friend but the next morning, instead of going to college, she stayed and talked and listened to Hooton, "transfixed by Harry's words". Their relationship, which she still regards as the most important of her life, began that day. She was 19, he was 44. "I'm 61 now," she says, "and I have never met anyone like him in my life. I was terribly lucky to fall in love with him when I did and live with him."

Hooton was a poet and an anarchist with a difference. He thought there was nothing wrong with people; people were perfect and did not need to be governed. What was needed was a government over

things. In this philosophy, for which he coined the term Anarcho-Technocracy, machines would be the liberators of human beings by being their slaves. But Hooton was over optimistic about the benefits of this social revolution. And his faith in machines sits oddly with another of his beliefs: that "the only work fit for man is manual work". The freedom he wanted for himself was that of the mind and the spirit. For much of his life he achieved it by taking bits of manual work when he needed them and keeping the rest of his time and energy for his real work: thinking and writing.

Another poet who was part of this milieu was Lex Banning, who was co-editor of the university paper *Honi Soit* in 1949 and had edited the university Arts magazine, *Arna*, in 1948. Banning and his friends were part of the literary, more conventionally bohemian side of the Push. He was a character of considerable force around the Push, all the more remarkable because of his severe cerebral palsy. Above all, he believed in the superiority of the artistic life. This put him at odds with the Libertarians, who were uncomfortable with notions of elitism of any kind. Banning hankered after old-style bohemia, an "anything goes" world; one of the things he, in turn, resented about the Libertarians was strong adherence to a philosophical "line"; the belief that their way of living was the correct way. He didn't want bohemia to be infected by rules.

One who knew Banning, both from the university and downtown, was Lillian Roxon. The daughter of Polish Jews, she had been born in Italy before the family emigrated to Australia. When she came to Sydney from Brisbane in 1949, she was a bright, naive, middle-class girl. She enrolled at university, but only because she was unable to get a cadetship on a newspaper. Journalism was the consuming passion of her life, and it was in journalism that she later made her

Infiltrating the Push

BEFORE SHE MET THEM – MORE SO AFTER SHE HAD – author Anne Coombs "wondered if I had been around then, would I have belonged in the Push?"

A Sydney University student in the mid-seventies, she just missed the era although "a certain aura at uni about the Push personalities intrigued me". Now she admits "they'd probably have scared me witless, not because of their behaviour, the degree of swearing and sexual freedom, but because of their outspokenness and verbal aggression."

Four years, two in basic research, the other two in writing and supplementary research, and more than 1000 interviews later, she admits the book "verged on the unmanageable. Most people were willing if not happy to talk. Once they started, they'd get passionate; sometimes there would be tears. It brought up things they hadn't had to think about for 30 years. A couple refused to talk at all, more a reflection of the Push's suspicion of outsiders and a desire to hang onto 'their' movement than anything else."

They saw themselves as beyond social norms, she says, people who thrived in adversity, but they became somewhat bemused when society started catching up with them in the sixties. The Pill, women's liberation and political agitation meant that by the mid-seventies the Push was no longer relevant. "Still, I developed an enormous respect for them overall; I'm conscious I now tend to apply their philosophy and their way of thinking through problems. Sure, they didn't carry their ideas far enough and there were always huge contradictions within the Push itself. No-one ever really knew if they 'measured up', whether they had evolved sufficiently, were unromantic or unsentimental enough, tough-minded enough."

"The biggest contradiction was that the Push were European-focused bohemian intellectuals who the whole time have been almost archetypal Aussie 'blokes' – going to the pub, the races, having a beer. They were forging a strongly Australian intellectual group, as opposed to say, the Lindsays of the thirties who were so European-genteel."

Murray Waldren



name. As a student, she spent a lot of time hanging around the *Honi Soit* office. She was a regular at the Lincoln during its heyday and here her social contacts broadened. From being a good Jewish girl who wore a corset (she always worried about her weight) and spent her evenings knitting and listening to the radio, she soon developed a lively, if not chaotic, social life.

Roxon was short and vivacious, with clear eyes, fair hair and beautiful skin. Although she studied philosophy, wit, not theory, was her forte. The crowd at her table was always full of laughter. At first she lived in a room at Double Bay, but she soon moved to a flat in the centre of the city, in Jamieson St, where she lived with her first boyfriend, architect George Clarke.

Without bothering too much about Libertarian ideas, many were attracted to the Push by the talk, the stories and gossip, by the jokes and laughter in the pub, the coffee shop and at parties. They were young and rebellious and wanted to have fun. They were drawn by the adventurousness of sex, the daring of dissent, by the knowledge that they were part of a particular "in" crowd, a network of people that was like webbing beneath the fabric of the city's educated elite.

Years later, when she was a successful journalist living in New York, Roxon wrote a novel about this period of her life. It was a comparatively short period, yet it domi-

nated her thinking for years afterwards, as if she could not shake free of it. She was not alone in this. Something about that time and milieu affected those who were part of it, particularly the women, in a powerful and not altogether positive way. Living differently was not easy in Australia in the fifties.

Roxon became a Push heroine. The Push appreciated intelligence and outrageousness and she had a sharp tongue that rarely missed its mark. The only one who could hold a candle to her was Neil C. Hope. They were sparring partners and mates. "Sope", as Hope called himself, was already a committed atheist when he moved to Sydney in 1946 on a teacher's scholarship to the university. He was a great wit and raconteur with a gift for words and Rabelaisian description, but little patience with theory. Like Roxon, he was more fond of lampooning the Libertarians than mouthing their theories, but he found the social milieu attractive. He, in turn, became one of the attractions.

THE PUB WAS THE PLACE WHERE PEOPLE met, talked, played pool, discussed the form for Saturday's races, argued about politics or poetry, and eyed off their next sexual conquest. It was always important to Libertarian men that wherever they went, the women went. They would not have tolerated a pub that did not allow free mingling of the sexes. The busiest time at the pub was

the hour from five to six, just before pub closing. The Libertarians turned up at the Tudor almost every day, but Thursdays and Fridays were the big days. It was imperative that you get there by six on Friday evening. If you didn't, you would be lost for the rest of the weekend – you wouldn't know where people were eating, where the party was that night or what was planned for the weekend. Most of the Push lived in rented or temporary accommodation, without telephones; people rarely arranged to meet.

The pubs were unremarkable as places. It was what was happening there that mattered. It must have been an unusual atmosphere for a stranger to walk into: very Australian at first appearance – a crowded bar, casual dress, a larrikin vernacular – but very un-Australian in details – women in the public bar buying their own beers, university lecturers rubbing shoulders with wharf labourers, people arguing the merits of Freud and Reich or Marx and Bakunin. But no talk yet of women's liberation. In his book *Australian Accent*, John Douglas Pringle speaks of meeting a group of working men in a Sydney pub discussing Nietzsche. He was taken aback.

Drinking was enormously important to the Push. Some believe it was all that was important. For many, over the years, drinking became not just an occupation but a problem. Smilde says, "You became a pub

drinker, a social drinker, a party drinker and 20 years later you discover you're hooked on it, that you're an alcoholic. It's a very common story."

They didn't "shout" rounds. They didn't want to force people to stay around when they might otherwise want to go. So people bought their own drinks, or borrowed money to buy one. Often women bought drinks for the men they were with. The main drink was beer, in schooners, but some, particularly the women, drank spirits.

Amphetamines were always popular around the Push. They were easy to get, and people took them to keep them awake so they could party all night, or swot for exams. At Push parties there would sometimes be saucers of pills scattered around the room like bowls of peanuts, but alcohol remained the drug of choice for most.

Although Waters and Smilde worked at various casual jobs after dropping out of university, the far more exciting way of making money was gambling. By the early fifties they had gathered around them a coterie of fellow gamblers. About eight or 10 of them would go regularly to the races at Randwick where they'd meet at The Flat, a section inside the course now used for car parking. Smilde says, "The Flat had its own bookmakers and was free to get into. The prices offered by the bookmakers were good on the flat but the scale of betting was very

small. But that was all right because we weren't big punters – we didn't have any money most of the time."

A WOMAN COMING INTO THE PUSH KNEW certain things: she would be drinking in the public bar with the men, she would be buying her own drinks (and probably beer for the blokes as well), no-one would curb their language because it might offend her, she could expect to be quickly involved in a sexual relationship which might or might not last beyond the night. And if she stayed around long enough she would find her ex-lovers becoming the lovers of her girlfriends and her girlfriends' ex-lovers becoming hers.

The Push surged ahead with the sexual revolution, at least 15 years before it began to permeate society, at a time when there was no safe, simple method of making sure you didn't get up the duff. Before the advent of the contraceptive pill, there were various weird and awful ways of preventing, or attempting to prevent, pregnancy. There was the diaphragm, much as it is today, which required a visit to a doctor to be fitted. He – almost invariably the doctor would be male – would probably ask lots of questions and you had to pretend to be married. There were spermicidal gels and tablets, which were not very effective.

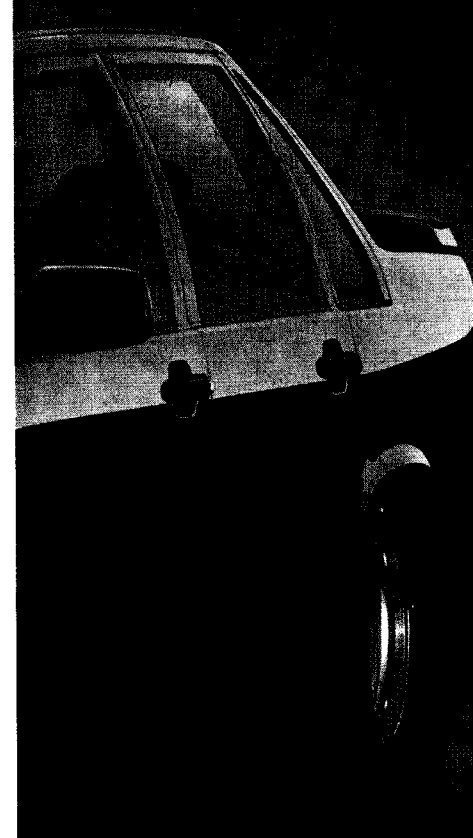
Later in the fifties there were early versions of the IUD, and there were condoms.

Libertarians did not use condoms. As a new woman on the scene, you learnt that very quickly. As a new man, you learnt very quickly that there was no need to worry about contraception because the women would look after that. Some Libertarian men were prejudiced against condoms because they were considered working class. All of them took it for granted that they reduced the pleasure of both parties. Of contraception in general and the diaphragm in particular, Fink says, "Slipping all over the room like frogs – just dreadful. It was ghastly. I've had five abortions. It was just something – urrggh! You'd have to go to Dr Crowe in Elizabeth Street. You'd have to wait, because it was illegal. Pregnancy was a nightmare."

At the time, she was living with Hooton in a flat in Potts Point. She apprenticed herself to a tailor for a while, to learn cutting, then got a job as an art teacher at a private girls' school in Strathfield. There were several other Push women teaching there. "At one stage we were all up the duff at the same time." Come lunchtime and all four of them had to go to a public phone to call Dr Crowe.

Often the women would gather in the sitting room of Fink's Wyde Street flat, talking and drinking tea while she made their clothes, putting some imagination and aesthetic quality into their appearance. "Trying to put any sort of glamour into the Push was pushing shit uphill," she says. One of

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those for whom Fink made clothes was Judy McGuinness, sister of journalist Paddy McGuinness, who remembers pregnancy being an ever-present worry. She had one abortion without anaesthetic when she was 17 and was in no hurry to repeat the experience. Abortions were expensive – 50 to 60 pounds, 100 pounds for a good one – and the degree of difficulty in arranging one varied. Sometimes it was easier to go to Melbourne. At other times, Melbourne women came to Sydney. The etiquette in the Push was that if a woman became pregnant, the responsible man was whoever she said it was, and he was expected to get together the money for the abortion, known as a scrape.

When McGuinness became pregnant for a second time, the man – one of the younger Push men with whom she'd had a brief fling – provided the money and she went off to Melbourne to have the abortion. When she got there, she couldn't go through with it. She stayed in Melbourne and had the baby. The men in the Push were scandalised: she'd run off with the money! But as she says, it was the only financial support she ever got from the father and it didn't go very far.

ONE DISTINGUISHING ELEMENT OF LIBERTARIANISM was that it was entirely an urban phenomenon. Once part of the Push, people rarely moved more than a few miles from the Sydney GPO. The only time they'd see

rural Australia was on their frequent journeying to and from that other metropolis, Melbourne, or when, later, they held occasional weekend conferences at a retreat at Minto, outside Sydney. The rest of the time it was an inner-city lifestyle of rooms in run-down terrace houses, gatherings in downtown pubs, card games in grotty flats and parties in various people's homes. Rooming houses were still common in the fifties and landladies, watchful and moralistic, were the bane of the Push.

Dottie Addison and Eris Walsh shared various abodes with a range of people. One of the most memorable was a large house in Kensington for which Addison held the lease. Frequent visitors included Roxon. Addison recalls one party at the house when Roxon stood in the middle of the room, naked except for briefs, her arms raised above her head, trying to attract the attention of some man. When asked why she was standing with her arms up like the Statue of Liberty, Roxon replied that her breasts looked better that way.

After closing hours were extended to 10pm in 1955, pubs were required to shut their doors for a dinner hour, so it was necessary to go somewhere for that hour. Often they went to the Greeks, an upstairs room in Castlereagh Street where you could have a cheap meal and an argument with the waiter and still be back at the pub within the

hour. The Greeks had been popular with bohemians since the thirties. Although the Push were regular customers, they were not always welcomed: they were too loud and often too drunk, and upset the other, mostly Greek customers. The waiters' response was to be rude and scathing.

The other popular place for a meal was Florentino's in Elizabeth St, where a bowl of spaghetti could be had for a few shillings. Florentino's was long and narrow, its walls were covered in posters. The little round tables at the front made people think it was *très* European. You could get chianti there.

Who paid on these occasions would depend on who had been winning, either at the races or that day's card game. If you were broke, there would always be someone who had some dosh to spare. As two of the principal gamblers, Smilde and Waters's fortunes fluctuated more than most. Always ready to borrow, they were also, when they had the money, ready to lend. Often it was their girlfriends, with small but steady wages coming in, who were the most reliable sources of funds.

Not long after pub closing hours were extended, the Tudor closed its doors. A hasty note was stuck on the door: "Push at the Assembly, at least for tonight." The Assembly was just a couple of doors up from the Tudor. It was here that Barry Humphries, then a young actor at the Phillip Street The-

atre, came across the Push. He was not impressed. "In the ladies' lounge, that is to say in a cheerless tiled room off the saloon bar where rudimentary seating was provided, met another hermetic Order," he wrote in his autobiography. "It called itself 'The Push', a fraternity of middle-class desperates, journalists, drop-out academics, gamblers and poet manqués, and their doxies. These latter were mostly suburban girls; primary school teachers and art students, who each night after working hours exchanged their irksome respectability for a little liberating profanity, drunkenness and sex."

"He called me a doxie!" Fink snorted after reading that. She met Humphries at a

the waterfront. He and some of the other Libertarians were influenced by the industrial Workers of the World – the Wobblies – and put forward some of their ideas, such as sabotage during strikes. That didn't go down too well, even with the communists.

One accusation sometimes aimed at the Push was that they were aping the working class, pretending to be what they were not, that they tried to be Australian intellectuals by taking up the pursuits of Australian non-intellectuals: pub-going, punting, card playing. But working on the wharves, pub drinking and gambling also epitomised their desire to make lives outside the strictures of middle-class morality. One example was

ingmen's jobs, their many sexual exploits, their disdain for security, epitomised what it was to be a Libertarian.

Some people came into the Push for a few years, then left. But Waters and Smilde were there from beginning to the end, and this longevity is one reason for their pre-eminence. They shaped its style and preoccupations. Jim Baker, too, was around for the duration, but never acquired the same stature. He did not have their physical or social charm. In a milieu where sexual activity was as important as intellectual activity, leadership devolved upon those who combined sexual attractiveness, force of character and natural charm. Not that anyone spoke of leadership. The Push had no structure and therefore no leaders, but that doesn't mean it had no hierarchy. Dottie Addison says, "The Push had a hierarchy and a constitution, although it wasn't written, as rigid as the Commercial Travellers' Association."

Most of the men went ahead and had the careers they were training for. Many of them, if not married already, did so in due course, despite the Libertarians' espousal of free love and denigration of marriage. The academics among the Libertarian men-philosophers like Baker and Bill Bonney, psychologists like David Ivison (who for a time lived with Roxon) and John Maze – could not hope to live up to the "standard" set by Waters and Smilde. They had other intellectual talents to offer, which would become valuable later, but in the early fifties it was the different lifestyle being lived by Waters and Smilde that captured people's imaginations. Anyone could get a PhD, but how many could live by their wits? □

This is an edited extract from 'Sex and Anarchy', by Anne Coombs, to be published next week by Viking, rrp \$29.95.

'The Push,' wrote Barry Humphries, 'was a group of middle-class desperates, journalists, poet manqués and their doxies.'

party at the home of Smilde's mother, Grace ("everyone liked everyone else's mother," one Libertarian told me). A love affair developed. Fink left Hooton and went with Humphries when he returned to Melbourne. Later, when it was too late to go back to Hooton, she regretted it.

Around the time the Push moved from the Tudor to the Assembly, Smilde made a career move that was to have a major impact on the Push, its future contacts and directions. In 1956, the captain of North Sydney Boys' High became a wharfie.

Work on the wharves suited the Push lifestyle, but it was not easy to break into. It was often physically demanding work, and sometimes dangerous. Smilde liked the atmosphere on the waterfront. He found his fellow workers, many of them communists, politically aware and motivated and he began writing articles about industrial relations and

their attitude to shoplifting. There was competition to see who could shoplift the most valuable item – Addison claims to have once walked out of a jewellers with a gold watch.

Smilde says: "Quite a few people got caught shoplifting and I did a bit of stealing on the waterfront when I worked there. It was a habit. I don't think you could have said that any of us were regular thieves. Most of us were not very keen on going to jail. We thought that was one of the worst things that could possibly happen to you, to lose your freedom ... I guess that's really why we didn't become criminal. But there was a lot of opportunistic sort of thieving. Not very successful either. We weren't very good at it."

THE LIBERTARIANS CREATED AN ATMOSPHERE, and to be part of it you had to possess an ineffable quality, a certain style, that let you in. Waters and Smilde, with their work-

Now it can travel with you.

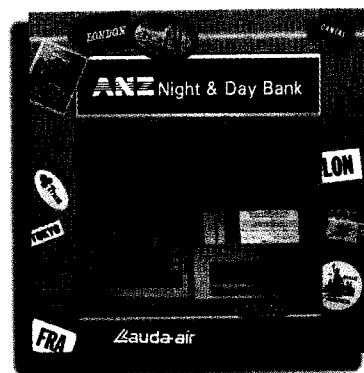
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Great writers like Henry James and Graham Greene often make dud playwrights. Was Patrick White in the same league? A new production of *Night on Bald Mountain*, not seen since 1964, provides an opportunity to reassess the Nobel Prizewinner's stagecraft.

STAGE WHITE

"THE STAGE-DOOR JOHNNY OF AUSTRALIAN playwriting" or "the single most important thing to happen to contemporary Australian drama"? These are just two of the many views on Patrick White, playwright.

As a novelist, the Nobel laureate is revered internationally, despite occasional skirmishes by academic raiding parties. As a playwright, however, his reputation has never been quite so secure. Some, like May-Brit Akerholt, artistic director of the Australian National Playwrights' Centre and author of a book about White's plays, consider them every bit as important as his novels. She goes as far as to suggest that under different circumstances he would have been as lauded as Samuel Beckett. In the opposite corner are people like Brett Sheehy, former literary manager/artistic associate of the Sydney Theatre Company, who puts much of the acclaim for the plays down to "screaming sycophancy", believing that had White not won the Nobel Prize, we wouldn't be bothering with his dramas.

"I've always thought that as a playwright he's a wonderful novelist," says playwright Louis Nowra, who is often cited as one of several Australian playwrights who follow in a tradition begun here by White. He begs to differ. "When novelists write plays they frequently become weighed down by symbolism and portentous dialogue. For me, the style of White's plays is forced and full of self-consciousness."

Ever since the Board of Governors for the 1962 Adelaide Festival rejected White's first major play, *The Ham Funeral*, causing a furore which resonated around the world, controversy has sat in the wings for all of his plays, none of which has become as internationally recognised as his novels. When his fourth play, *Night on Bald*

Mountain, was also rejected by the Adelaide Festival in 1964 by moralists who objected to the alcoholism in the play, just as they had objected to the "filth" (the abortion found in a garbage bin) in *The Ham Funeral*, White had had enough.

Having faced vitriolic reviews for *A Cheery Soul*, which had opened in Melbourne the previous year, and embittered by rows with director John Tasker, which raged right up to the opening night of *Night on Bald Mountain*, White forsook the theatre and was in turn forsaken.

For 12 years his plays were not seen on the Australian stage. For 13 years he didn't write a play. Then, in 1976 along came young director Jim Sharman (hot from his London triumphs, *The Rocky Horror Show* and *Jesus Christ Superstar*). Sharman's acclaimed revival of White's second play, *The Season at Sarsaparilla*, not only re-established the playwright on the Australian stage but kick-started a second wave of playwriting. Four plays followed: *Big Toys* (written especially for Sharman and Kate Fitzpatrick, who played the sensuous slattern Nola Boyle in *The Season at Sarsaparilla*), *Signal Driver*, *Netherwood* and *Shepherd on the Rocks*.

Since then there have been important revivals of two more of the four early plays. In 1979 Sharman directed a revelatory production of *A Cheery Soul*. Designed by Brian Thomson, it swept away the clutter of the previous production, leaving the way clear for a star turn by Robyn Nevin, whose performance as the awesome Miss Docker, who destroys by doing good, is still regarded as one of the most extraordinary ever seen on an Australian stage.

Neil Armfield, who took over Sharman's mantle in the eighties, has revived *A Cheery Soul* twice, most recently for the Melbourne

By Jo Litson



Kate Fitzpatrick with a photo of herself and White taken by William Yang in 1980. White was smitten by the actor as soon as he saw her.

PHOTOGRAPH BY MARCO DEL GRANDE

◀ Theatre Company. With Robyn Nevin again in the lead role, this production, which closes tonight at The Victorian Arts Centre Playhouse, has received rave reviews.

In 1989 Armfield directed *The Ham Funeral* for the Sydney Theatre Company – the first revival of the play for 27 years. Now he is directing *Night On Bald Mountain*, which hasn't been seen on stage since it premiered in Adelaide in 1964. Produced by Belvoir's Company B, *Night on Bald Mountain* opens at The Playhouse in Adelaide next Saturday then at Sydney's Belvoir Street Theatre on July 6.

It's been a long time coming – 32 years – but, says Armfield, “*The Ham Funeral* became more meaningful the further it got from its time of creation and I think that will be true of *Bald Mountain* as well.”

Whatever one might think of *The Ham Funeral*, it was ahead of its time: a groundbreaking, radical play. Written in London in 1947, it pre-dated Beckett's landmark *Waiting For Godot*.

White was hoping for a West End run but the English, with their traditions of comedy of manners and naturalism, had no context in which to understand his expressionistic drama with its narrator, vaudevillian bag ladies and girl-anima: they completely missed the point, as did the Americans.

“It took a Beckett in Paris in 1953 with *Godot* for that sort of theatre to be accepted,” says Akerholt. “The French had a strong so-called absurdist or non-naturalistic tradition, so Beckett was able to tap into that. If White had been writing in French, there's no doubt he would have been lauded as one of the great playwrights of the world.”

No doubt? Who knows? Plenty would reject Akerholt's claim. In any event, White had to wait 14 years for *The Ham Funeral* to reach the stage, where it was finally given an amateur production by the Adelaide University Theatre Guild at the Union Theatre in Adelaide in 1961, in defiance of the Adelaide Festival.

The opening night was a triumph. As David Marr says in his biography of White: “*The Ham Funeral* had become a rallying point for those who were unhappy with the boring, official culture of Australia in the late 1950s and early 1960s and hated the philistine power of the Establishment ... the fact of it being staged was like the waving of a banner of revolt.”

Each of the four early plays was groundbreaking. White put Australian suburbia on stage in a way that had not been seen before (Barry Humphries was doing something similar with Edna Everage). But it was the form White employed which made his plays such alien creations.

In style, White's plays were influenced by the European tradition which spawned writers like Ibsen, Strindberg and Wederkind (“I'm amazed that an academic with time on their hands hasn't worked out the

connection between *The Ham Funeral* and Strindberg's *The Ghost Sonata*,” says Sharman). But playwrights like Strindberg were, as yet, virtually unknown in Australia. Audiences had no way of understanding White's plays any more than directors and actors understood how to perform them.

“At the time they would have seemed like anomalies,” says Sharman. “It wasn't until the late seventies when I got to direct them that it was possible to do *Sarsaparilla* the way he had written it. Had there been a greater acceptance of what he was doing at the time, who knows what we might have seen. But that's history.”

Sharman had his chance to change history with his revivals of *Sarsaparilla* and *A Cheery Soul* – and did so resoundingly. His production of the latter turned a certifiable flop into an overnight sensation. “We took a play that had basically been dismissed from the Australian canon, a play which had in some ways stopped him writing for the theatre, and we turned it around so that it became an Australian classic,” says Sharman. “That doesn't happen very often.”

There is little doubt that Sharman changed White's life (Sharman, in turn, claims his life was changed by seeing White's plays in the sixties). He re-opened the stage door to White, and introduced him to some

done. [The phone conversation] was a long torturous affair with the famous lugubrious voice. Everything was very measured, on both sides of the conversation, until I said, ‘well, when shall we meet?’ Suddenly the tempo of his voice changed completely and he said, ‘what are you doing now?’”

White had harboured thespian ambitions ever since his mother took him to shows as a child. “My vocation came closest to revealing itself in those visits to the theatre, usually musical comedy, in the early babbings of sexuality,” he wrote in his literary self-portrait, *Flaws in the Glass* (called “Claws in the Arse” by the maligned).

White's love of theatre was “an expression for his gay sensibility,” suggests Nowra, “an old-fashioned gay sensibility: stage divas, bright lights, stage-door johnnies, glitter at a time when there was no glitter in Australia. He came alive backstage and that's, I think, why he continued to write plays – he just loved the whole atmosphere of theatre.”

Of all the theatre people White met through Sharman and later Armfield, it was actor Kerry Walker – “Kero” as he called her – who grew the closest to him, appearing in four of his plays. He once told her that the two roles he thought he would be able to fully understand as an actor were King Lear and Hedda Gabler. He also confided that he would have loved to have played in

he is incredibly accessible. I doubt if many of the people [who say he is a better novelist than a playwright] have seen many of the plays. Reading them isn't enough. A script is a blueprint for something else completely.”

White loved his gossip and he loved his actresses. An incurable stage-door johnny, he became smitten with Kate Fitzpatrick when she played Nola Boyle in *Sarsaparilla* in 1976, just as he had fallen for Zoe Caldwell when she played the role in 1962. Indeed, White was so taken by Fitzpatrick's performance that he immediately sat down and wrote *Big Toys* for her.

The play, which opened in Sydney in 1977 to decidedly mixed reviews, took a swipe at corrupt Sydney society, and at the time caused all kinds of titillating speculation as to who the characters were based on. The script was described as “a love letter” by one London literary agent and White, certainly included several jokes especially for Fitzpatrick. The restaurant mentioned is called Le Cafe, after a Sydney establishment Fitzpatrick loved to frequent. “And he told me he gave Mag all kinds of gorgeous clothes and jewels to make up for the chenille dressing gown I had to wear in *Sarsaparilla*,” laughs Fitzpatrick.

In fact, Fitzpatrick nearly didn't play Mag, suddenly falling foul of White, as did so many people over the years. A few weeks

after a New Year's Eve party at White's, at which he presented her with a hand-typed manuscript of the play, she went to dinner with the Queen on the Royal Yacht Britannia, little suspecting how White, a staunch Republican, would take it.

Her attendance was reported on the front page of *The Sydney Morning*

Herald the next morning and “an atom bomb went off in Centennial Park” [where White lived], says Fitzpatrick. “He wasn't going to have me in his play, he wasn't going to speak to me again or have anything to do with me. Jim had to really talk him around. Even on the first day of rehearsals he didn't speak to me.” Gradually, as rehearsals progressed, White became less stand-offish and on opening night, when he sent Fitzpatrick “half a tree of blossom” and an engraving of English actress Ellen Terry, Fitzpatrick knew she was finally forgiven.

Fitzpatrick remained close to White for the rest of his life, but not everyone who offended was so lucky. John Tasker, director of the premier productions of *The Ham Funeral*, *Sarsaparilla* and *Bald Mountain*, to whom White owed a considerable debt, was never forgiven. By *Bald Mountain*, their

relationship had disintegrated into constant argument. Relations were then severed. Years later, at the opening night party for *Netherwood*, Tasker attempted a reconciliation and was cut dead.

Richard Wherrett was always out in the cold, although he never quite understood why. After a performance of *The Elocution of Benjamin Franklin*, starring Gordon Chater, White went backstage and said to Chater, in front of Wherrett (the director), “bit of a fizzer ... pity Sharman didn't direct it.”

“Patrick hated sentimentality and thought Richard's production was sentimental,” offers Armfield. “And [years later] when he heard Richard had nipple rings he couldn't quite come at the idea of that!”

Throughout Wherrett's reign as artistic director of the Sydney Theatre Company, White would fire off the occasional salvo lambasting Wherrett and the STC. Despite this, Wherrett believed that the STC should stage White's plays, and revived *The Ham Funeral* in 1989 (which was an unexpected sell-out). Having let bygones be bygones, Wherrett assumed White would do the same. “I didn't think he would suddenly think I was gorgeous just because I was putting *The Ham Funeral* on, at long last, but I thought he'd be civil and, I suppose, appreciative. That was naive of me.”

On the first day of rehearsals, as Wherrett made a speech of welcome, White fumbled noisily through his bag for his eye-drops. On opening night he was still steadfastly ignoring Wherrett. “When he wheeled this cake in and made a speech about how fabulous the cast was and still wouldn't talk to me I couldn't take it anymore,” says Wherrett, who disappeared into his office and had a good cry.

Many relationships with White foundered, believes Sharman, because people didn't know when to withdraw. “I think if you are an artist you understand the way an artist works. In the case of Patrick there was a ruthless side to it and his writing is often at its best when it's at its most ruthless. I often thought people confused friendship and artistic collaboration and when the artistic collaboration was over, they wanted the friendship to continue at the same pitch. I think there was a cast of characters assembled for every novel and once the novel was written, if the people were still there, I felt Patrick staring at them as if to say, ‘what are you still doing here? I've written your novel.’”

One of the criticisms frequently levelled at White's playwriting is that he was just a frustrated actor. “I've always thought his female roles were just Patrick White with a tea-towel on his head,” says director Charlie

Little. Well, yes and no. White freely confessed to being a frustrated actor in *Flaws in the Glass*: “Most children have theatre in them. Those who carry it over into adolescence and, more or less, maturity, commit the ultimate indecency of becoming professional actors. If I didn't go all the way, I became instead that far more indecent hybrid, a frustrated one. Sexual ambivalence helped drive me in on myself. Lacking flamboyance, cursed with reserve, I chose fiction, or more likely it was chosen for me, as the means of introducing to a disbelieving audience the cast of contradictory characters of which I am composed.”

White is there in all his characters, male and female. Miss Docker has been described as his “most brutal self-portrait”. “He's in Miss Docker, certainly,” says Sharman. “I mean, do you see Shakespeare in *Hamlet*? Do you see Brecht in *Mother Courage*? But I think you can over-read it that way because I also see him in the Custances [the devoted old couple at the beginning of the play] and the Wakemans [the floundering priest and his wife]. Barry Humphries once joked to me that Edna Everage could play Miss Docker as a classic role.”

Whether Armfield can do for *Bald Mountain* what Sharman did for *A Cheery Soul* remains to be seen. On paper it's nowhere near as strong a play as *Sarsaparilla*

White's love of the theatre was 'an expression for his gay sensibility', suggests Nowra, 'an old-fashioned gay sensibility: stage divas, bright lights, stage-door johnnies, glitter at a time when there was no glitter in Australia ... he loved the atmosphere.'

of the brightest young things in Australian theatre – which White loved. And he helped White fulfill his long-held ambition – to be a successful playwright.

White's partner Manoly Lascaris once described White's love of the theatre as “a virus” – and he was well and truly infected. “Though he tried to give the impression that he was finished with theatre, White's theatrical ambitions were only ever on ice,” writes Marr in his biography. When Sharman, a director he had particularly admired, offered him the chance to revive those ambitions, White melted in an instant.

Sharman recalls the first phone conversation they had about producing *Sarsaparilla* for the Old Tote: “At that stage he had said there were to be no more productions of his plays so there was a question mark as to whether it could be

vaudeville. Hidden depths to White all right.

“I suppose I made him laugh,” hazards Walker. “But then he made me laugh. It was a mutual thing. I still miss the laughter. He was so funny – and to me that humour's totally there in the plays. That's the thing that people like Simon During [a University of Melbourne professor whose recent book *Patrick White* attempts to topple White from his literary pedestal] miss. Having been an actor in his plays, and heard the belly laughs, I can tell you audiences aren't sitting there analysing the way the academics do.”

Walker is scornful of what she sees as “an industry out there” that peddles the impression that White's plays and novels are difficult: “He's such an intuitive writer. People say he's hard to understand but it's because they're not prepared to let go of their preconceptions. The second you do,



The MTC cast of 'A Cheery Soul', with Robyn Nevin (wearing brown) once again performing the lead role.

or *A Cheery Soul* (generally regarded as White's two best). Akerholt, who has seen every White play on stage except *Bald Mountain*, certainly had her doubts, so last year staged a reading of it at the Australian National Playwrights' Centre. Armfield was there and shared Akerholt's judgment: the play was worth reviving.

The play pits the forces of the flesh and the heart against those of the intellect. A university professor, his alcoholic wife, her young nurse, a young man and a wise old goat woman stumble towards tragedy. There are problems with the play's structure (as there are in many of White's plays) – particularly the sudden leap to her death by the nurse: it will take a wonderful performance in a wonderful production for it to be convincing. □

The ride of his life: Bill Green is set to take on the Hollywood A-list who, he claims, stole his ideas and made 'Terminator 2'. Opposite: Con and Filia Kourtis – their mythical Minotaur made their lives a real-life nightmare.

PHOTOGRAPHS BY GRAHAM CROUCH

ONCE UPON A TIME, a dreamy young girl named Filia lived on the island of Crete. She wrote poems and short stories, fascinated by the local archaeology. During her last year at boarding school, in the late sixties, she was taken to visit the ruins of Knossos, the birthplace of the Minotaur, the monster with a bull's head on a man's body. It fed on human flesh and, in this case, on Filia's wonderful imagination.

The Minotaur inhabited the 16-year-old's head like the Labyrinth whence it came in ancient days. Filia wanted to use it one day to create something, she didn't know what, but within two years she was newly married to Con Kourtis and newly arrived in Australia, where she saw all the crime in the papers and on TV, convincing her that her creature had to be turned into something that fought for good. She tried to explain all this to her new husband – how the half-man half-bull was giving her nightmares – which wasn't easy. The years went by, they had children. The dreams, however, never went away.

Kourtis: "Then we started to have ..." He pauses. "Not problems, but I started to realise I had to do something." So, at the age of 36, in the mid-eighties, he took a scriptwriting course to not only slay this beast haunting his wife, but to make his mark on the world. Thus, a Hollywood fable began. Twelve years later, it still doesn't have an ending, but it does have a moral – get a good lawyer.

Con and Filia still expect to do the improbable and not only make a big budget movie, *The Minotaur*, but also sue some of Tinseltown's biggest names – the giant talent agency International Creative Management, writer/director/producer James Cameron and actor Arnold Schwarzenegger – for stealing what they say are their ideas and putting them in *Terminator 2: Judgement Day*. Meanwhile, across Melbourne, another writer, Bill Green, already has these stellar names on writs going right up to the US Supreme Court, alleging they stole *his* ideas from *The Minotaur* script. Now, he is being sued by the Kourtises to decide who owns what, who thought of which, and who is shafting whom. For someone, there's potentially a multi-million-dollar prize come judgment day.

CON KOURTIS WASN'T A MAN OF MEANS, OR WORDS. "A CLERK, bakery supervisor, computers; name it, I've done it," he says, in a thick Hellenic accent. But he did the scriptwriting course and started to write small things down. Filia had the ideas, Con put them together. Not the Minotaur though, it was too big. "Then," explains Filia, "I said we can at least try to write this idea. Con, he say 'It's too big for me. A big story too much work'. Then, like, he say, 'Yes, we have to find a scriptwriter with more experience than me'."

Kourtis: "At that time [1988] I knew only the basic scriptwriting. So we commissioned Bill Green. Okay?"

Bill Green was a knockabout writer, former horse breeder, press

What do you get when you cross a Hollywood blockbuster with an Australian scriptwriter who claims much of the film is stolen from his idea? And another two Australians who say it was their idea? You get two lawsuits – one against Arnold Schwarzenegger and Co – and a fight meaner than the baddie in Terminator 2.

By Mark Whittaker

Bill Green's Judgment Day



secretary and journo. They gave him a treatment and some professional artwork they'd done up. In one of the drawings there is a clear likeness of Arnold Schwarzenegger as one of the intended characters.

More than anything, it shows that the Kourtises, from the very beginning in their little brick home in the north Melbourne suburb of Fawkner, were not just aiming for Hollywood – they were locked, loaded and gunning for the A-list. They borrowed \$50,000 against their home, paid Green \$25,000 for the script (which Green says was substantially different from Kourtis's treatment) and used the other \$25,000 to take it and themselves off to Los Angeles in 1989. They stayed for three months and started making a few contacts. On their return they were unable to get any support in the insular Australian film clique, so they went back to LA and stayed another three months. They knocked on doors, they did the schmooze as best they could on their downtown motel budget. This time, they say, they met Spielberg's people. They met directors Ridley Scott (*Alien*, *Blade Runner*) and James Cameron (*Aliens*, *Terminator*, *True Lies*).

And how did you meet Cameron? "We make an appointment," Kourtis says, in a "how-else?" tone. "We've got a script here, >

“we’d like you to see it.” They were encouraged and kept up the trans-Pacific touting over the coming year.

They met John Boorman (*Deliverance*) and a string of producers. Kourtis told Bill Green that David Cronenberg (*The Fly*, *Dead Zone*) and John Landis (*The Blues Brothers*, *An American Werewolf In London*) made an offer of \$380,000 for the script, but Kourtis had rejected it because he wanted to be involved in the production, according to Green. Kourtis did not confirm or deny this. They met Joe Rosenberg at ICM, the company that managed both Cameron and Schwarzenegger. Encouraging faxes flew across the Pacific. It looked like ICM were going to get them their choice of director – which was either Cameron or Ridley Scott.

They thought they had done the impossible, but the months went by, and all was quiet. Bill Green didn’t hear anything more

about it until ICM’s Joe Rosenberg rang: “We aren’t going to package *The Minotaur* and Ridley Scott isn’t going to direct it.”

Green wants 3-5 per cent of the production budget – about \$US100m – plus damages.

“OK. So what about James Cameron?”
“No, he’s not going to direct it either.”

Love your work, but hasta la vista, baby. It dragged Green into an abyss. After having his expectations raised, his shot at the big time was gone, but he got on with life.

IT WAS TWO YEARS LATER, IN OCTOBER 1991, WHEN GREEN’S SON Ben, 26, went to the movies. Green says he has total recall of the day.

“Hey dad, you’re going to have to rewrite that screenplay of yours,” said Ben.

“Which one?”

“*The Minotaur*.”

“Why?”

“They’ve got all that stuff from it in *Terminator 2*.”

Green didn’t believe it, but he went along to one of the Bourke Street cinemas to see for himself. Alarms started ringing in the opening credits when a children’s playground was featured. Green had also used a playground. He’d done it differently, but it was enough to make him get his ticket out and start scribbling on the back. He hadn’t brought a notepad.

Terminator 2 is about a robot sent back in time, from 2029 when machines rule the world, to kill a boy in the present who will grow to become the leader of the future human resistance, which, meanwhile, sends back a good robot, played by Schwarzenegger, to save him. Now that isn’t so different from the original *Terminator* (1984), but Green really started to get riled when he saw the bad robot, the T1000, was made of a metal that could liquefy and reshape into whatever it chose, just like his creature could.

He was getting pretty mad when he saw the T1000 turn its arm into a sword to stab a man. The Minotaur had produced weapons out of its body: “A huge horn suddenly appears from a slot in the Minotaur’s side and slices open the cabin of the confronting vehicle.” The same way the T1000 attacked an elevator in *Terminator 2*.

Then he saw the T1000 cling to the back of a car using a limb converted into a metal hook. His Minotaur had climbed down a wall “clinging to the sheer face with adapted limbs”. At the 45-minute mark, in one of the movie’s most stunning scenes, the T1000 melts into the tiled floor of a mental asylum. A guard walks over it and treads on its flattened, camouflaged face, before it reforms itself behind him, turns a finger into a long thin blade, and stabs him through the eye. Green was in a rage. His Minotaur turned itself into a children’s playground. A soldier walked over it, treading on its eye, before it reassembled itself behind him and killed him with a metal horn protruding from its body.

Schwarzenegger’s character had been the bad robot in the first

Terminator movie. In the sequel, he was reprogrammed into a good robot whose mission was to save the boy. Similarly, the Minotaur was a baddie, manipulated by Theseus into becoming a goodie.

The main sub-plot in *Terminator 2* has the good guys, armed with a vision of the future, attempting to destroy a computer chip laboratory, whose technology would lead to a holocaust. Green’s main plot revolved around Theseus – having seen the holocaust in the future caused by the sabotage of nuclear power stations – attempting to take over a nuclear power station to prevent a future holocaust. As he watched *Terminator 2*, Green was out of his tree. Furious. The good guys even get into the power station/chip laboratory in the same way.

Sitting there in the dark, he felt violated.

FACED WITH WHAT HE SAW AS A RAW DEAL FROM THESE HOLLYWOOD predators, Green vowed to get even. He cast around for a good lawyer, a surprisingly difficult task in an industry town like LA.

In *Fatal Subtraction*, a book about humourist Art Buchwald successfully suing Paramount over the idea for Eddie Murphy’s *Coming To America*, lawyer Pierce O’Donnell describes how the studios tie up all the good lawyers by employing them.

Green eventually got a lawyer in San Francisco, Michael Guta, and filed suit against ICM, Cameron, Schwarzenegger, Ridley Scott, Joe Rosenberg and more. He is claiming 3-5 per cent of the production budget – reportedly about \$US100m – plus damages.

O’Donnell hadn’t heard of Green’s case when I rang him, but said: “It sounds like he’s got a legally viable claim. It doesn’t mean he is going to win. Most cases don’t.” The precedent, says O’Donnell, was created by Desny versus Wilder. The writer Victor Desny had an idea. In 1925, a man called Floyd Collins had got stuck down a cave in Kentucky. A reporter from the *Louisville Courier Journal* won a Pulitzer Prize for his exclusive interviews with poor Floyd as he lay dying.

In 1949, Desny thought that the bad taste the incident left in a lot of people’s mouths would make a great idea for a script. He rang the legendary writer/director/producer Billy Wilder. Desny got through to his secretary. He pitched his idea to her and she said she’d pass it on and, if Wilder liked it, he’d buy it. Desny heard nothing more about it until 1951, when he saw the Paramount picture *Ace In The Hole*, aka *The Big Carnival*, starring Kirk Douglas as a self-seeking reporter (“I’ve met some hard-boiled eggs, but you – you’re 20 minutes”) covering a man stuck down a hole.

The case went to the Supreme Court, which ruled that the common law implied a contract when the secretary said she’d pass the idea on. The secretary was, in effect, Wilder’s agent. Similarly, Green hopes to show that ICM’s promise to get a director for the script created an implied contract. When ideas from the script were used, they had to pay. It’s not a copyright case. It’s a contract case.

Correspondingly, Buchwald had sold the idea of a despotic king coming to America to buy arms and being deposed back home. He finds himself in the Washington ghetto, falls in love with a CIA hooker, becomes a better person, regains the throne and takes the hooker home to be his queen. The idea was earmarked for Murphy, but later dropped before Murphy came up with “his” story of an African prince coming to America to find a bride in the ghetto.

“Claims of idea theft are common. They are rarely proven,” says O’Donnell. “Dorothy Parker once said the only ‘ism’ Hollywood believes in is plagiarism. My case, the Buchwald case, is a rarity where the writer won. He got a million, but had to battle them for seven years. It cost \$4 million to win a million. We did it for free ... Paramount spent \$8 million.”

It takes a certain person to take on such forces – such arithmetic.

ENTER BILL GREEN. HE’S A FIGHTER, A SHIT STIRRER. HAD HIS first 15 minutes in 1974 when as Jim Cairns’s press secretary he was involved in a drunken blue with bureaucrats in the bomb shelter which served as a bar beneath the Australian Embassy in what was then called Peking. It was a trade mission and they’d been banqueting all day, drinking the local grain spirit, Mai Tai, plus Australian wine. Green was not happy with the bureaucrats; thought they were blocking him at every turn and sabotaging Cairns. They might have put “It’s Time” stickers on their cars – two weeks after the 1972 election – but they’d spent the past two years stuffing the new government at every turn, he fumed.

“... One of the brief moments I do recall relatively vividly from the whole evening in the Down Under Club,” he wrote two weeks later in *Nation Review*, a paper he co-founded, “is the fleeting impression that someone should show the bastards some reality, and then laughing at the incredible vanity that it should be myself.” This is Green. A stocky, personable fellow with worker’s hands and an FM radio voice. Only now, at 55, it’s moguls instead of bureaucrats.

The Peking incident was a front-page, three-day scandal just as things were turning sour for Labor. Cairns, who remembers Green as a bright and active press secretary, could not recall the incident, but it didn’t surprise him that he’d stick it up the pen-pushers.

Green had handed in his notice before the trip anyway. He retreated to Victoria’s western districts to breed horses and write when he could. He had already written his first novel, based on his experiences growing up around Swan Hill on the Murray River, where his stirring began early. “I vandalised with a mate of mine, a Koori kid, vandalised a police boat. Police were burning the Kooris’ humpy towns to try to clear them out. I suppose it was a bit of a reaction to that. They were my friends.” An embarrassment, he was sent to boarding school.

When he wrote *Small Town Rising*, in 1971, he got some really rude rejections so stopped sending it away, but his wife, Helen, kept giving it to different publishers each year. Slowly the responses got better. By the early eighties, the subject of racism in a small town had gained a fashionable cred and Macmillan accepted it, put it in hardback, and called it literature.

His next novel, *Born Before the Wind*, was a “factional” account of race fixing and the ins and outs of the breeding game. He says the Victorian Racing Club took his trainer’s licence away from him because he wouldn’t tell them where he got his information. VRC licensing manager John Byrne said he didn’t want to discuss it: “He could tell you anything. I don’t want to put my foot in it.” Byrne said Green had not reapplied for a licence. Certainly he last held one in July 1984, just when the book was published.

Back in Melbourne – living and working in a former funeral parlour above a dentist in working-class Williamstown – he’s knocked out a few scripts and another six novels, including *Freud and the Nazis Go Surfing* and *Compulsively Murdering Mao*. His ninth, *Pink*

Water Dawn, a thriller about arms and chemical manufacturing in Melbourne’s western suburbs, was published last month.

READING SOME OF THE ABOVE ACCOUNT HAS, I AM SURE, MADE the Kourtises fume. The words “his Minotaur” will go down like Divine Brown at the Oscars.

Back in the early nineties, the Kourtises continued the trans-Pacific schmooze, trying to get the movie up. They say they had become disillusioned with Green’s script. It was too complicated, everybody was telling them, and by 1991 they felt confident enough to write their own. They met Telly Savalas’s sister and then Telly himself. He wanted to direct their new script and introduced them to friends who became backers, says Kourtis, who couldn’t produce the letter which he says proves it. Kourtis says Schwarzenegger wanted to play Theseus in this new version of *The Minotaur*.

They say they secured the budget on this film and rattle off names of production houses and producers who wanted to make it. One, an Australian with some handy credits, was “just ready to do it”.

Kourtis appears to have misunderstood the situation. The producer recalls: “I had a look, made a few calls. I called a guy in Hollywood; it didn’t stack up. He said ‘I understand you’re going to put in half the money.’ I said: ‘What do you mean? This is my first call’.

“As a producer you are sent all sorts of scripts ... He [Kourtis] was a very emotional, very keen man. In Hollywood he went and rushed around and believed everything people told him. When people say, ‘I loved your script, and will make your picture,’ that just means they want you to buy lunch ... It wasn’t as though he was a highly regarded professional. He had a beaut idea and that was it.”

Ahhh, don’t call us, Con, we’ll call you.

Kourtis maintains that their investors ran when Green launched his legal bid in September, 1993. They “told me that I am a thief ... that Bill Green is the owner and creator of *The Minotaur* and that we are liars and thieves”. So now the Kourtises are suing Green, alleging, among many other things, that he has no right to contest the case in the US. Green expresses surprise that all this is happening. He says he invented most of the features of *The Minotaur* which were allegedly taken for *Terminator 2*, and that the Kourtises signed over the copyright to him so that he could fight the case.

The Kourtises had planned to take Cameron and Schwarzenegger to court, they say, but first wanted to make their movie to get money to fight with. They are bitter. They face the loss of their house from the \$50,000 mortgage. Kourtis says he can’t work. He maintains he still has friends in the US who are supporting him and just waiting for him to win this case before resurrecting his movie career.

“I won’t mention the name. I was offered \$10 million to write for a company for five years, but because of the lawsuit I lost it.”

That is a lot of money for a writer, I suggest.

“Of course it is,” he says, matter-of-fact, “because I present him with *The Minotaur*, *The Wig* [another script], which I wrote and

BRAIN GAMES

CRYPTOSQUARE

Answers read the same down as across.

1. Animal’s den ransacked with a penny this month.
2. Cut back dried fruit?
3. Foreign currency unit ran up without one English note.
4. Not really capable in pet disarray.
5. Sleet ruins old court jurisdictions.

WHO SAID THAT?

Try everything once except incest and folk dancing.

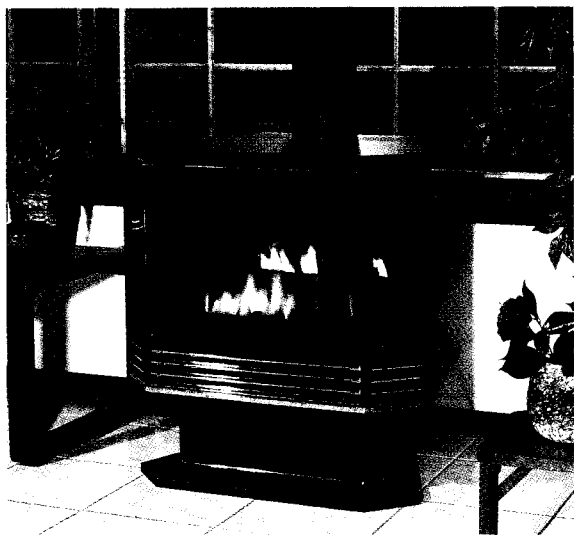
SYNOGRAMS

Find synonyms for the following pairs so that each synonym is an anagram of its pair (eg *Evening Object* = *Night Thing*).

1. Suffocate Container
2. Rents Region
3. Disease Label
4. Halt Mail
5. Analyse Weapon

Answers on page 37

Never lift a log.



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one about Poseidon versus George Bush and Saddam Hussein, a camp comedy. He said, 'where have you been?' ... And now I live in misery. I haven't got a car. We can't move. I'm not in a position to work."

It is difficult to portray the depth of emotion in the Kourtis house. They both got "sick" in the middle of the fight. Filia made 10 trips to the US, leaving her two early-teenage daughters, "the most hard years of their lives ... I left everything behind me because I believed this work, because I saw the reaction of the American people. So that's why I go back again and again. Each time I meet a new director or a new people that was interested I gave them the work, hand by hand. I never sent by mail, and I stayed there until we had the answer."

WHEN I TOLD GREEN, IN JANUARY, THAT CON KOURTIS WAS ABOUT to sue him in the Victorian courts, he wouldn't believe it. "No, he couldn't do that. Everything I've done has been above board ... This is all so stupid. We need to do this together. Divided we fall." Green says the Kourtises will share the proceeds if he wins in the US. He says his lawyers have all the paperwork to prove his case. I saw some, not all, of it. The Kourtises claim they can prove they still own the copyright and that they thought up all the good bits. Whether they do, and did, will be decided by the court. When I told Kourtis that Green said any money from the case would be shared, he erupted: "I get nothing out of it completely and Filia gets 8 per cent."

Here, it gets complicated. Two lawyers, Con Kiatos and Chris Karamountzos, were behind much of the paperwork, the effect of which will be tested by the Victorian court. They are each listed as shareholders and directors in the company which was to make the film, Minotaur Film Productions Pty Ltd, according to the 1993 return, which was the last return filed to the Australian Securities Commission at the time of writing this story. Con Kiatos says he and Chris Karamountzos have split. Asked who owned Minotaur Film Productions, he said: "I'm not really up to speed on it. You'd better talk to Chris." He said he didn't know where Karamountzos was. Melissa Fraser, spokesperson for the Law Institute of Victoria, said she was unable to comment.

Green says that if they win in the US, 40 per cent goes to the US lawyer's contingency fee. Green gets 30 per cent, out of which all the extra court and travel expenses are paid (perhaps 15 per cent) and the remaining 30 per cent is split between the Kourtises, Karamountzos and Kiatos. "I get about the equal of the Kourtises."

When I said that Kourtis claimed they would receive just 8 per cent, Green sounded surprised.

GREEN'S CASE IN THE US COURTS SUFFERED A DEFEAT IN A "NOTICE to dismiss" claim some months ago, but he has appealed to the US Supreme Court. The Kourtises have lawyers briefed and ready to sue the same people as Green in LA, anticipating that if they win against Green here they will have the right to fight the case there.

Kourtis: "Nobody wants to listen to us in Australia ... We had a good reputation in America. Forget about Australia. We are honest, and good writers ... Because we have had our reputations damaged, we are trying to get it back, and then we will do the impossible in the US. We've got the connections. We've got the people. We've got the money - not our money, but others' money."

When Filia told me she had documents, but couldn't find them, I said it was important she did, because she hadn't yet shown me anything that proved her case. She took this as a personal affront. "What have I been saying to you all this time? All these papers," she screamed, frustrated, mournful, looking at the lounge with papers scattered all over. A little old Greek lady was sticking her head around the door. I was asked to leave. The cab had arrived. "You should go now," she told me, darting around the house, distraught.

The Kourtises have made many claims which seemed believable; so has Green. There's a lot of bull and half-bull left in the old Minotaur. That's all for the courts to figure. The Kourtises' solicitor, Chris Nicou, is attempting to have a summary judgment in the Victorian matter. Judgment Day, Part One. Coming soon. □

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INDULGENCE

LATIN LOVERS

WINE WITH JAMES HALLIDAY

CARLO CORINO WAS A MUCH-LIKED WINEMAKER WHO, AMONG other things, showed that Australia did not invent the flying winemaker concept ... the tide can flow both ways. Italian born and trained (at Alba in Piedmont), he had made wine in Italy and Ethiopia before joining the Montrose Winery in Mudgee in the mid-seventies as chief winemaker.

After a 10-year stint, Corino returned to Italy to take up a position as head of a large Sicilian winery, but kept in touch with his many friends in Australia. One of his principal challenges was to "unlearn" much of the knowledge and techniques he had garnered during his time here. Specifically, he had to avoid retaining too much grape aroma and flavour in the wines, particularly those being made for the domestic (Italian) market; in the southern half of Italy and in many northern regions, traditional winemaking techniques had (and still have) a vice-like grip on the minds and preferences of winemakers, and through them, on the consumers.

Nowhere was this more apparent than with Italian white wines. The grape variety was typically very bland (the ubiquitous, high-yielding trebbiano being the most obvious example) and the winemaking methods (oxidative juice handling, uncontrolled fermentation temperatures) had the effect of removing any last vestige of grape flavour. The result was a water-white, faintly chalky fluid, the main virtues of which were that it was alcoholic and safe to drink (when water might not be). A lifelong consumer of such a wine would simply not regard a lush, skin-contacted, American-oaked Australian chardonnay as having anything to do with white wine, and dislike it as much as his or her Australian counterpart would dislike the Italian trebbiano.

Similar, though not quite so dramatic, comparisons can be made with the traditional red wines of Italy. Fashioned from indigenous grape varieties and matured in large, very old, oak vats, these wines vary from light-bodied to plushy, faintly gamey ripeness, but are always distinctively Italian. Then there is the phenomenon of Lambrusco, Italy's very successful competitor to brands such as Mateus Rosé (of Portugal), Blue Nun (of Germany) and, in days gone by, Australia's Ben Ean moselle. These traditional wines are sustained by two quite separate forces: they are cheap to make, and have a committed market, both in Italy and the Italian diaspora – most notably in the US and Australia.

So it is that such wines are still imported into Australia in significant quantities, typically through business-

es run by Australians of Italian descent, and sold both for home consumption by a similar audience and through the many hundreds of Italian restaurants scattered around Australia.

At the other extreme are the new generation Italian wines, almost all of which have appeared since 1970. The exception is sassaica, which traces its origins back to 1942 when Marchese Mario Incisa della Rocchetta decided to plant cabernet sauvignon in Tuscany. However, it was not until 1968 that the first sassaica was made (and commercially released in 1971) – at the urging of Incisa's nephew, a then youthful Marchese Piero Antinori.

Antinori smartly followed suit with Tignanello (the first vintage of 1971 was released in 1974), and what is literally a new wine industry was born in a country which has been making wine continuously for thousands of years.

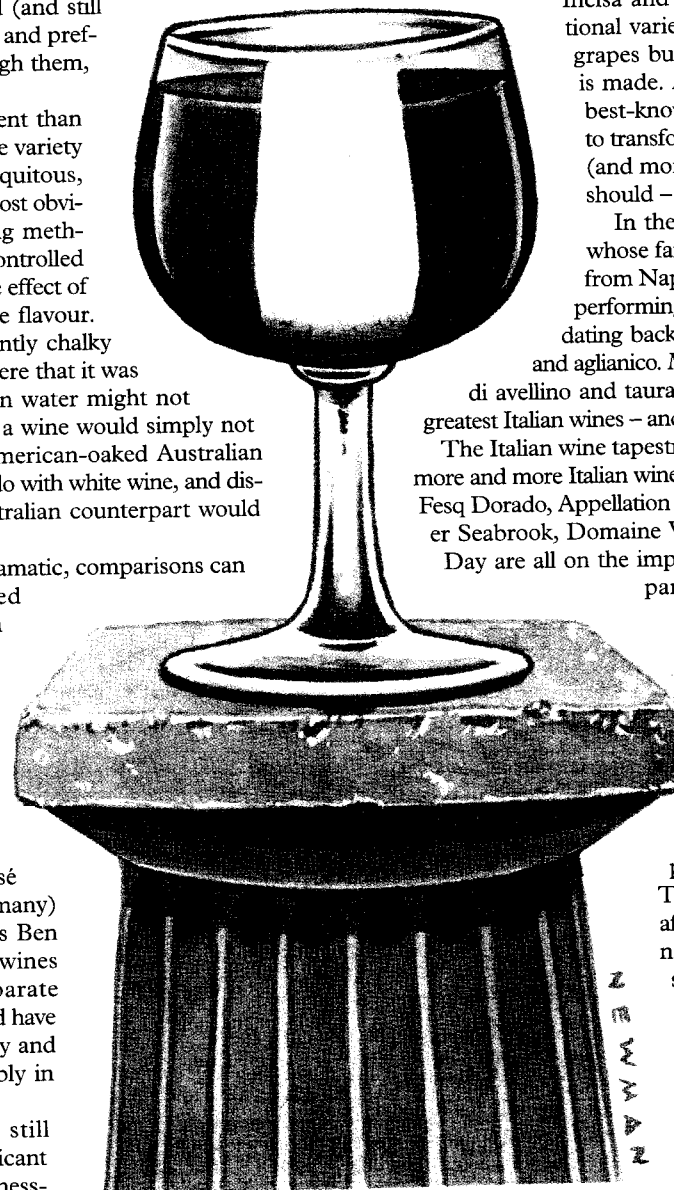
Whereas Incisa and Antinori have utilised non-traditional varieties, others have taken traditional grapes but revolutionised the way the wine is made. Angelo Gaja (of Piedmont) is the best-known figure, working with nebbiolo to transform perceptions of what Barbaresco (and more recently Barolo) could – indeed should – taste like.

In the south, Antonio Mastroberardino, whose family winery was established not far from Naples in 1878, has gone even further, performing miracles with three grape varieties dating back to pre-Roman times: greco, fiano and aglianico. Mastroberardino's greco di tufo, fiano

di avellino and taurasi are considered to be among the greatest Italian wines – and are a perfect blend of old and new.

The Italian wine tapestry is vast and – as I said last week – more and more Italian wines are arriving in Australia every day. Fesq Dorado, Appellation Wines & Spirits, Negociants, Tucker Seabrook, Domaine Wine Shippers and Paul de Burgh Day are all on the import wagon. The wines these companies are importing are alluring in every way. Italy leads the world in packaging innovation and design, and the labelled bottles are irresistible to the smart cafe set. The wines themselves are no less seductive, with rich, clean flavours, and those distinctive Italian tannins which make the reds natural companions to the panoply of Italian cuisine.

The wines have also become more affordable. After a period of near madness in the late eighties when prices soared to ridiculous heights (fuelled in particular by Gaja mania in the US), export prices in lira have come back to rational levels. Add the effect of a favourable exchange rate as the Australian dollar moves through the 80 US cent mark, and it is easy to see why Italian wine is on a roll. □



INDULGENCE

ROSES ARE RID

GARDENING WITH CHERYL MADDOCKS

GARDENING IS BIG BUSINESS. IN AUSTRALIA it is a \$2.5 billion industry. No wonder the horticulture cohorts are keen to strut their stuff at gardening shows.

In April I attended the Sydney Garden Festival and the inaugural Melbourne International Flower and Garden Show. While the Sydney show was a low-key affair, the Victorians imbued theirs with genuine style. A black-tie gala preview raised money for Cancer Research and attendance topped 100,000 despite the 12.5cm of rain falling during the four days of the show. The enthusiastic organisers hope this annual event will eventually match, in style and scale, Britain's Chelsea Flower Show.

While this may seem like an unrealistic aspiration to some, the Melbourne show is certainly off to a good start and should definitely be marked on next year's calendar. The layout was impressive. The entrance to the Royal Exhibition Building featured a grand boulevard of 30,000 seedlings surrounding magnificent cascades and reflecting ponds. The historic Great Hall provided an impressive backdrop for cut-flower arrangements and floral art. Over 250 exhibits more than adequately represented the horticulture, nursery, landscape gardening, florist and cut-flower industries.

So what took my eye? I must say I was taken by five thornless roses which will be released by St Kilda Roses on October 26. The hybridising program has ensured that all the roses are disease resistant and require little maintenance. The foliage is profuse, lush, dark green and glossy. Thorns rarely appear and most varieties remain thorn free. One of the five varieties is 'Smooth Prince', which has cerise pink, well-formed, excellent cutting flowers. It has a light fragrance and reaches a height of 1.3m. 'Smooth Perfume' has large, light pink petals edged in lavender. The well-formed flowers have 32 petals and repeat-bloom on a 1.2m-high bush. 'Smooth Angel' is also fragrant and repeat-blooms. It

features rich cream flowers with apricot/yellow centres. 'Smooth Romance' is pure white with a gentle blush pink on the outer edges of its 40 petals. This attractive rose makes a long-lasting cut flower and reaches a height of 1.2m. 'Smooth Velvet' is a vigorous variety with large, blood-red flowers. Its height of 2.1m makes it ideal as a shrub/climber, or for use on a trellis.

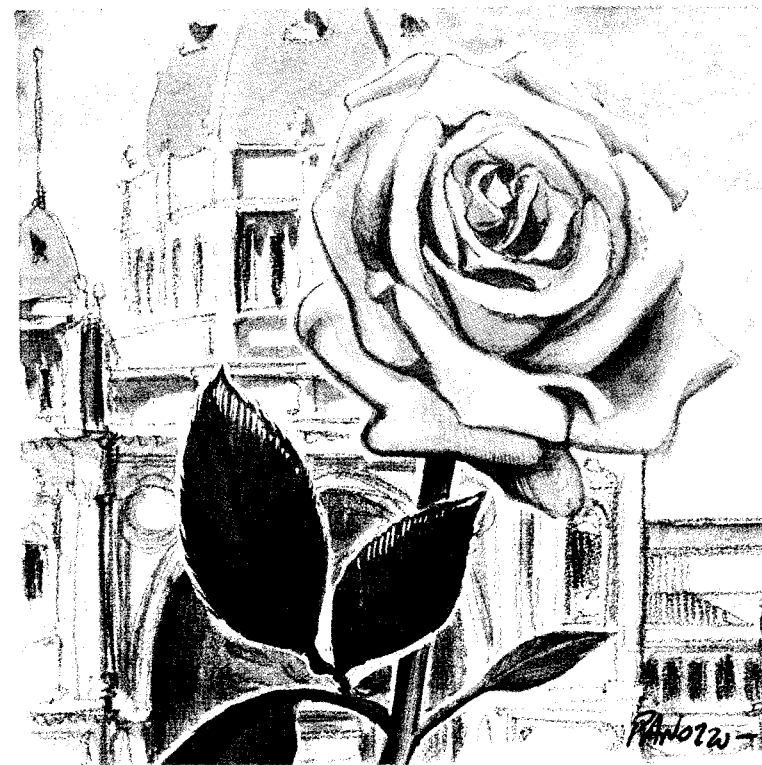
Hedges within the garden are becoming even more popular than those featured on boundaries. They can be used imaginatively to divide the garden into "rooms", to make ideal screens or as attractions in themselves. Box (*Buxus* species) have held their popularity for years, but there is now a far greater choice. *Syzygium* 'Bush Xmas', for example, is a dwarf lilly pilli which is actually a compact form of *Syzygium australe*. It was selected as a seedling variant about three years ago and displayed a naturally compact habit from the start without any

'Paradise Petite' and 'Paradise Little Liane' are two miniature camellias ideal for low hedging or topiary. They are part of the Paradise *Camellia sasanqua* collection bred by Bob Cherry of Paradise Plants NSW. 'Paradise Petite' was grown from a cross between two unnamed *C.sasanqua* seedlings. This small, dark-green leaved camellia has a dense compact habit and soft pink autumn flowers. 'Paradise Little Liane' has white flowers with a faint pink margin. It has dark green, narrowly elliptical leaves. When clipped to shape, both camellias form a thick hedge to 1m in height.

'Paradise Helen', 'Paradise Audrey' and 'Paradise Belinda' are worth looking out for if you require a hedge more than 1m high. 'Paradise Helen' has an elegant, upright growth and reaches a height of 4m. Like all camellias, it can be clipped to a desired size. This plant features masses of pink buds which open to white. The fast-growing 'Paradise Helen' is suitable for sun or shade. 'Paradise Audrey' has a dense upright habit which attains a height of 3m. It produces pale pink, informal double flowers over a long season. 'Paradise Belinda' has 110mm-wide pink flowers, which appear in profusion throughout autumn and winter. It can reach a height of up to 2m.

Photinia 'Superhedge' is perfect for situations in which quick screening is required. Under ideal conditions 'Superhedge' can grow 3m within a year of planting. 'Superhedge' produces new flushes of rich, burgundy-red leaves throughout the year. It has a self-branching habit which makes pruning unnecessary. 'Superhedge' is tolerant of most soil types and grows well in full sun or part shade. It is more heat and humidity tolerant than most other photinias and is thus suitable for growing in areas of southern Queensland and northern NSW.

For those who would like to visit, Melbourne's next International Flower and Garden show will be held April 9-13, 1997. □



CLASS ACTS



VALERIE FISHER, OF Swanbourne, WA, was appalled to discover, from a *quid pro quo* self-description I wrote to inaugurate a contest in which readers were asked to describe themselves, that I was large, portly,

ruddy, shambling and rumpled.

"All these years," she wrote, "I have had you about five feet nine, thin and lithe, nice brownish face and immaculate clothes. You should have just SHUT UP ... Please don't publish a full-length photograph. I shall try to forget your self-description and return to my former fantasies."

Well, I actually used to be about five feet nine, thin, lithe etc. That was when I was 12. Personally I perceive no decline. I still believe I can leap tall buildings in a single bound and am now able to sing Bosambo's song from *Sanders of the River*. Was Paul Robeson a skinny, scuttling runt?

In addition to several score nice-looking individuals, two school classes entered the self-description contest and a special class prize is on its way to each of them.

Jim Plunkett, an instructor from the National English Academy, of Bondi Junction, NSW, wrote to say he hoped that his immigrant students' ideas "will shine through their spelling and grammar in a non-native language".

I think they did. For example:

Lucky Eap, from Indonesia: I am a short guy, slim and without moustache and short black hair with left-side parting. Although I have a small body, I always do anything fast and without complaint. I walk like a train, fast but careful and always try to be on time. In my oval face you can see my oval black eyes, with a strong view but always I smile when somebody calls. I wear jeans with T-shirt and also my big black belt. You can know me by my handshake, strong, and I always smile.

From Taka: I am a medium-build Japanese. I have a typical Japanese face but sometimes people take me for Korean. I have

small, cute, round eyes and intelligent eyebrows. My hair is not long. I often wear light-blue clothes. If I smile, very cute.

From Kenny Wang: Based on my physical expression, you suppose be wondering this guy must have been in army for a while or he is a police officer on his duty in casual clothes. A young man with black wavy hair and a pair of bright, naughty eyes. When I face to people, usually a lovely smiling coming up. Obviously, according to the colour of my skin, you could recognise that I come from one of the Asian country. Finally, you should pay attention when looking for me in large crowd. Otherwise you going to lose a 175cm height young man.

And Robert, from Germany: I am an ordinary young man with a thin body. I walk quickly across the streets with an elegant style, as a cat. My hair is dark-blond and so thin that you can't see it. My beard is so strong that my shaver needs a lot of energy to clear my face.

* * *

The second class to enter the contest was Class 9 English, from MLC School, Burwood, NSW, taught by Heather Proctor. This is how some of them saw themselves.

Elizabeth Lamb: I am the girl with the short brown mop, usually any which way on my head. I am the two dark brown eyes above the straight, rather-wide-when-I-smile nose. I am the ultimate pear-shaped figure. Mine are the bitten-down fingernails cemented between my teeth, whose spacy gap is a spitting image of Ray Martin's. The girl dreaming of myself in another

world and ultimately escaping the rabbit trap of reality - that's me.

Hannah Michaelis: I am a tall, ungraceful blonde. Elegance means nothing to me. I am loud and boisterous and know not what a quiet life is. I walk slowly and aimlessly. My hair is ratty, my face is plain and I look totally out of place in anything more elegant than a *Best-and-Less* T-shirt.

Nicola Reid: I look younger than I am, perhaps 12, with brown hair and blue eyes. I have a pug nose, short, wavy hair and a fringe to cover my eyes, brushed back. Described by some of my friends as "cute", I am not likely to stand out. I have large, widely spaced eyes and small hands that are never still as I fidget.

Sarah Burm: I am an Asian and have two brown, almond-shaped pellets for eyes. I have a slight oil burn on my nose and a small mole, or beauty spot as I like to see it, on my right eyebrow. I have been told many times that I have a sarcastic sense of humour. I prefer to call it wit. I wear braces and on my front teeth I have gold buds which shimmer with the sunlight when I smile.

Ramona Vijayarasa: I have pitch-black, curly hair and dark tropical skin. My eyes are hazel and on my nose sits a dent, for which I have my mother to thank. I have been blessed with below-average height and consider myself pleasingly plump. My gait and posture would be frowned on by any modelling school. My teeth have been wired by an orthodontist who doesn't know the meaning of the word pain.

It's been a pleasure to meet you all.

Frank Devine

THE CONCISE CROSSWORD No 416

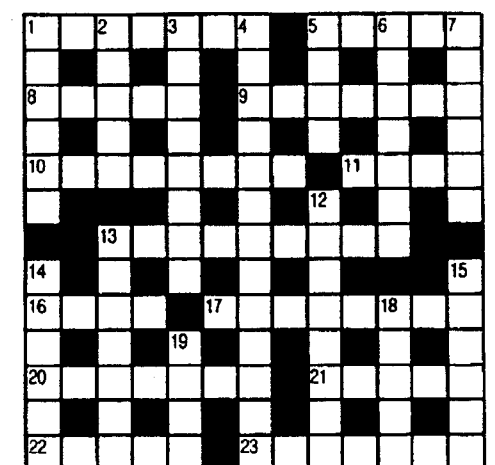
Across

- 1 Drank deeply (7)
- 5 Beneath (5)
- 8 Garlic-flavoured mayonnaise (5)
- 9 Reward for rescue (7)
- 10 Graze on the skin (8)
- 11 Winch (4)
- 13 Cause to clot (9)
- 16 Frost (4)
- 17 Greek (8)
- 20 King's ransom (7)
- 21 Make amends (5)
- 22 Dress-sense (5)
- 23 Church spire (7)

Down

- 1 Radiation point outside our galaxy (6)
- 2 Love affair (5)
- 3 Dairy-cattle breed (8)
- 4 Debauchery (13)
- 5 Amplitude (4)
- 6 Seepage (7)
- 7 Shellfish (6)
- 12 Mitigate (8)
- 13 Hairy-leaved herb (7)
- 14 Famous dog-show (6)
- 15 Acquiesce (6)
- 18 Hang down (5)
- 19 Dumb (4)

SOLUTIONS TO No. 415: Across: 1 Morpheus, 5 Drey, 9 Defamed, 10 Mania, 11 Curse, 12 Flesh, 13 Rare, 16 Stir, 17 Ladle, 19 Lairs, 21 Dross, 22 Abashed, 24 Odin, 25 Needless. Down: 1 Midriff, 2 Refluent, 3 Hem, 4 Under-estimate, 6 Rind, 7 Yearn, 8 Imperils, 11 Churlish, 14 Red ochre, 15 Resides, 18 Rodeo, 20 Yogi, 23 Aid.



Brain Games answers. Cryptosquare: 1. April. 2. Prune. 3. Rupee. 4. Inept. 5. Leets. Synograms: 1. Smother Thermos. 2. Hires Shire. 3. Rickets Sticker. 4. Stop Post. 5. Parse Spear. Who Said That? Sir Thomas Beecham.

13. Now, we would like you to do two things: 1. Please indicate if you have ever read any of the sections listed below and 2. If you have ever read any of the sections listed below, please indicate how often you have read them. (Circle two responses in each row)

	Ever Read		4 of the last 4 issues read	3 of the last 4 issues read	2 of the last 4 issues read	1 of the last 4 issues read	0 of the last 4 issues read	Don't Know
	Yes	No						
That's Life by Susan Kurosawa	1	2	1	2	3	4	5	6
The Vulture	1	2	1	2	3	4	5	6
Cooking with Diane Holtigue	1	2	1	2	3	4	5	6
Gardening with Cheryl Maddocks	1	2	1	2	3	4	5	6
Wine with James Halliday	1	2	1	2	3	4	5	6
Home Hunt (Real Estate)	1	2	1	2	3	4	5	6
That's Language by Frank Devine	1	2	1	2	3	4	5	6
Crossword and Brain Games	1	2	1	2	3	4	5	6
That's That by Barry Oakley	1	2	1	2	3	4	5	6

14. The Weekend Australian package consists of The Weekend Australian newspaper and The Australian Magazine. Thinking about how you read The Weekend Australian package, please circle the statement most appropriate for you. (Circle one response only)

I usually read The Australian Magazine and not The Weekend Australian newspaper	1
I usually read The Australian Magazine and The Weekend Australian newspaper	2
I usually read The Weekend Australian newspaper and not The Australian Magazine	3
I do not usually read The Weekend Australian newspaper or The Australian Magazine	4

15. What changes, if any, would you like to see made to The Australian Magazine?

19. Which of the following occupational categories would you fall into?

Professional eg. Doctor, Dentist, Solicitor, Accountant etc	01
Other professional eg. Teacher, Nurse, Police, Ambulance etc	02
Senior Manager eg. CEO, Director, General Manager etc	03
Other Manager eg. Branch Manager, Department Manager etc	04
White Collar eg. Clerk, Sales Executive, Administration etc	05
Skilled eg. Carpenter, Electrician, Plumber, Draftsperson	06
Semi/Unskilled	07
Unemployed	08
Student	09
Retired	10
Home Duties	11
Other	12

20. In which of the following income (gross) brackets do you belong?

Less than \$30,000	1
\$30,000 to \$39,999	2
\$40,000 to \$49,999	3
\$50,000 to \$59,999	4
\$60,000 to \$69,999	5
\$70,000 to \$79,999	6
\$80,000 to \$89,999	7
\$90,000 to \$99,999	8
\$100,000 or more	9

DEMOGRAPHICS

The following information is collected for analysis purposes only; it is used to allocate responses to groups only; individual details will not be disclosed and confidentiality of all personal information is assured. For each of the following questions please circle the one response that is the most appropriate.

16. Gender	Male	1
	Female	2
17. Age	Under 18 years	1
	18-24 years	2
	25-34 years	3
	35-49 years	4
	50-64 years	5
	65+ years	6
18. State of Residence	NSW	1
	Victoria	2
	Queensland	3
	South Australia	4
	Western Australia	5
	Northern Territory	6
	ACT	7
	Tasmania	8

And so you can be entered in the draw for the return trip for two to Paris, flying Lauda Air, five nights accommodation at Le Meridien Hotel or the Mount Buller Ski Trip, could you please complete the personal details below. Your details will only be used to contact the winners of the prize draw, and will not be used for any other purpose, or passed on to any other organisation. Entries are restricted to one Survey per person. No photocopies will be accepted.

Name: _____

Address: _____

State: _____ Postcode: _____

Telephone: _____

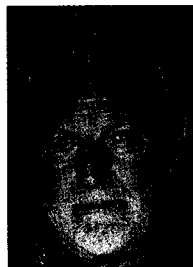
Please complete the Survey and post to:

The Australian Magazine / Reader Survey
PO Box 551, Strawberry Hills NSW 2013

Conditions:

1. The winner of the trip to Paris is the first completed Survey drawn, the next complete Survey drawn will be awarded the Mount Buller Ski Trip.
2. All entries to be received before June 21, 1996.
3. The prizes are non transferable and non redeemable for cash.
4. The draw will take place at The Australian Magazine at 10am on Tuesday June 25, 1996.
5. Prize winners will be published in The Australian Magazine issue date July 20, 1996
6. Full terms and conditions can be found in the Public Notices section in The Weekend Australian today.
7. NSW PERMIT TC96/2951 Vic Permit 96/735 issued on 21/5/96. ACT Permit TP 95/3984.

THAT'S THAT ANGST-WRITTEN



A DR FELIX POST HAS BEEN DOING PIONEERING work in the field of writers and madness. According to a newspaper report, he has studied the lives of 100 male British and American writers over the past 150 years. He has good news for poets. Only 31 per cent of them were alcoholic, compared with 54 per cent of playwrights (this figure may have been unfairly weighted by Brendan Behan). As well, their rate of marriage breakdown was less (26 per cent, compared with 54 per cent of novelists). But about the most sobering of his findings, Dr Post was politely oblique: "No traits of personality disorders were found in 14 per cent of poets, as against 7 per cent of novelists and only 4 per cent of playwrights." In short, most writers are odd, but playwrights are oddest of all. To paraphrase Tolstoy, all normal writers resemble one another, but odd writers are odd in their own particular way.

* * *

Poets are odd in a poetical way. Their art is solitary and introspective. No publisher calls up to ask them to round off a line or tighten up a stanza. No publisher asks them anything, unless it's to try another publisher. Publishers do them out of duty, because there's no money in them. Poets spend hours tweezing words together in patterns, but in the flea market of literature no-one is interested. So they withdraw and become contemplatives, saving their words for their work. This is why they can be a problem at public readings. Suddenly they have an audience, however small, and the strings of their tongues are loosened. At the readings that used to be held at the Harold Park Hotel in Sydney, the time limit was 15 minutes. After one long and heavy night, the final reader, a poet from Melbourne, read excerpts from a frighteningly bulky work. The 15 minutes was just a prelude. He cantered on to 20, 25, 30 minutes. Dedicated poetry listeners got up and went. "Excuse me," one of the organisers whispered to me while I was dozing up the back, "you're a friend of his - can't you get him to stop?" A bell was tinkled. A woman went up to him at the lectern. More people left, but this was his Delphic moment and he wasn't going to let it go. At 37 minutes (we were counting) he stopped his droning, looked up from his trance, and thanked an audience which he had worn down to five ... And because poets are neglected and not often allowed out to perform, they suffer from White Mouse Syndrome. When, years ago, one of our children kept white mice, they'd scurry about for hours and then turn on one another in a flurry of squealing. Poets, madened by obscurity, can sometimes do the same.

* * *

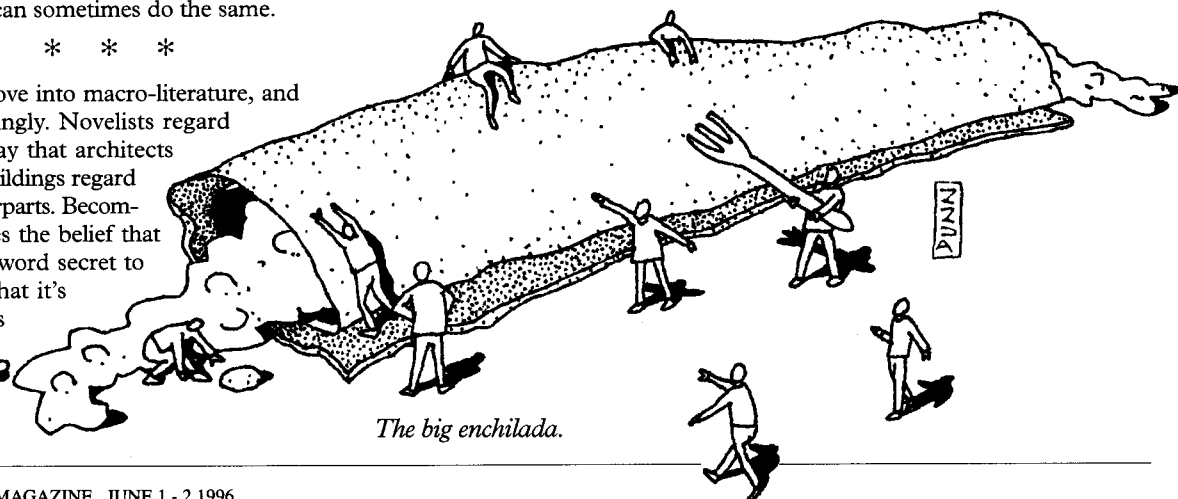
With novelists we move into macro-literature, and egos expand accordingly. Novelists regard poets in the same way that architects who design public buildings regard their domestic counterparts. Becoming a novelist involves the belief that you have a 100,000-word secret to tell the world, and that it's worth giving up years of your life to spell it out. Novelists are haunted by the idea that this might

turn out to be a gigantic delusion. An unpublished poem is an unpublished poem. An unpublished novel is as sad as a foetus in formalin. But if publishers *do* show interest, a curious courting ritual begins. The novelist preens and shows her feathers, and attracted parties make darting movements towards her, retreating at the last minute then returning again. Because the object of desire is already heavily pregnant, it's not a mating ritual but an obstetric one. The successful publisher must rush in, avoid claws and teeth, flip the novelist onto her back, and achieve not penetration but extraction, with success taking anything from weeks to months. Post-natal depression is common, and this is when novelists are most odd. Then the reviews come out, and the oddity can turn into alcoholism or nastiness. The usual cure for this condition is an idea for a new novel. But sometimes, as with Evelyn Waugh, Kingsley Amis and Roald Dahl, the nastiness is terminal. Dahl, ready to begin a new book, once sent offensive letters to Robert Gottlieb, his publisher at Knopf in New York, telling him he was running out of pencils. They were to get him six dozen of a very special type and airmail them to him in England immediately. Gottlieb couldn't locate the exact kind he wanted, but sent back the nearest they could find. He got a diatribe in return. An incensed Gottlieb replied: "In brief, and as unemotionally as I can state it, you have behaved in a way I can honestly say is unmatched in my experience for overbearingness and utter lack of civility." When the letter was sent off, everyone at Knopf stood on their desks and cheered.

* * *

But for stress, nothing matches a new play's first night, and that's why playwrights are the oddest of all. They live in dread of the Domville Effect - when Henry James was booed in 1895 after the opening night of his play *Guy Domville*, he plunged into a severe depression. The work of one playwright friend of mine had so scathing a review in the Melbourne *Herald* that he was unable to leave his house for a week. I sat next to another who, when no-one laughed at his lines, did all the hilarity himself until he verged on hysteria ... Unlike with poems or novels, the interaction is tangible. If the play doesn't connect, it changes from a wedding to a funeral before your eyes. You come to see a cast and an audience married, but instead a slow death occurs, and there's nothing you can do to stop it. There's a line written by the mad 18th-century poet Christopher Smart when he was in an asylum: "Let Ross, house of Ross, rejoice with the Great Flabber Dabber Flat Clapping Fish with hands." That's the noise a displeased first-night audience makes, exactly, and it can send a playwright off his head.

Barry Oakley



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