



## **Professor Roland Perry OAM, B.Ec., F. Monash**

Professor Roland Perry is one of Australia's most prolific and versatile authors. Currently at work on book 30, he has ranged across several genres, including biography, politics, war, history, the British Royals, sport (primarily cricket) and fiction.

Professor Perry has written six bestsellers on World War 1 and World War II. He is the only author to write books on both the major battle zones of The Great War (1914-1918); the Western Front (*Monash*) and Eastern Front (*The Australian Light Horse*). He has also written the most comprehensive work on Australia's involvement in the Pacific War (1941-1945): *The Fight for Australia* (aka *Pacific 360*).[1]

In October 2011, Perry was made a fellow of Monash University. He was awarded the Medal of the Order of Australia 'for services to literature as an author.' He was a member of the National Archives of Australia's Advisory Council 2006-2012. He is a member of the General Sir John Monash Foundation, the KK (King of Klubs) Club, and a director of The Spirit of Australia Foundation. Perry is an honorary coterie member of the Murrumbidgee Football Club; a member of the Melbourne Cricket Club and the Melbourne football Club, as well as the Alliance Francaise and the RSL (Elwood branch).

Monash University bestowed a Professorship on Perry in October 2012. He became the University's first writer-in-residence, with the brief to lecture PhDs and PhD aspirants on all aspects of writing, and Australian history.

Roland Perry began his writing career as a journalist on the Melbourne Age from 1969 to 1973. His first editor (in the paper's business section) was Les Carlyon (later author of 'Gallipoli' and 'The Great War') when it was going through what many observers believe to be its finest years as a crusading newspaper under Editor-in-Chief Graham Perkin. While working on the paper, Perry gained an Economics Degree at Monash University (1970-1972) and studied at Melbourne University, winning the Exhibition Prize and Frederick Blackham Journalism Scholarship in the subject 'Journalism' in 1969. (His primary education was at Murrumbidgee State School and secondary education at Scotch College, Melbourne.)

He moved to England in 1973 to further his writing career and spent five years making documentary films, notably with feature-director Tony Maylam and one of Europe's foremost documentary producers, Jack Grossman. Grossman was involved with 'Arts for Labour' (the UK Labour Party) under Neil Kinnock in his bid to unseat Margaret Thatcher as UK Prime Minister. Grossman was commissioned to make Labour's television political broadcasts (party commercials). He finished forever the tedious use of 'talking heads' and brought Perry in to help produce a controversial 10 minute party advertisement refuting Thatcher's claim that she had primary control of all nuclear weapons on UK soil. The sensational clip suggested that the US President still maintained his 'finger on the button' concerning US Cruise Missiles based in the UK and aimed at the (then) Soviet Union. Thatcher was forced to defend her claims in a hostile Parliament. [3] [4]

## FIRST FICTION

Perry worked for three years part-time on his first book, a fictional thriller, *Program for a Puppet*, which was first published in the UK by W. H. Allen in May 1979 and then Crown in US in 1980. [5]

The book did reasonably well for a first fiction in hardcover, almost selling out its first print run, but it became an international best-seller in paperback, primarily with Hamlyn in the UK and Pocket Books in the US. *Program for a Puppet* was translated into several languages, including German, Spanish, Japanese and Italian. Reviews were strong for a first book. Newgate Callendar in *The New York Times* called it 'altogether an exciting story...an exciting panorama.' [6] Author Morris West sent the publisher a review, saying it was 'a compelling read. I found the narrative fascinating.' [7] *Publisher's Weekly* (US) said: 'In a slick, convincing manner, Perry welds high-tech with espionage.' [8]

*Playboy Magazine* captured the book's scope dubbing it, 'the story of the century, incorporating, assassination, corporate blackmail, terrorism, love, sex and death. A little bit of Forsyth, a dash of Arthur Hailey, this is a first rate story...a good read.' [9]

The UK *Guardian's* Tom Tickell said 'Police chases and shoot-outs are a part of any thriller. Making them gripping enough to raise the heartbeat is far rarer but this book succeeds in doing it. The book has great pace and excitement...taut and extremely well written.' [10]

In an interview on Sydney radio a decade after the publication of *Program for a Puppet*, Perry spoke about learning more from the negative reviews for his first fiction book than the good reviews: 'Some were a bit cranky; some were patronising,' he said, 'but they were all in some way instructive. One thought the writing was "too high mileage." Another spoke of a "staccato" style. I recall another mentioning that it was, at times, like a film script. One reviewer thought I had two good thrillers in one, which had merit. I did meld two big themes that may have been better separated.

But you don't really know what you are doing on a first fiction. I did all the heavy research, "forty ways to pick a lock," that sort of thing.' In a further interview on ABC TV, when talking about his first novel, the author said he kept the story moving—Freddie Forsyth style—from city to city around the world. Characterisation

was minimal. The plot was strong, but being a good ‘plotter’ and researcher were the least important elements, he claimed, of distinctive writing. Perry didn’t think he had a ‘voice’—or any strong confidence in what he was doing until book number 4, which seemed to be the general rule for authors. He remarked that he was fortunate ‘*Program*’ did so well. It allowed him to buy time to concentrate on developing a writing career. [11]

The ‘film-script’ element was noticed. *Screen International* reviewed *Program* favourably, saying it was ‘eminently filmable...about big business, the CIA, the KGB, intrigue and assassination...Perry is good writer and his involved story zips along at a nice pace. Can’t wait to see the film version!’ This attracted legendary British producer Sir Lew Grade, who sought to option the film rights. But this coincided with his film version of the *Titanic*, which was a box-office flop. It sank hopes for future Grade productions, including the adaptation of *Program for a Puppet*. [12]

## JOURNALISM & CRISES

While based in the UK, Perry covered three US Presidential elections as a freelance journalist in 1976 (Jimmy Carter v Gerald Ford); 1980 (Ronald Reagan v Jimmy Carter); and 1984 (Ronald Reagan v Walter Mondale.) His outlets were *The Times*, London; *The UK Sunday Times*; *The UK Daily Telegraph*; *The UK Sunday Telegraph*; *The Guardian*, UK; BBC TV and radio; *TV Channel 4*; radio *LBC: Harpers & Queen*; *Penthouse*; *Columbia University Magazine*; *Time Out*; *Campaign Magazine UK*; and *Computing UK*. (The author has written articles for all Australia’s leading papers and magazines over a 40 year span, 1969 to 2009, including *The Australian*, *Sydney Morning Herald*, *The Age*, *The Sunday Age*, *The Melbourne Herald Sun*, *the Sydney Daily Telegraph*, *the Brisbane Courier Mail*, *The Adelaide Advertiser* and *West Australian*. He has also contributed to the *Heritage Magazine* and *Medical Observer*.)

One of the most striking features he wrote in those four decades appeared in *Penthouse UK* in 1984. This investigative article was based on interviews by Perry (in 1981, on camera with Jack Grossman directing) inside the White House. In this expose, conspiracy theorists, especially those on the political fringes who blame 9/11 on a cabal *inside* the US Government itself, could well find more than clues to the root of the evils in which they believe so fervently. The key interviewee, Dr Richard Beal, explained how the US Government planned for world ‘crises’ long before they happened or *might* happen by using advanced ‘war-gaming’ techniques.

These included how a ‘crisis’ might be created, for instance, to allow the US to go to war to protect its oil interests in the Middle East. The author believed that the Reagan administration was in an over-confident mood in 1981—soon after Reagan’s inauguration. In this atmosphere, he said, its guard was down. Nobody would have secured such footage or commentary, he claimed, at any time after 1981. [13]

## FIRST NON-FICTION, HIDDEN POWER

Given the world-wide market for his first book, W. H. Allen wanted Perry to write another fiction. But the author was keen to use his journalistic background to follow

up on a factual element in the novel—the way the American public was manipulated into voting for candidates by slick computer-based campaigns. He had read Joe McGuinness' *The Selling of the President* concerning the election of Richard Nixon in 1968. Perry decided to write *Hidden Power: The Programming of the President* about the election of Ronald Reagan in 1980. The book explained how advertising techniques had been superseded in elections by more sophisticated methods, including marketing and computer analysis. It was published by Aurum Press in the UK and Beaufort in the US in 1984. The book, as much narrative as analysis, told how the two key campaign 'pollsters' steered their candidates. It was not critical of the President Ronald Reagan, but was seen by the Republican campaign as hostile to him.

In mid-1984 Perry received a phone call 'from someone saying he was an American student interested in doing a thesis on the book,' the author told Melbourne *Herald's* Caroline Wilson in an interview in London, 'I thought it seemed a bit strange so I asked him to leave a number. When I rang back I found it was the headquarters of the Reagan-Bush re-election committee. My publishers had a few phone calls like that and just started playing along without giving too much away.' [14]

The initial contact was just the beginning of pressure to suppress the book. Republican and Reagan pollster, Dr Richard ('Dick') Wirthlin, used his lawyers to attempt to stop Perry from promoting the book in the US. Perry and his publishers ignored warnings and went ahead with a 20 city promotional tour. He had a rollercoaster ride during the second election of Reagan in 1984. [15]

The Republican Party assigned party hacks to editorialise against the book every time the author appeared on television or radio. By contrast, celebrated Democratic Party Pollster Pat Caddell (Wirthlin's key rival in the story) bought 50 copies for distribution inside the Democratic Party.

*Hidden Power* had a good run of reviews during the early campaign election months. US *Publishers Weekly*, often the first review, which the book trade look to for guidance on coming publications, said: 'An alarming expose of the political mass manipulation made possible by modern technology.' [16] *John Barkham Reviews* said, 'This is a landmark book form Americans. They should read, mark, learn, and remember come November.' [17] *ALA's Booklist* commented: 'An authoritative, behind-the-scenes study of political polling in America.' [18] Then Sydney Blumenthal (later a key advisor in the Clinton Presidency), a polling expert who had written his own well-received tome, *The Permanent Campaign*, weighed in with: 'Roland Perry's book is a wonderfully revealing tour guide for anyone planning to travel to the polls on election day.' [19]

The *San Francisco Chronicle* noted that 'Hidden Power presents a frightening view of the process by which we elect public officials. This is a fascinating book.' [20] *Library Journal* was also positive: 'This is a timely and interesting account of a new breed of political technocrats.' [21] 'Fascinating and timely' was also the *Houston Post's* refrain with the added poser: 'How should a President conduct his administration, by consensus or conviction?' [22]

Buoyed by this strong response across the country, publisher Beaufort took out a full-page advertisement in the *New York Times* Sunday Book review section [23] citing a selection of these reviews. Predictably, Reagan supporters in the media acted on their concern that the book was anti-Republican. Pro-Republican journalist Jack Honomichl in (US) *Advertising Age* attacked the book. He found the subject ‘fascinating’ but called it ‘chock full of hyperbole.’ [24] *Newsweek* dismissed it saying that ‘it’s the techniques for mass manipulation of computer-aided pollsters that have Perry in a tizzy.’ [25]

The detractors did not like Perry’s style of developing a dramatic narrative. Dwelling on it was a useful distraction for some. It was a long way from the usual political writing in the US and the UK. The *New Scientist’s* Theodore Roszak wanted the facts much dryer. He thought the book was ‘something like—but not quite—a nonfiction... for a study which aspires to be a significant expose, that is nearly lethal.’

On the other hand many appreciated the author’s approach, which they believed made otherwise esoteric material digestible. [26] The US’s *Bloomsbury Review* wrote: Perry’s book is neither metaphorical nor is it analogous to modern politics.

It is a painstakingly objective and accurate documentation of the world’s governing forces. Without making grim predictions or fatalistic judgements, Perry looks at recent Western politics in terms of computerisation and points out some imposing new developments. Perry is a journalist not a moralist or a dreamer. His conclusions are backed by hundreds of hours of taped interviews and years of extensive research.

But *Hidden Power* is not a dry, tedious textbook account of the subject. It reads like a docu-drama and gives a realistic portrait of some of the media-made, computer programmed politicians. “Up close and personal” is applicable to *Hidden Power*, and so in “the inside scoop.” *Hidden Power* is a story well told; a story the public needs very much to know and understand.’ [27]

Radio talk-back hosts across the U.S.A saw the book as controversial. In pro-Democrat Boston, one presenter had the author on for the entire four hours of his program answering questions from a mixed audience. Some queried the fact that an ‘outsider’ (non-American) dare analyse US Presidential politics. Others, in the traditionally pro-liberal Massachusetts, saw the book as a vehicle for the grievances against the Republican Administration.

In the UK, the book received wide coverage. *The Economist* opined that it had a ‘frightening message: the pollsters with their state-of-the-art computers, which keep a finger on the pulse of the electorate, hope they can manipulate almost any election and have ambitions to control what the people’s choice can do in office.’ [28]

Oliver Pritchett in the London *Sunday Telegraph* thought the book’s main concept was ‘an alarming idea, and the author...plainly intends to give us the shivers.’ [29]

The book’s success in hardcover in the US led to a proposed \$800,000 rights deal by Beaufort and Aurum with a leading US paperback group. But Wirthlin’s lawyers, and the White House, put pressure on the paperback publisher. It backed out of the deal, which was unusual given that the book had been in the US public domain for six

months gaining wide media publicity. But Reagan's support was so strong just after his re-election that the political climate would not allow a mass market publication with an expose of hidden election techniques. [30]

Perry published a further book on the marketing and programming of political candidates in the UK and Europe, *Elections Sur Ordinateur*, which was published first in French by leading publishers Robert Laffont and Bonnel Editions, which received a good run of reviews in France. At this time Perry and Jack Grossman produced a one-hour documentary film 'The Programming of the President' segments of which were broadcast on the UK's Channel 4 in 1984. Wirthlin, Caddell and political candidates such as Ted Kennedy, were interviewed by Perry for the film before the book was released. [31]

## RETURN TO AUSTRALIA: SECOND FICTION

In 1985, Perry returned to Australia (after 11 years based in London, and one [1980] in New York) to work as a scriptwriter with director Tim Burstall, who played a leading part in the renaissance of the Australian film industry from the late 1960s.

Perry was also a writer/director on *Strike Swiftly*, a seven part ABC television documentary series on the Commando regiment of the Australian Army. [32]

Following this, he decided to write his second novel, *Blood is a Stranger* (published by William Heinemann and Mandarin books in 1988), which was set in Australia's Arnhem Land and Indonesia. [33] This covered the 'issue' of the misuse of uranium mining and dangers of nuclear weapons, a theme in Perry's early writing and documentary film-making. The book too received a good run of reviews. Stephen Knight in the *Sydney Morning Herald* wrote: *Blood is a Stranger* is a skilful and thoughtful thriller...with a busy plot and some interesting, unnerving speculations about what might be going on in the world of lasers, yellowcake (uranium mining and manufacture) and Asian politics—things that most people prefer to ignore in favour of more simple and familiar puzzles.' [34] The *Brisbane Courier Mail* wrote: '(the book) delivers a rare kind of thriller: action but in a setting of substance and credibility.

Murder, travel, a touch of sex, some more murder, intrigue and betrayal...Roland Perry obviously doesn't believe in understatement.' [35] *The West Australian* called it 'a racy read in our backyard.' [36] The *Melbourne Age* concurred: 'The story moves along very well indeed—Sydney, Arnhem Land, Asia—and at the same time Perry keeps the characters believable..' [37] Similarly Stan Barney in the *Canberra Times* wrote that 'Perry writes well.' The novel 'moved along at a cracking pace...' [38]

## BURCHETT: THE EXILE

After this second foray into fiction, Perry wanted to write a third novel, but was taken by the intriguing life of communist journalist, Australian Wilfred Burchett. Burchett died in Bulgaria late 1983, when Perry was still in London. The author was amazed at the run of media commentaries and obituaries—in the US, UK, France, China, Russia and many other countries. Here was an Australian, whose life, at least behind the scenes, was largely unknown, receiving huge editorial comment, bigger than any Australian before him including Sir Robert Menzies. Perry decided to write Burchett's

biography. William Heinemann in Australia and the UK were again the publishers, in 1988. The subject was the most controversial figure in Australia's history since Victorian bush-ranger Ned Kelly. He polarised the nation perhaps like no other. Perry sought to tread the middle ground to separate myth from fact. Burchett's enemies alleged he was a floating communist agent, working in the world's trouble spots for the KGB and other espionage outfits. His supporters claimed he was simply a left-leaning, independent journalist.

Perry based the book on Australia's biggest defamation trial, when Burchett in 1974 sued Jack Kane of the Democratic Labour Party for calling him a KGB agent. Thirty trial witnesses laying out Burchett's life and career delivered the author a useful vehicle for the biography. Perry travelled to the US, UK, France and Russia for research. He interviewed key figures on both sides of the political spectrum, and all the key lawyers and barristers in the case.

Many reviewers used the book as a 'political football' which they could kick according to their political inclinations. In contrast to the US, where *Hidden Power* was supported by the more liberal press and attacked by the conservatives, the Burchett book—*The Exile*—was attacked by the liberal press and supported by conservatives. Similar to Burchett the character, the book polarised commentators. [39]

Some took a neutral stance. Phillip Knightley, a strong Burchett supporter, said in the London Sunday Times that Perry wrote about the trial 'in a vivid and impartial manner. Since Australians have a capacity for long and bitter feuds that is almost Sicilian, the courtroom scenes make for gripping reading as Burchett's enemies do their best to "get the Commie bastard" once and for all.' [40] On the right, Jake Kane, the defendant, called the author a 'wimp' for not 'nailing' Burchett further as a KGB agent. Red Harrison in the *Weekend Australian* tacitly concurred with this sentiment and was critical of the author for not condemning his subject further: 'Roland Perry's approach to necropsy is more prosaic, as if the facts of life should speak for themselves. Indeed they do, and Perry has marshalled them without subtlety or scepticism....the censure (of Burchett) is as insipid as it is astonishing, as if Perry would deny the breadth and diligence of his own research.' [41]

#### THE EXILE REVIEWS: LEFT, RIGHT, MIDDLE

In contrast, on the far left, Ben Kiernan, the one-time representative in Australia for Pol Pot (responsible for genocide in Cambodia), attacked Perry and the book in the *Sydney Morning Herald*, saying that 'by limiting his [the author's] focus to the allegations and part of Burchett's defence, Perry avoids the many other aspects of Burchett's life and work.' [42] On the right, B. A. (Bob) Santamaria, who supported Jack Kane, drew on Perry's rare 'editorial' summary in the book and cited it in his (Santamaria's) review in the *Melbourne Herald*: 'Burchett was not the independent observer he claimed. A true independent who had witness what he had would not have supported Stalinist show trials in Eastern Europe. He would have had something more to say about the 1956 attempted revolution in Hungary, which he denounced.

He may have considered being other than mute on Czechoslovakia in 1968, or even Afghanistan in 1979. He might also have written with some insight on the trial and

execution of a big section of the North Korean leadership in 1953....Because of his [Burchett's] tremendous impact during the Vietnam War he could have had some influence on events in Pol Pot's Cambodia soon after. But he chose to ignore the carnage until it was too late..' Santamaria wondered whether 'any attempt would be made to "bury" it [the book].' [43]

On a similar note, Professor Robert Manne wrote in the *Melbourne Herald*: 'Perry clearly entered upon his study with an open mind, intrigued by Burchett's career, and to some degree charmed by his character. What is important about his book is that the evidence has driven him—almost in spite of himself—into the camp of the detractors. Perry is, firstly, convinced that throughout his long career, Burchett was a covert but nevertheless dogmatically committed communist. During every important event—between the late 1940s and the early 1980s—Burchett was active and effective....With Perry's book it ought to be possible to say that the Burchett controversy is closed. In fact, what will happen is that Burchett's defenders will merely regroup. In public his book is likely either to be ignored or dismissed by nitpicking. In private his [Perry's] motives will be questioned. In writing truthfully about Burchett Roland Perry has offended a powerful lobby.' [44]

Manne was correct about the Burchett supporters regrouping, but the book was far from ignored as scores of reviewers in the Australia and the UK presented their views of the book and Burchett. In one of the longest-ever critiques in the *Australian Book Review*, Bill Lesley, firmly pro-Burchett, wrote that Perry 'has taken on a monumental task....The Exile represents an exhaustive working out of quite mammoth amounts of information, much of it which is quite absorbing and even fascinating..' But this was faint praise in a generally damning review. Lesley thought Perry was not as empathetic to his subject and his achievements as he should have been. Perry began the book with a dramatic narrative of Burchett's world scoop on the dropping of the first atomic bomb on Hiroshima, Japan in August 1945.

Lesley said Perry drew from it 'as little as possible as a guide to understanding his subject's career and development.....one feels rather the cold skills of the professional entomologist, picking carefully through the endless dust of detail to effect a reconstruction of a fascinating object...' [45]

*The Canberra Times* however, took a different view: 'Perry looks at both sides with a dispassionate eye, conditioned partly by his decision to use as background the evidence produced in Burchett's unsuccessful defamation case against Senator Jack Kane....Perry studiously avoids a moral judgement on Burchett's life which had given him worldwide notoriety.' [46] The *Sydney Daily Telegraph* viewed the book as 'extremely well-written and researched.' [47] The *Brisbane Sun* saw it as a 'meticulously fair and balanced account of an extraordinary life.' [48]

Picking up on Perry's narrative style developed in fiction, *ABC Radio (5AN) Adelaide's* Keith Conlon said: 'The Exile reads like a first rate thriller.' [49]

Burchett's lawyers weighed in when the publisher asked for their comments. Burchett's barrister (Judge) Harvey Cooper wrote: 'I picked up this book with some trepidation. But once I started to read it, I just could not put it down...because of the interesting and easily read manner in which it is written...this book (on the subject) is

the first which gives credit where credit is due and condemns where condemnation is due.’ [50]

Burchett’s solicitor, Roy Turner wrote: ‘The Exile is nothing short of brilliant—a masterpiece. I have never read a better account of a trial. The book explains Burchett, the enigma, to me for the first time. Considering the style of the writing, it is a book worthy of study in higher education...the author has produced an outstanding work; a scholarly, well-researched and fairly presented description of an exile.’ [51]

Even the populist *People Magazine*, looking for a suitable angle for its audience, wrote in its review: ‘Burchett knew that getting the actress Jane Fonda to visit North Vietnam and make anti-war speeches and documentary films would be the propaganda coup of the war. The Fonda connection is just one fascinating aspect of the life of Wilfred Burchett detailed in *The Exile*.’ [52]

### THIRD FICTION, AND FILM

Roland Perry next returned to fiction and a pet theme—the evils of nuclear weapons—in this third novel *Faces in the Rain*. Set mainly in Melbourne and Paris, he used a thriller narrative (writing for the first time in the first person) to expose the nefarious activities of the French in testing and developing nuclear weapons in the Pacific. The book, published by Mandarin in 1990, was well received without the media polarisation or intense coverage of his non-fiction. [53] The *Melbourne Age* review by Peter Pierce said: ‘There is a French-Polynesian connection in Roland Perry’s able frame-up and pursuit thriller. Propelling his hero from Paris to the Melbourne Club and the Mosque of Iran in East Coburg [Melbourne], Perry handles the location shots with ease; keeps the dialogue clipped; while providing a complicated plot that is effectively elaborated and ended.’ [54] The *Melbourne Herald-Sun* noted *Faces in the Rain* was an unusual novel. ‘Perry has put together a plausible plot, and action that rattles along at a fine pace. Altogether a pleasant surprise.’ [55] The *Canberra Times* was also positive:...’Recent episodes involving the French Government in the Pacific are used to good effect to give the book an appealing topicality, and Perry proves to be deft at keeping the reader guessing....*Faces in Rain* is always entertaining...’ [56]

Only one published reviewer was less than impressed. Robert Hood in *Australian Crime and Mystery Magazine* wrote: ‘Perry tells the story economically, the plot is paced well and is effectively structured, and he occasionally provides telling imagery.’ However, after citing an example of this, Hood complained that the main character was not ‘particularly endearing...his thoughts seem to deal with only immediate action and never drew out wider implications.’ [57]

(The author was pleased to learn in 2013 that Allen & Unwin were publishing his first three fiction works as e-books.)

In 1991, Perry was commissioned by the *Weekend Australian Magazine* to write a feature about an Australian syndicate attempting to raise the treasure from a sunken galleon off the coast of Guam in the Pacific. He had kept his hand in at film-making and, inspired by the Guam story, returned with a film crew to make a documentary: *The Raising of a Galleon’s Ghost*. Perry wrote, produced and directed the film. It was

sponsored by Omega, which distributed it world-wide. The cinematographer was Rob Copping, who shot some of Australia's most successful films including the Tim Burstall-directed *Alvin Purple* and *Stork*. [58]

## THE FIFTH MAN

For his seventh book, Perry set his sights on his biggest challenge yet: to discover the identity of the 'Fifth Man' in the Cambridge University (UK) spy ring—the most effective espionage group of the 20th Century. All members of the Ring worked for the Soviet Union's KGB and were run by Russian Master Spy Yuri Ivanovitch Modin.

To even attempt this project Perry needed considerable research funds for several trips to Europe, Russia and the US. He raised the finance in 1992 and 1993 by writing two books in 'lighter' fields that he enjoyed formerly more for leisure than work: films and cricket. One concerned the films of Mel Gibson (*Lethal Weapon*). Publisher Peter Fenton at Oliver Books sent Perry on another 20-city tour of the US, then to the UK, to promote it. The other tome covered the 1993 Ashes cricket series between Australia and England, and the hero of the Test matches, spinner Shane Warne (*Shane Warne: Master Spinner*.) [59] [60] In the spring/summer of 1993 in England the author saw every match of the Ashes series, and in between took trips to Moscow, Washington DC, Paris and St Petersburg in search of the mystery espionage agent for the book *The Fifth Man*. He had a strong base of contacts within British intelligence, especially MI6, members of which had assisted him on detail for his first novel and information for articles on espionage.[61]

After initial research he presented a 20,000 word evidentiary statement to Sedgwick & Jackson UK's William Armstrong, who had published various books on espionage, notably by British journalist Chapman Pincher. Armstrong had been caught up in circumstances surrounding the MI5 agent Peter Wright, who published 'Spycatcher' with William Heinemann (also Perry's publisher in 1988. Through this connection, Wright became one of Perry's interviewees for *The Fifth Man*). Armstrong commissioned Perry to write the book, telling him it explained the whole affair for the first time. The Fifth Man was published in 1994, during an avalanche of spy book 'collaborations.' Often gullible western writers and academics linked up with former KGB agents to produce mainly turgid, unmemorable, over-blown volumes, with many claiming 'exclusive' access to KGB files. Despite these claims, no westerner ever had personal access to the files. They worked on 'summaries' prepared by the KGB, which created pitfalls and obvious opportunities for KGB 'disinformation'. [62] Only Perry and Kim Philby's biographer, Phillip Knightley, avoided such spurious links. Knightley instead edited a book *The Philby Files* by Genrikh Borovik. [63] Perry made several trips to Russia for in-depth interviews with eight KGB agents, five of whom claimed they knew the true identity of the Fifth Man. Once more he drew on his journalist experience.

'The collapse of the old USSR saw the rise of two types of Western espionage "experts",' the author told Damien Murphy of the Australia's *Bulletin* magazine, 'academic historians on a feverish document hunt, who maintain the Fifth Man is fantasy because documentation [on him] apparently does not exist.; and London journalists flying into Moscow to pay superannuated KGB officers to tell them what they want to hear for a headline.' Perry said he 'slipped under the net.' He didn't do

deals with literary or espionage agents, but instead arrived and used contacts to get interviews, or simply turned up on door steps, with an interpreter, the way any journalist would in the west. Some agents politely or impolitely rejected his overtures; others did not. [64]

The book proved one of the author's more controversial works. It named Lord (Victor) Rothschild, the Third Baron, as the fifth key member of the KGB-controlled Ring. The other four were Guy Burgess, Donald Maclean, Kim Philby, and Sir Anthony Blunt, the Queen's art curator. The media and press were split between positive and negative reaction to *The Fifth Man*. *The Irish Times* reviewer Kieran Fagan said: 'This book by an Australian journalist is very unusual....Few writers on espionage achieve the page-turning fluency of Roland Perry.' [65] *The Weekend Australian* reviewer Richard Hall said 'it only takes a couple of phone calls to establish that the Rothschild operation had been pretty small beer for a long time.' [66] Hall did not mention who was on the end of those phone calls that informed him so much, which prompted Perry to write to the paper, saying 'it would have been helpful if Mr. Hall had named his sources so we could compare them to those in the book...'[67] In contrast, Norman Abjorensen in *The Sunday Canberra Times* wrote: Perry makes a plausible case that the Fifth Man was...Rothschild...even from the most critical viewpoint it has to be conceded that the circumstantial evidence pointing to Rothschild is compelling.' [68]

The UK *Independent Bookguide* noted: 'Perry takes you on a trail of sensational discoveries to an individual whose power was truly awesome—Lord Rothschild.' [69] The author-as-guide reviews kept coming. Caroline Wilson, who had interviewed Perry concerning *Hidden Power*, said on Melbourne's 3AW radio: 'This book is brilliantly researched and a first class read. No turgid spy tome here. Perry takes you on a guided tour through the hall of espionage mirrors.' [70] Linda Agrin on LWT (London Weekend Television) said in the literary program 'You're Booked': *The Fifth Man* is a powerful excursion into the espionage demi-monde...the facts about the names Burgess, Philby, Maclean and Blunt are about to take on a new dimension...this is a wonderful read.' [71] Peter Couchman in a 50 minute interview with the author on Melbourne's ABC radio thought it 'a fascinating, plausible new look at the whole question of The Fifth Man. An excellent read.' [72]

Christopher Hitchens in the *London Review of Books* seemed on less than an exhilarating journey and more like a plod through a representative sample (five) of the torrent of 'revelatory' spy books in the mid-1990s, including *The Fifth Man*. Hitchens looked at them through the prisms he knew well: history (apart from espionage history) and literary content. He was concerned with what he viewed as a seminal or 'defining, moulding episode of this moribund [20th] Century' which to him was the Hitler-Stalin Pact. Hitchens was unhappy with all the authors for not giving him more on it. 'Roland Perry...spends exactly one sentence saying that after the Pact "the agents thought of abandoning their commitment [to the KGB/Soviet cause] until Gorsky made contact." Gorsky, the London "Control" [running the Cambridge Ring at the time in the late 1930s] was apparently able to convince Maclean, Philby and Burgess, but not Blunt and Rothschild, that Stalin's realpolitik was "buying time." This could be accurate, I suppose...' [73]

## INVESTIGATING AUTHOR

*The Scotsman's* Gillian Harris interviewed Perry, who said: 'There were 100 little things that fitted into place [in naming Rothschild as the Fifth]. But the thing that triggered it for me was Lord Rothschild's job as MI5's security inspector [during WW2]. That explained how he got into all the major research institutions and weapons centres.' In a piece of good old-fashioned investigative reporting, Perry 'tracked' a small, saucer sized device—a magnetron for use in radar— 'stolen' by Rothschild from a defence laboratory in the UK run by Sir Mark Oliphant. This was given by Rothschild to Blunt. They worked together on drawings and notes on the magnetron. Blunt then passed it all on to the London Soviet Embassy's top agent Vladimir Barkovsky. Barkovsky photographed the device, information about it and drawings supplied by Rothschild and Blunt, which was all sent by diplomatic bag to the KGB's Moscow Centre. Then Barkovsky returned the magnetron to Blunt, who returned it to Rothschild. Rothschild, acting his part as MI5's security adviser, and showing amazing cheek, then posted the magnetron back to Oliphant, with a warning note for him to 'tighten up his security.' The guileless Oliphant was grateful to the benevolent Rothschild for showing how easy it was to steal a device from his laboratory. Oliphant was also relieved that Rothschild did not report his lax security, which could have seen war weapons development funds withdrawn by the UK Government. No media outlet (except for Harris at the Scotsman) picked up on this extraordinary discovery by Perry, whose investigation included interviews with Oliphant in Canberra and Barkovsky (on camera) in Moscow.

The magnetron, according to Perry, was just one of many weapons developments that Rothschild, the brilliant scientist with a 183 IQ passed on to the Moscow Centre this way. Perry claimed the Rothschild carefully kept his direct contact with the KGB spies to a minimum. Instead, he used middle-men, namely Guy Burgess and Blunt, to pass on any purloined espionage information. [74]

The author seems over the decades to have been a reluctant responder to reviewers, but the comments surrounding *The Fifth Man* 'smoked' him out more often than all his other works combined. Some comment was straight-out defamation and had to be answered. Noel Annan in the *New York Review of Books* attacked him saying he had 'the insolence to suggest that the Rothschilds helped him.' [75] Perry responded in the *NYR*: 'At the risk of being caned like Tom Brown, I humbly submit I did interview six members of the Rothschild family.....some were most helpful, others were more reticent. But I taped the interviews, just in case an old schoolmistress should doubt their authenticity.' [76] Annan claimed: 'I asked Lady [Tess] Rothschild whether she had been interviewed by Mr. Perry. She said she had no recollection of being visited by a man with a tape recorder. Still one can forget conversations.' [77] Tess Rothschild's remark was one befitting a former MI5 employee, which she was. The author, an assiduous recorder, did the taped interviews with her over the phone from the London offices of film-maker Jack Grossman, who listened to the discussions. Annan must have missed the first page of *The Fifth Man* in which Perry writes: 'Special thanks are due to the busy Honourable Miriam Rothschild and Lady Tess Rothschild, who contacted me when she learned I was writing a book concerning her husband.' The other interviews (taped, face to face) with the Rothschild family included two of Victor's sons, Jacob (the 4th Baron, his son from his first marriage), and James Amschel (the son from the second marriage, to Tess.) [78]

The sensitivity over Tess Rothschild comes from Perry's implied claim in the book that she spied for the KGB with Victor as a team from 1938. The Rothschild family lawyers demanded copies of the book from Sedgwick & Jackson before publication but decided not to sue, preferring 'to maintain a dignified silence.'

## PUBLISHING FRAUD

An even more contentious issue in the book was the claim that the brilliant Scot and Cambridge graduate John Cairncross was *not* the Fifth Man. In his opening chapter, Perry made a strong case for him being an important KGB spy but pointed out that Cairncross was finished as an operative in 1951. MI5 was on to him and forced him from the UK into exile in France, where he had no access to any secret information. This was acknowledged by KGB Spy Master Yuri Modin, Perry's key interviewee, in his own book *Mes Comrades de Cambridge*, first published in France in 1994. [79]

The British publisher Headline Book Publishing, which bought the rights, wanted to spice up the material for its audience. [80] It made less than subtle changes, first to the title, making it *My Five Cambridge Friends* with the sub-heading: 'For the first time, their KGB controller reveals the secrets of the world's most famous spy ring—Burgess, Maclean, Philby, Blunt and Cairncross.' Second, Headline changed lines on page 104, now implying that Cairncross was the Fifth Man: 'At the close of 1944, the name of John Cairncross, code-named the Carelian, was added to the four agents to whose cases I had been assigned. He was the "Fifth Man." Cairncross had at one time or another been in contact with the others, but he was hardly a member of the group.' [81]

This paragraph was revealing in its confusion. He had made contact, sortof, maybe, but he was *not* in the Cambridge Ring. The words changed and inserted by Headline were pure fabrication, according to Modin, who pointed out that Cairncross, to his knowledge, had never been in contact with any member of the group. UK *Guardian* journalist Richard Norton-Taylor rang Modin to check on this and found him angry that the false claims, changes and fraud on the British (and later US) buying public, had been made without him being consulted. [82] Alan Rusbridger, who agreed with Perry's assessment that Rothschild was the fifth man, also wrote in *The Guardian*: "Yuri Modin...says in the English edition of his recent book that Cairncross was "the fifth man." Modin says he never used the term, which is not contained in the French edition of his book.' [83]

Perry travelled to Moscow again with Jack Grossman and filmed Modin denouncing his British publisher's doctoring of the content this way. [84] A fourth investigator, researcher Daniel Korn of the British documentary film company, Touch Productions, also questioned Modin on the matter. [85] On each occasion, Modin was adamant: he had not named Cairncross as number Five. The French publisher supported his claim. But for Headline it was a case of 'never let the facts get in the way of a good story.' The fabrication was taken as gospel by almost all reviewers, including the more astute observers such as Hitchens in the *LRB*, and the espionage expert David Leitch in the UK *Sunday Independent*. [86] This provided the UK publisher (and the happily compliant media except for *The Guardian*) with a useful 'headline' grabber.

Without the 'Cairncross was the Fifth' angle, the book delivered some cautious, vague insights on Modin's life and nothing new or revealing on the British spies in question.

Ian Cummins in the *Melbourne Age* was one of a score of reviewers who remained ignorant of Headline's literary hoax. But he went one better than most by telling his readers that the author was 'careless with detail' such as 'the claim that Margaret Thatcher was a lawyer...she actually graduated in chemistry.' Thatcher in fact, as Perry pointed out, graduated in a Bachelor of Science in chemistry *and* read for the bar specialising in tax law. [87] Perhaps Cummins believed 'read for the bar' meant poetry recitals at London's Chelsea Potter pub, her 'local' in the King's Road.

#### THE BRADMAN BIOGRAPHY: THE DON

Perry turned to his love of cricket for his next book, *The Don, a biography of Sir Donald Bradman* published in 1995 again by Macmillan in Australia and William Armstrong at Sedgwick & Jackson in the UK. More than 50 books had appeared on Bradman since the 1930s, but no author had ever interviewed him. Perry secured interviews through contacts that had done business with the cricketing legend. Six months turned into a six year relationship and four books in all: *The Don*; *Bradman's Best* (Random House, 2001); *Bradman's Best Ashes Teams* (Random House, 2002); and *Bradman's Invincibles* (Hachette, 2008).

After the review battleground created by some of his other non-fiction bestsellers such as *Hidden Power*, *The Exile* and *The Fifth Man*, the author had a different experience with this sports biography on Bradman, who many people in Australia rank as the 'greatest Australian.' (Perry had high regard for Bradman, but ranked General Sir John Monash above him). *The Don* went to top of the bestseller lists in Australia and had the most positive run of 'notices' of all his books in Australia and the UK. [88] Perhaps the most appreciated would have been by the doyen of cricket writers E.W. Swanton in the UK *Cricket Magazine*: '*The Don* is an unsurpassable record of a phenomenal figure, from Lord's to the moment of writing, has been, if any man ever has, a victim of his fame.' [89]

In Australia, the reviews had a familiar pattern. The drama and pace for a sports book was appreciated as they were in Perry's fiction, and usually also, but not always, in his more serious non-fiction. Certainly the author's love of the game was seen to be coming through his writing. The Melbourne *Herald Sun* wrote: '*The Don* is a sterling biography...it gives a riveting account of many of Bradman's innings, and one can almost feel the excitement that gripped cricket fans when he strode out to bat.' [90]

*Australian Cricket Magazine's* Ken Piesse found the book was 'a riveting and engrossing account of the life and times of cricket's mega hero...In a 645 page book, Bradmanlike in research and presentation, Perry provides far more biographical and character detail on The Don and his life than previously published.' [91] The Sydney *Sunday Telegraph's* Peter Lalor said: 'Perry keeps a compelling pace in the work...The Don always let his cricket do the talking and so does the author. Perry brings to life the various innings with colourful and detailed descriptions of the shots, bowling and fielding...a good read and a handy bench-mark for all the modern hysteria [in 1995] about Brian Lara and Steve Waugh, two fine players whose averages and performances are but a shadow of The Don's.' [92]

*The Sydney Morning Herald* critique by Philip Derriman said that the book was ‘well researched, well illustrated and well written...anyone who looks into the book for an informed, readable account of the life of an extraordinary individual who also happened to be a fantastically successful sportsman will be well satisfied.’ The reviewer was critical of Perry not expanding on the religious divide between the Masons and Catholics: ‘Perry’s book does include a personal detail about Sir Donald Bradman, which, as far as I know, has not previously appeared in print—namely that he is a former Freemason. Perry states the fact without comment, although many readers, having heard the stories of friction between Catholics and Mason in Australian cricket in the 1930s and 1940s, are sure to wonder if it was a factor in the lifelong personal rift between Bradman and his Catholic team-mates, Bill O’Reilly and Jack Fingleton.’ [93]

Perry in *The Don*, in several media interviews and articles over a decade made it clear he did not think this had anything to do with his ‘rift’ with these two other contemporary Test cricketers. This he said, was why he did not play it up in the book.

In an interview with AFL football legend Kevin Bartlett on Melbourne Radio, Perry read Bradman’s responses to relevant questions dealing with the ‘Catholics v Masons’ issue.. He (Bradman) could be cantankerous and tough to deal with at times, Perry told Bartlett, but bigotry was not in his nature. He was agnostic. He did not have much time for religion. ‘It certainly did not interfere with his selection of cricketers in the Test side or anywhere else,’ Perry noted, ‘although there were accusations that the Australian Board of [cricket] Control in the 1930s had prejudices against Catholics.

These may well have been true. But the evidence did not stack up in Bradman’s case. In fact, the opposite was true. He fought for and got selected speedster Laurie Nash [a Catholic] in the final Test of the 1936-37 Ashes series very much against the entire Board’s wishes. That Australian Test side had six Catholics in the team. Bradman captained it. He wanted the best team to beat England and such background things as this would never have entered his head. Australia winning was almost all that mattered to him. Bradman gave the Board an ultimatum: “if you don’t select Nash in the team, I will consider my own position.” Of course, the Board backed down. But the rumours persisted, possibly because Bradman himself never sought to address the religion issue. Remember too he personally chose Richard Mulvaney, a Catholic, to run the [charitable] Bradman Museum in Bowral. Mulvaney became one of his closest confidants. The Museum [now running 22 years] became a fine institution in his name. It has developed into the most important symbol of the Bradman legacy.’ [94]

The old Catholics v Masons divide did not enter into UK reviews for *The Don*, which were similar to those in Australia. *The Blackpool Evening Gazette* noted: ‘Perry’s momentous new book on Bradman will become an established classic.’ [95] *The Birmingham Post* reviewer said: ‘Perry has provided an entertaining, breezily-written book that has drama and pace...(The Don)...is a book which should be in every cricket library and has some superb photographs and many memorable quotes.’

*Total Sports Magazine UK* wrote: ‘*The Don* is a magnificent book. Bradman’s story is wonderfully related by Perry—a monument both to his research and his writing....Perry’s joy in relating his greatest innings is infectious.’ [96]

## WARNE, WAUGH AND CAPTAIN AUSTRALIA

Perry's first book on Mel Gibson had been a lucky, timely commission, but he became intrigued with the actor's personality and character, which he had not explored in the first book. Now he believed the quirky actor to be a challenging biography. He composed *Mel Gibson, Actor, Director, Producer*, his third book with Macmillan Australia, published in 1996. The following year Perry wrote a biography of Shane Warne: *Bold Warnie*, after his story on the leg-spin bowler's dominance of the 1993 Ashes. *Bold Warnie* was published by *Random House* in 1998. Again, Warne's brilliance on the field and controversial life off it over drug, sex, gambling and more sex, made him an attractive candidate for a biography, and to explore both sides of the Australian Superstar sporting character and story.

The success, and apparent enjoyment, for the author in writing these cricket books, all big sellers, prompted him to do more, including *Waugh's Way: Steve Waugh—learner, leader, legend* (Random House 2000); and *Captain Australia, A History of the Celebrated Captains of Australian Test Cricket* (Random House, 2000). [97]

The Waugh biography seemed in defiance of early 'expert' opinion about his capacities as a leader. Ian Chappell attacked Waugh; respected observer Peter Roebuck was critical. Even Sydney radio broadcaster Alan Jones expressed his displeasure at Waugh taking over the top sporting appointment in Australia. The negative pronouncements suggested Waugh would not last long as either captain or even Test player after he took over the leadership in early 1999. Perry thought otherwise. He began writing the biography. Waugh made his critics look foolish.

He endured and prospered, and so did *Waugh's Way*, selling well for the rest of Waugh's career through to 2004. It and the *Captain Australia* were in general well received. *Wisden Cricketers' Almanack 2001* said of the Waugh biography: 'Roland Perry is gloriously readable, always thoughtful. His account embraces all the major controversies, but there is never any question whose side he is on. Perry shows Waugh's evolution as a cricketer and a captain with solid admiration, but shrewdness too.' [98]

*Captain Australia* covered every Australian skipper (except for Ricky Ponting) since Test cricket began. Each chapter carried a mini-biography of the 41 leaders. He began the book with the story of Charles Lawrence, whom Perry called 'a founding father of Test cricket.' In 1868, Lawrence took the first squad of international cricketers from Australia to England. It was a unique team, made up entirely of Aboriginal cricketers who acquitted themselves impressively. One of cricket's best and most seasoned commentators, Robin Marlar, wrote in the *Cricketer International*: 'Perry is a prolific, stylish writer...What lifted this book for me was the 24 page prologue on a fascinating character, Charles Lawrence, the immigrant from England who took on the embryonic Australian establishment and brought the first, if not quite the only team of Aborigines to England in 1868.' [99]

Each reviewer seemed to have a chapter that stood out for them. For *The Age*, Melbourne 'the most interesting' was on the 34th captain, Ian Chappell, entitled 'Larrikin Leader,' which notes cultural and political connections between Chappell, Bob Hawke, the advertising guru John Singleton, 1970s 'ockerism,' and the

promotion of WSC (World Series Cricket, sponsored by Kerry Packer.) [100] *The Herald Sun* Melbourne noted: 'There are some good stories in *Captain Australia*...The chapter on Greg Chappell [35: 'All Class and Substance'] gives wonderful insight into the genius of Sir Donald Bradman.' [101] Cricket Magazine *Inside Edge* wrote: The appeal of *Captain Australia*...will be the detail on captains most of us never saw such as Murdoch, Blackham, Armstrong, Woodfull and Richardson...It's a valuable addition to our cricketing canon.' [102]

## BRADMAN'S BEST; BRADMAN'S BEST ASHES TEAMS

Roland Perry's run on cricket books continued, courtesy of Sir Donald Bradman, who gave him his world's best cricket team selection from all cricketers who had played the game since Tests began in 1877 to the end of 2000. Perry discovered during his writing of the Bradman biography that Sir Donald had made a hobby of selecting world sides. The author asked him for his 'best-ever' dream team and they discussed the scores of candidates. The book, *Bradman's Best* (Random House) was published simultaneously in Australia and the UK on 12 August 2001 to much fanfare. It was an instant best-seller capturing the imagination of the sporting world.

The UK *Observer's* Norman Harris noted in his column that the book 'containing the 11 precious names will be guarded like gold bars.' [103] The London *Spectator's* Frank Johnson was inspired to choose his own Philosopher's XI, starting with Plato and Aristotle. 'Donald Bradman's posthumous ideal cricket XI of all time was revealed this week,' he wrote. 'Few political scoops have inspired so much conversation and argument.....' The fact that Bradman had only chosen two English names—Bedser and Hammond caused Johnson to remark: '...another humiliation for English cricket at Australia's hands in this dreadful summer (2001).

But at this point we English should stop conceding that, at this or that, we are not world class. What is the most important and hardest of man's functions? It is to think. The selection of an international, 'dream' thinking XI would tell a different story about the English.' Johnson finished his article with: 'So: five English speakers; three Frenchmen; two Greeks; one German. No Australians were selected.' [104]

In response to this, Perry wrote a 'tongue-in-cheek' letter to the *Spectator*: '...I agree with Frank Johnson's Philosophy First XI, except for a glaring omission which has overtones of vindictiveness. Surely England's most radical, and in my opinion best, modern philosopher, Professor Brian O'Shaughnessy, author of those monumental tomes *The Will* and *Consciousness and the World*, should be in the team, even as 12th man. Has Professor O'Shaughnessy been left out for reasons not obvious from your clearly biased selection process? Is this the meaning behind Frank Johnson's rather pointed last line: "No Australians were selected"? Did the good professor's accident of birth in Australia cause him to be overlooked?' [105]

Bradman's selection of just 12 players—seven of them Australians—brought predictable criticism from every direction: contemporary players and their supporters; disgruntled commentators from different countries whose favourite players had been neglected; and the usual round-up of Bradman detractors.

*The UK Guardian* editorialised with commonsense perspective: ‘Matthew Engel [the paper’s leading cricket writer], unconcerned that his batting average is 99.94 lower than the Don’s, has already criticised the composition of the Bradman team in this paper....but no two pundits will ever agree. Bradman allowed his closeness to his teammates to influence his selection; ask a Yorkshireman and it is a fair bet that the entire “dream” team would be from God’s own county; and, as for computers, they will rely on averages, an unreliable arbiter of greatness. Would Spofforth have routed today’s England, or Jessop saved the day with a sparkling hundred? We will never know...’ [106]

Perry’s follow up book with summary chapters on Bradman’s selections of his best Ashes teams (*Bradman’s Best Ashes Teams*—also published by Random House) could not have captured the imagination of the cricket world a year as much as the first book. Yet still it sold well in the UK and Australia from 2002.

#### MONASH: THE OUTSIDER WHO WON A WAR

After this run of sports writing, the author turning again to history, writing a biography of Australian General Sir John Monash, the outstanding military commander of the Great War, 1914-1918. This proved to be his biggest challenge since the publication of *The Fifth Man* a decade earlier. The book—*Monash: the outsider who won a war*—had a healthy run of reviews from the widest range of critics for any of his works. Leading politicians (of different persuasions), including prime ministers and State Governors, Generals, military experts, historians, academics, lawyers, engineers, journalists and literary critics lined up to read arguably the author’s best biography to that point. The judges in the national Federation of Australian Writers’ Award said: ‘Roland Perry’s splendid biography has not only added greatly to our knowledge of Monash, he has produced a finely written, engrossing book. This biography is not only very detailed and painstakingly researched; it is also a wonderfully entertaining book. *Monash: the outsider who won a war* is a model of the biographer’s art and a worthy winner.’ [107]

NSW Labor Premier, Bob Carr, in *The Australian Jewish News*, wrote: ‘Reading Roland Perry’s compelling and wholly absorbing biography prompts the question: suppose John Monash had never donned a uniform. How would we regard him today? For one thing, he would still be an excellent subject for a biographer. For another, he would still rank among the most remarkable Australians of his time. Perry’s book is sub-titled: “The Outsider Who Won a War”—a line that contains two bold assertions, both of which can be justified.’ [108] Jeff Kennett, former Victorian Liberal Premier, when launching the book in Melbourne, said: ‘The detail in this book is staggering, and fascinating; the narrative is strong and well-written. It’s a page-turner without any contrivance on the author’s part....This book covers a vital part of history.’ [109]

Kim Beazley, Labor’s, then shadow Minister for Defence, who launched *Monash* in Sydney, commented: ‘This biography of Monash is for our time, our generation. The author has expertly put the story of this great Australian’s life in both historical and political perspective....It is as much about relationships as it is about war. The book is as much for women as it is for men....It should be read in our schools and universities.’ [110] The then Prime Minister John Howard said: ‘This is a wonderful biography; a superb work. It is part of the growing store of what can only be called

epic Australian histories now of that period.’ In 2006, on a trip to Washington DC, Howard gave an autographed, leather-bound copy of the book to President George W. Bush as a state gift. [111]

Newspaper reviews were almost universally positive. The *Sydney Morning Herald* reviewer wrote: ‘Perry’s book...tells a heroic story at a ripping pace unimpeded by too many footnotes.’ [112] *Australian Book Review* noted: Perry is in his element discussing reputations and intrigues. He loves character study: Machiavelians such as Keith Murdoch, and royalty such as George V...Perry brings into sharp(er) focus the influence of Monash’s lover Lizzie Bentwitch both during and after the war.

There is also a lot more detail about Monash’s relationship with Annie Gabriel, the wife of an early business associate, with whom Monash carried on a long affair and almost eloped.’ [113] The Melbourne *Herald Sun* called it ‘inspiring.’ [114] 10: The magazine *Eureka Street* wrote: ‘In this rollicking biography of General Sir John Monash, Roland Perry seeks to release his subject from the image of a dourly brilliant engineer and soldier....the narrative drive and verve never flag....This is indeed, and successfully, the ‘biography of Australia’s greatest military commander’ that its publishers proclaim it to be.’ [115] *The Canberra Times* reviewer called a ‘popular history...a rattling good yarn. The book takes us efficiently through his (Monash’s) whole life...it is his pre-World War 1 achievements as an engineer, advocate and entrepreneur, then his post-war work with the State Electricity Commission, Victoria, that fascinate. In this book there is something for everyone. The lay reader will receive a comprehensive and comprehensible rehearsal of the Anzac Corps battles, both on Gallipoli and on the Western Front.’ [116]

*The Australian* literary editor chose the publisher of a previous book on Monash (*John Monash* by Geoffrey Searle) to review Perry’s biography and naturally he was never going to find it quite as engaging as his own effort. Nevertheless, the reviewer, Peter Ryan, managed to admit: ‘Perry had a grand theme and a mighty challenge. He has produced a blockbuster. He grasps the distinguishing facets of Monash’s character and personality...Perry shows us, too that necessary ruthlessness....this he balances by describing Monash’s extraordinary care for his men’s health, nutrition, comfort and morale. We are shown in detail some of the malign external influences Monash had to surmount....’[117] Less than enthusiastic was *The Melbourne Age’s* Englishborn reviewer John Lack, who wrote: ‘Roland Perry writes well and engagingly..’ but then went on to attempt to diminish Monash’s impact, avoiding new evidence and instead put up a defence of British Generals. Similarly a further review in *The Australian* of the book’s third edition (by English-born Peter Stanley), attacked Perry’s report that Hitler’s blitzkrieg tactics in WW2 were based on Monash’s tactics in WW1. It seemed that some English academics in Australia with an interest in WW1, were never going to countenance the extraordinary achievements by Monash no matter what the analysis or facts. Lack and Stanley have been quick to defend the British Generals, Haig and Co., in an on-going revisionism to reverse their image as the “Butchers of the Somme.” [118]

Perry was an interviewee in a TV documentary on Monash, *Monash; The Forgotten Anzac*, on the ABC in 2008. This drew a modest to fair number of more than 850,000 viewers, including Australian regional areas. He also appeared in a radio documentary on the same subject on Radio National in 2007. [119]

## MILLER'S LUCK

A few months after the release of the Monash biography, star all-round cricketer Keith Miller died and the outpouring of appreciation for him inspired the author.

Perry wrote in the magazine of the Australian Cricket Society, *Pavilion*, 'The media, everywhere cricket is played and even in places such as Paris via *The International Herald Tribune*, where it is not, celebrated his life rather than simply reporting his passing.' [120] Perry decided to write *Miller's Luck, The Life and Loves of Keith Miller, Australia's greatest all-rounder*. [121] Miller's colourful life as a sportsman, war 'hero,' and playboy lent itself to something more than a straight sports narrative. Drawing on the Miller archive, which the family gave him, the author wrote a comprehensive account of Miller's life, public and private. The Miller family members made one request of the author: that he did not make the book hagiographic. They wanted something deeper and broader than the subject's own thin autobiography, which skirted around or avoided his war record, his sporting achievement and his family and private life. This brief knocked out four other hopeful authors, all of whom wished to write *Boys' Own Annual* hero worship. Perry was willing to take up the challenge, even though he uncovered some uncomfortable facts from the family members themselves. The vast majority of positive reviews in Australia and the UK indicated he achieved his and the Miller family's aims. The book was published in Australia by Random House, and in the UK by Aurum Press, who used the title *Keith Miller*.

Esteemed cricket historian J Neville Turner said: '*Miller's Luck* is up there with the great cricket biographies. The sensitive areas are handled with integrity and discretion.' [122] Ron Reed, doyen of Australian sports writers, wrote a syndicated piece for all News Corporation tabloids including the Melbourne *Herald Sun* wrote: '*Miller's Luck* is an excellent biography. It's an honest portrayal of the imperfect human being behind the heroic legend.' [123] AAP's Jim Morton wrote: '*Keith Miller* is an enlightening biography of the test all-rounder, who was a cool and carefree match-winner on the field and a playboy philanderer off it.' [124] Jim Rosenthal in the UK *Daily Mail* ranked the book as the number one sports book of 2006. [125] The UK Cricket Society named it as the cricket biography of the year and it was short-listed for the Cricket Writers' book of the Year. [126] [127] Archie Mac on Cricket Web's book review wrote: 'This is Roland Perry's eighth book on cricket, and for my money his best...the result is not just a great cricketing book, but also a complete portrait of a fascinating life.' [128] However, another English reviewer, David Frith, writing in *The Cricketer* magazine, was most upset that his hero had been written about in this manner. In a confused attack, he first gave a rambling summary description of Miller's life taken from the book, then proceeded to malign the author: 'Unfortunately, Roland Perry's work here is anything but confidence inspiring. He is an opportunistic author, Don Bradman, Shane Warne and Steve Waugh being among his previous subjects...' This was an odd claim given Perry's other previous subjects. Frith has been a long-time Bradman detractor, and this may be the source for at least part of his antagonism towards the author. Then again, the reviewer here may have been judging the author from his (Frith's) own writing record.

Frith seems to have spent a career avoiding any opportunity for a well-written bestseller. In this transparent review he turned proof-reader, pointing out alleged and

disputable errors, a tried and trusted method for lazy or incompetent reviewers intent on hatchet jobs devoid of any ideas or intelligent critical faculty. [129]

ABC TV's 'Australia Story' interviewed Perry extensively for a two-part series on Miller, which borrowed more than heavily from *Miller's Luck*, without attributing its sources to the book. It was broadcast over two nights, 20 and 27 April 2009, and was a ratings success, attracting 1.3 million and 1.8 million viewers respectively. Apart from the author, the documentary featured Jan Beames (the subject's niece), Miller's four sons, Bill, Peter, Denis and Bob, and his friends Michael Parkinson and Ian Chappell.

## LAST OF THE COLD WAR SPIES

Ever the opportunist, Roland Perry next chose an obscure American spy, Michael Whitney Straight, as the subject of his 19th book, *Last of the Cold War Spies*, published first by the US's Da Capo Press. [130] Straight, the scion of a super-rich Anglo-American family, had been recruited by Anthony Blunt into the infamous Cambridge University Ring. Straight's name had come up often in Perry's research into *The Fifth Man*. He began his investigation again in Russia interviewing former KGB agents in the late 1990s. He was in correspondence with Straight himself over a two year period. The subject of the questions and answers formed the basis for the biography. Straight died early in 2005 and his Estate (read 'family') tried hard to stop the book's publication, hiring top First Amendment lawyers, but failed.

The publication was given a boost by Phillip Knightley, who wrote: 'In the years before Straight died, in frank interviews with him, from government files and from confessions from former intelligence officers, Roland Perry has painstakingly produced an intriguing and illuminating account of Straight's crucial role in the most damaging spy ring of all time.' [131] The publisher placed a review line from this on the front cover of the first hardcover edition, but in such small print that it could hardly be read. The paperback edition was let-down by a gaudy cover. Knightley's world expert review was replaced on the front by a review from the respected but less weighty *Providence Journal*: 'A gripping portrayal of the insidious ways of the KGB.' [132] Supportive reviews continued to flow.

Washington DC reporters, perhaps influenced by their environment and arguments from politicians and bureaucrats, searched for points that would sway them one way or the other. Interestingly both sides of the political spectrum were positive. The more liberal *Washington Post* said: 'Perry argues persuasively that this polished son of American capitalism was indeed the last of the cold war spies.' [133] The conservative *Washington Times* wrote that '*Last of the Cold War Spies* was an engrossing story, and a disturbing account of how the Soviets managed to co-opt a large chunk of the American left.' [134] *The Washington Examiner* called the book 'fascinating and instructive.' [135]

*Publishers Weekly*, always a useful literary barometer in the US, wrote: 'Perry's bare knuckle prose illuminates (Michael) Straight's trajectory from the privileged *New Republic* heir who flirted with communism as a Cambridge student, to the KGB spy who worked under JFK and Nixon....This astonishing chronicle of deceit, survival and ingenuity reveals the depth of penetration into the highest levels of American

Government by Straight and his fellow Soviet apparatchiks and operatives during some of the Cold War's darkest moments.' [136] *Booklist Review* called it 'an engaging tale.' [137] Another respected publication of critique, *Library Journal*, noted: Perry nicely conveys how Straight functioned (in the White House, the US State department, secretly funding several communist fronts, as editor of *The New Republic*, as deputy chair of the National Endowment for the Arts, etc) while secretly working for the Soviet Government...Perry uses various sources and new interviews to show that he (Straight) remained a pro-Soviet spy for his entire adult life...Recommended.' [138]

Such strong literary reviews were augmented by various internet book review sites, which again were favourable. Typical was *Popmatters.com* which said 'Straight's life couldn't have been more interesting if Ian Fleming had penned it...Perry's chapters on Krivitsky [the prominent KGB 1930s defector to the US] read like passages from a lost le Carre novel. His recounting of Anthony Blunt's trip to Germany following the end of World War 11 to retrieve papers that could incriminate the British Royal Family could be straight out of Evelyn Waugh.' [139]

The wide range of positive reviews, and probably the title, caused American film interest to run hot. Perry's then UK agent Andrew Lownie fielded many expressions of interest in bringing the story to the big screen. That was until they realised that the book was layered and as much about the UK as the US. It was also set mainly from 1920 until 1965. The film companies, according to Lownie, had a vision of something more American and contemporary.

#### MORE SPORT: THE ASHES AND SAILING TO THE MOON

Perry turned again to sport and cricket for his 20th book, *The Ashes: A Celebration*.

Random House's shrewd publisher Jane Palfreyman made sure the book hit the market first in 2006 before the deluge that was sure to come ahead of the much anticipated 2006-07 Ashes Series in Australia.[140] The book was mainly an anthology of the author's essays on the game and included much unpublished material about some of his subjects, Bradman, Warne and Waugh. He included his top ten 'impacts' on the Ashes since 1877. The Melbourne *Age's* Steven Carroll wrote: 'Having written voluminously before on cricket and cricketers...his knowledge on the game is formidable...he's an authoritative observer, not shy...and a very entertaining read.' [141] Kit Galer in the Melbourne *Herald Sun* wrote: 'This book serves as an excellent primer for those whose interest in the game was aroused by Australia's defeat last year [2005].' [142]

The author stayed in the sports genre for his next biography, that of West Australian Rolly Tasker the world champion yachtsman and international businessman. Perry, a keen sailor in his youth, had for decades found Tasker an elusive subject until he persuaded Tasker's third wife, Kerry, to consider a story on her husband. Tasker finally agreed to extensive interviews. The result was *Sailing to the Moon*, which had similar themes to Perry's highly successful approach in *Miller's Luck*. Tasker's story, complete with exceptional sporting achievements and business attainments, was mixed with an expose of his controversial and flamboyant private life. [143]

## BRADMAN'S INVINCIBLES

Perry's 22nd book was the fourth in a series of five volumes drawn from his years of interviews with Sir Donald Bradman—*Bradman's Invincibles*. It covered what Perry (and Bradman himself) saw as the sports legend's crowning achievement as captain of Australia—a 34-match tour of the UK in 1948, in which his team did not suffer one defeat. This feat, perhaps the greatest ever by any sporting team, had never been done before and has not been done since in more than 130 years of tours. [144] The book hit the mark. The *Sydney Morning Herald* noted: This is a wonderful insider's view of the (1948 Ashes) series....Perry is a good, unpretentious writer and the story he has to tell is one of courage and drama....It is a great Australian yarn.' [145] Adrian Nesbitt in Sydney's *Sun Herald* wrote: 'Perry paints an excellent background picture of a tour that is remembered by Australians as a triumph over the mother country, often without consideration that England was still bearing the scars of war....Perry creates suspenseful moments, in the dressing-room and on the field....His meticulous approach gives us a great understanding of the subtleties and room for instinct that were Bradman trademarks.' [146] Teri Louise Kelly in *Independent Weekly* said, 'Perry's work, much like Bradman himself, is head and shoulders above the competition....Bradman's Invincibles leads the reader into the dusty backrooms, on to windy training pitches and mid-Test; beautifully written and accompanied by excellent photographs.' [147] David Stanley in *Cricket Boundary Magazine* commented: 'Bradman's Invincibles is required reading for all cricket lovers, particularly those of the younger brigade who may not know much about the players, apart from Bradman, who made up his remarkable team....It is a good read and I recommend it.' [148] *Inside Sport* noted: 'Perry's prose provides worthwhile insight into the mechanics of Bradman's mind.' [149] Perhaps one of the most pleasing reviews from the publisher's point of view came from Neil Harvey, one of the Invincibles' stars. He said: 'I found it a very entertaining read. It brought memories flooding back.' [150]

## THE AUSTRALIAN LIGHT HORSE

After covering the Western Front through the biography of Monash in WW1, Roland Perry turned to the Eastern Front for his 23rd book. It covers the dual part-biographies of Australian General Sir Harry Chauvel and T E Lawrence ('Lawrence of Arabia'), which are the vehicles for his tome: *The Australian Light Horse*, published in late September 2009. The book reached number one in the bestsellers list for the categories of 'Military' and 'History' in November 2009, and was still number one in May 2010. [151] Reviews for *The Australian Light Horse* were consistently strong and positive. Paul Ham in *The Australian* wrote: 'Perry's work must be rated the first great read about the victories of the Australian cavalry in Arabia.' [152]. *The Age* made the book a 'Pick of Week' and noted the author 'emphasises the significance of the Light Horse achievement...it's briskly written, well-researched popular history.' [153] Rod Moran in *The West Australian* called the book 'an example of popular history at its best, with a compelling overview of the Australian Light Horse Regiments' exploits...what they achieved was quite remarkable. *The Australian Light Horse* is a history book that deserves a place in every suburban-home library. It tells the story of an extraordinary generation of Australians who created an enduring legend while changing the course of history.' [154] John Hamilton reviewing in the

Melbourne *Herald Sun* said: ‘Perry conjures up the romantic image of the Light Horse that endures to this day.’ [155]

*The Brisbane Courier Mail* saw the book as ‘a colourful and rattling good yarn.’ [156]. *Good Reading Magazine* similarly found it ‘an enthralling and absorbing tale. He (the author) gives a well-balanced view of Chauvel and the ALF’s achievements and he ties the importance of their deeds to Australia’s emergent nationhood.’ [157]

## THE CHANGI BROWNLOW

Perry’s 24th book was *The Changi Brownlow* [his third publication with Hachette, and Matthew Kelly as publisher]. It appeared in July 2010. This story followed the fortunes and misfortunes of Peter Chitty and other members of the 8th Division (2AIF) 9th Ambulance Unit. Chitty, a non-combatant, won an unofficial Brownlow Medal for the best and fairest player in an Australian Rules Football competition held in the notorious Changi prison in 1942. This amazing POW character was also awarded the British Empire Medal—one of just 24 given out by the British from the vast POW network worldwide. It was given for his selfless work on behalf of the sick and wounded on the Thai-Burma railway, build in brutal haste by the Japanese in WW2. [158] *The Age* review said : ‘...the story of the fall of Singapore is dramatic, as are the descriptions of the Japanese atrocities that followed. Above all, it is a tale of survival.’ Fiona Purdor in the *Brisbane Courier Mail* noted: Author Roland Perry is a gifted story teller. He tells a gripping and well-paced yarn—a rarity in war biographies—and then combines it with a fascinating piece of Australian sporting history. [159]

The *Herald Sun* said: ‘Australian POWs endured inhumane treatment under the Japanese during World War 11, but kept up their spirits through football, humour and their preparedness to make sacrifices for each other.’ Similarly, the *Australian Women’s Weekly* noted: ‘*The Changi Brownlow* is the story of Peter Chitty—a farm hand with unfathomable physical and mental fortitude from Snow River country—a story of courage and the invincibility of the human spirit.’ The *Sydney Daily Telegraph* noting that ‘the hero tag is applied freely in the sporting arena, but few professional sports people would deserve it as richly as Peter Chitty.’ [160]

Reference to Peter Chitty pleased the author, who hoped that the book would make Chitty a more famous character than his brother Bob, who was captain of Carlton’s winning VFL Premiership team of 1945. The way the story has attracted readers, TV and film producers, that hope may come to fruition.

*The Changi Brownlow* was shortlisted for the Australian Booksellers Industry Award for non-fiction (2010).

Perry has written a four-hour TV script based on the book and he expects offers for the rights to the book, and the script. But he has a motto dealing with film adaptation.

‘I’ve had options taken out on eleven of my books and a rush of film approaches and offers in the last two years. So far apart from adaptations on six books for factual documentaries, no dramas have been made [from my books] for the big or small screen. This is one reason I’ve begun again to exercise my script-writing muscle,’ he

told Trevor Chappell (on ABC Radio Overnight), ‘but my cautious observation is that there is “many a slip between celluloid and lip”. You do what you can and but do not expect anything. That’s the film and TV industries.’ [161]

Channel 7’s roving reporter Neil Kearney interviewed Perry and Peter Chitty’s son Roger for a documentary on *The Changi Brownlow* for an Anzac Day Special program. [First Broadcast 25 April 2015]. [162]

## THE FIGHT FOR AUSTRALIA

Book 25, published in 2012, was *Pacific 360* (also published by Hachette and its non-fiction publisher Matthew Kelly), a comprehensive narrative on Australia’s fight against the Japanese invaders from 1941 to 1945 in World War 11. Perry aimed at a big canvass, covering all the war action in the Pacific, particularly in the defence of New Guinea and Papua, and also the reaction of the Government and public all around the country. Prime Minister John Curtin was front and centre in the story. He came to power just before Japan began attacking everywhere in the Pacific and Asia, and died in office a sort time before Japan was defeated.

Major General Jim Barry reviewed the book and said: ‘I can recommend this very readable book...it fills a gap in Australia’s history.’ [163]

The publisher felt that this tome was ‘under-sold’ and brought it out again in 2014 with a different title—*The Fight for Australia*—and more definitive cover in Trade Paperback.

One issue involving this book not performing as expected was the big success of Perry’s 26<sup>th</sup> book, *Bill the Bastard*, published by Allen & Unwin at exactly the same time in October 2012. It is the dramatized non-fiction tale of Australia’s greatest war-horse of WW1. *Bill* was the most powerful of the 200,000 Walers sent to war in the Middle East. He was unrideable until horse-whisperer Michael Shanahan managed to get him battle ready for *The Battle of Romani*.

‘I found I was competing with myself when doing the publicity [for two books at once],’ Perry told the media, ‘which I won’t be doing again.’ [164]

## BILL THE BASTARD

*Bill the Bastard* was chosen as one of 50 top reads in 2013 in the Federal Government’s Get Reading program. It attracted five offers for film rights and they were sold to a leading and experienced Australian producer/director Simon Wincer (*Free Willy*; *Lonesome Dove*; *The Lighthorsemen*; *Phar Lap*; *The phantom: Crocodile Dundee in Los Angeles*; *The Cup*). Perry is a co-producer on the film, and is acting as a script consultant.

*Bill the Bastard* and the author are featured in an excellent documentary produced by Marian Bartsch’s company *Great War Horses*. [First Broadcast ABC TV, 19 April 2015]. It was the only documentary selected in the five finalists (the other four were dramas) for the Cinefest Oz film festival at Busselton, WA in August 2014. [165]

## HORRIE THE WAR DOG

Perry followed up the success of *Bill the Bastard* with another ‘animal’ book (number 27), *Horrie the War Dog*, which was again published by Allen & Unwin, with outstanding sales success. Publisher Sue Hines joked with the author that he might want to try for a third animal tale. But apart from an elephant story involving a former French girlfriend, who runs a wild animal reserve in Africa, he was not motivated to try for another.

*Horrie* was dramatized non-fiction story about a remarkable dog—Horrie—that was picked up as a starving pup in the Libyan desert early in 1941 by Jim Moody a member of the 2/1 Machine Gun Battalion. This act of kindness proved to be one of providence. The dog had exceptional ears and could hear the sound of attacking Luftwaffe planes several minutes before humans. He would bark and warn the Battalion members who would run for trenches. This way Horrie saved the lives of thousands of diggers. The story had a twist, arguably the most amazing hoax in Australian history.

Since the publication in October 2013, five film-makers have approached Perry to buy the film rights to the book.

## THE QUEEN, HER LOVER AND THE MOST NOTORIOUS SPY IN HISTORY

He changed direction once more in 2014 and tackled a new genre—the British Royals. His entry into book 28, the dramatized non-fiction story—*The Queen, Her Lover and the Most Notorious Spy in History*—was via his expertise in British espionage. It created a switch, or widening in readership, for women have been the prime readers of this book. It covered the life of Queen Victoria and carried right through to the current British Monarch. The book reveals, for the first time, that Queen Victoria and the Royals had a long-running secret: Victoria had a love-affair with a Scottish Lord *before* she even met Prince Albert. [166]

Hachette bought the books rights for *The Don* and republished it with an update on Bradman’s impact on Apartheid in South Africa, re-titling it as *Don Bradman* in 2014. The publisher also bought the rights to *The Ashes* for publication in 2015, and republished *Bradman’s Invincibles* in 2014. Four books---*Bill the Bastard; Horrie the War Dog; The Queen, Her Lover and the Most Notorious Spy in History; and Monash, the Outsider Who won a War* have been produced as ABC/Bolinda audio books.

In December 2014, the author engaged literary agent Jo Butler and film agent Anthony Blair at Sydney based The Cameron Cresswell Agency.

Roland Perry is returning to fiction with a thriller to be published in October, 2015.

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The Sir John Monash Foundation promotes scholarship, leadership and Australia's heritage and values. In particular, the Foundation raises funds for and administers the nation's most prestigious postgraduate scholarships—Australia's General Sir John Monash Awards.

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