

6 The AgeReview Books

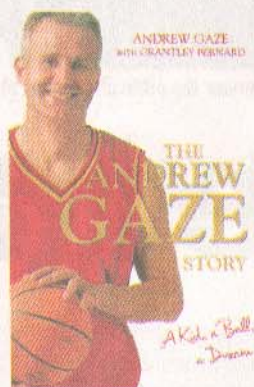
start reading. If I am not engaged by the characters or story after 50-60 pages, I'll pick up the next

me to finally catch up on this one, which I've been meaning to do for a few years now because so many people have recommended it. I tend to listen to my friends' book picks and am rarely disappointed. As a child, I remember reading a lot of biographies: I can recall Franklin and Eleanor Roosevelt, Helen Keller (we share a birthday),

took her little charges to visit her alternate magical universe as she pleased.

Anita Diamant's new book, *The Last Days of Dogtown*, is published by Allen & Unwin at \$29.95.  
Interview by Frances Atkinson

AUTOBIOGRAPHY



**The Andrew Gaze Story**  
Andrew Gaze, with Grantley Bernard  
Hardie Grant Books \$39.95  
Reviewer **Dianne Dempsey**

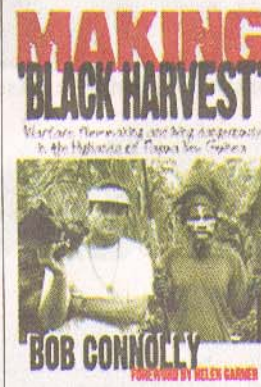
Andrew Gaze's voice is very like that of his public persona, natural, modest and observant. When he appeared recently on the ABC's *Glasshouse* and his hosts were having a riotous time at his expense — all two metres of him — Corinne Grant got it more right than she knew when she commented: "Hey, guys, he may be tall but he bends."

Although we are told that the book is co-written with sports writer Grantley Bernard, we are not told the exact nature of the collaboration. It would have been interesting to know about the process. Did Gaze dictate? Did Bernard act as editor as well as writer? Certainly the voice is amicable and totally without pretension, so that we conclude, that whatever the technique, it was authentic.

In a fabulous basketball career that included 612 games for the Melbourne Tigers, 297 games for Australia, five Olympic Games and participation in the American NBA, there is one aspect to Gaze's life that is not dwelt on. Gaze's paternal grandfather beat and abused his wife and eventually deserted the family. That his grandfather made a living as a magician is something a more fanciful writer might have developed — the grandson inherits his grandfather's magic and uses it to shoot hoops. But Gaze concentrates instead on his father Lindsay, the son of the abusive man, who protected his mother and grew up straight and tall and inspired not only his son but thousands of other young people to play basketball in Australia.

Much of Gaze's history has been included in this book and will be of great interest to sports fans.

MEMOIR



**Making Black Harvest**  
Bob Connolly  
ABC Books \$32.95  
Reviewer **Owen Richardson**

During their time together making documentaries, Australian husband-and-wife team Bob Connolly and Robin Anderson were the acknowledged leaders in their field: films such as *Rats in the Ranks* and *Facing the Music* and their trilogy of films about Papua New Guinea — *First Contact*, *Joe Leahy's Neighbours*, and *Black Harvest* — are all classics and won them acclaim here and abroad.

After Anderson's death from cancer in 2002 Connolly found a journal she kept during the year they spent making *Black Harvest*, which deals with the breakdown of coffee planter Joe Leahy's relations with the men working on his plantation in the New Guinea Highlands, and the war that broke out between two tribal groups. It inspired him to write this remarkable book, humorous, gripping and well-written throughout.

Eventually Connolly had to face the fact that he and Anderson were no longer onlookers in the disaster befalling the subjects of their film, but had become involved, much as they didn't want to be. Either way you're damned, though; when he writes that when confronted with a wounded man his first impulse was to keep filming, rather than to help, he expresses horror at his own callousness.

By the end they had both realised that the worse things got for the people of the Highlands the better things were for their film, and that their presence there may have contributed to the violence that spiralled out of control for much of the '90s.

THE MEDIA



**Media Mayhem**  
John D'Arcy  
Brolga Publishing \$24.95  
Reviewer **Michelle Griffin**

The red top title of this newspaper man's memoir promises scandal but former Herald and Weekly Times chief executive John D'Arcy has written a businesslike account of the seismic shifts in newspapers late last century. *Playing with the Big Boys in Media*, as the subtitle promises, seems to involve a lethal mix of rugby tackles and simultaneous equations. With its thickets of share prices and counter-offers, it works best as a reference for anyone interested in the history of media ownership in this country — a tangled, alarming topic then and now.

D'Arcy gets most of his career in Brisbane out of the way with a fond farewell: "The 30 odd years I spent with the Queensland Press Group . . . were the most enjoyable of all the time I spent in the media." Most of the book is devoted to the 1980s, when media magnates and politicians boiled down the newspaper industry to the sticky concentration we know today. D'Arcy seems to like Kerry Packer, though "he had a reputation as a bully and a media mogul. He was both." We get a charming anecdote about the secretary running in with a lighted cigarette whenever Packer bellowed her name. D'Arcy saves most of his anger for "alooof" Rupert Murdoch and News Limited. "The successful senior management and editorial people at News Limited were all, in my view, servile sycophants."

He is particularly hostile to *The Herald's* last editor, Eric Beecher, so don't go looking for a review in **Crikey.com** any time soon.

CRIME FICTION



**The Flood**  
Ian Rankin  
Orion \$25  
Reviewer **Dianne Dempsey**

Reprinted with an introduction by the author, Ian Rankin's first published novel provides insight into the genesis of his later crime novels in which Edinburgh appears not so much as background but as a mysterious and protean character. Based on the small mining village where he grew up in Fife, *The Flood* starts with a stunning set-piece that Rankin tells us was based on an actual event in the history of his town.

Ten-year-old Mary Miller is pushed by one of the village boys into a chemical run-off from a nearby coal mine. Mary is rescued by her brother and is physically unscathed except for one thing, her hair has turned white.

At first, the villagers align themselves with Mary's family, but a short time after the accident, the culpable boy is burnt to death in a mining accident. Drawing on the folklore and superstition in which this old community is still steeped, Rankin describes the logic by which the villagers then cast Mary as a witch. When Mary has a bastard son and her parents die, her status as a pariah is confirmed. She and her son live together in a tight ball of anxiety as around them the coal mining industry, upon which the village depends, dies. The novel's climax is propelled by a flood in which mother and son face peril.

Rankin says he once sat in on a literature tutorial about *The Flood* and was quietly fascinated as the students described the symbolism, not always obvious to him, that permeates this dark and unnerving novel; a novel that finally suggests we owe our inheritance to time and place as much as to our ancestors.