



# BITS

## From Potter's Field

by Patricia Cornwell; Little, Brown 1995; trade paperback 340 pp; \$22.95.

*From Potter's Field* continues the gruesome 'adventures' of Temple Brooks Gault the psychopath who featured in Cornwell's last two crime novels, *Cruel and Unusual* and *The Body Farm*.

The novel has Cornwell's trademark style. The pace is fast, Dr Scarpetta works too hard and justice is wobbly. Set partly in New York, *From Potter's Field* has more grunge and less of the technical wizardry of Cornwell's earlier work. If anything this enhances the appeal of the book — it's spookier. Dr Scarpetta is VI Warshawski without the clothes obsession.

Don't read this if you're after elegant prose. If all you want is an engrossing scare it's the book for you but you'll have to fork out \$22.95 until it's available in the conventional paperback size [Don't you just hate that?]. ● FW

## The Happy Couple: Law & Literature

Editors: J. Neville Turner and Pamela Williams; The Federation Press 1994; 395 pp; hardback, \$45.00.

The Law has long been a source of artistic inspiration. Its machinations, motifs and madneses have been explored in works from *The Merchant of Venice* to *Beverly Hills 90210*. Franz Kafka was a lawyer — Helen Darville had aspirations. Lionel Hutts from *The Simpsons* (who sued the makers of *The Never Ending Story* for misrepresentative advertising) is a personal favourite.

The compliment is rarely returned. Sure, some judges don't mind throwing in quotations to demonstrate their erudition, however, in general, lawyers like to pretend that their business is reality. Literature is strictly an after hours indulgence.

*The Happy Couple* is a wildly diverse collection of essays that addresses this neglected nexus. Anatomical references in law, the literary qualities of

legislation, the quasi-legal feature of Holocaust literature, the poetics of infanticide, the language of Roman statutes, Dickens, defamation and censorship are just some of the topics that are explored.

The book was compiled by the Australian Law and Literature Association. In this country the Law and Literature movement also sustains a journal and courses at the Universities of Sydney, Wollongong and Monash.

*The Happy Couple* is arranged in four sections. The first part is historical. The second looks at illustrations of law as portrayed and analysed in literature. The third discusses areas in which law intrudes on art forms and the last subjects law to the rigorous scrutiny of literary theory.

A valuable example of cross fertilisation, these essays are weird, enlightening, obscure and fascinating. Open-minded readers will find *The Happy Couple* an excellent source of fresh perspectives. ● ME

## Indigenous or Aboriginal Rights to Property: A Papua New Guinea Perspective

by Peter Donigi; International Books 1994; 144 pp; \$14.95. Available from BooBook Publications Australia (NSW).

In *Indigenous or Aboriginal Rights to Property*, Donigi reviews the rights of indigenous landowners of Papua New Guinea within the current legislative and constitutional framework, in the light of existing international law on the subject of indigenous rights.

The book includes chapters on acquisition of the title at international law, Aboriginal title and the Monticello proposal.

The most interesting facet of *Indigenous or Aboriginal Rights to Property* is the unique perspective of the author. Peter Donigi is both a lawyer and a landowner. He will succeed his father as Chief of the Badeabus clan of the Arapesh linguistic group in the Sepik Province. ● FW

## Public Policy: A Critical Approach

by Mark Considine; MacMillan Education Australia 1994; 282 pp' \$29.95 softcover

'We live in an age in which social and political life are compressed between the treads of a global economy and the hard flat surface of mass culture, between things primarily instrumental and those increasingly narcissistic' (Preface).

Considine teaches political science at Melbourne University. *Public Policy* is about public sector policy making with a particular focus on the processes, relationships and culture required for innovation in the public sector. Considine seeks to write about policy making in a way that does not rely on an instrumental theory of systematic processes, an analysis premised on notions of 'elite dominance' or a theory of rational choice.

He suggests that policy making cannot be fully explained by any of these theories and aims to write an anthology, in effect, of the policy world. This involves examining its political economy, institutions, actors and discourse (jargon, myths and values). Considine aims to make visible the key factors in the process. He concludes that difference and conflict are ever present in policy making. They cannot and should not be smoothed over. For there to be innovation in the public sector, there must be a 'clash and clamour' of alternative perspectives to produce multiple solutions. From there, it is a shorter step to a feasible solution.

While a fairly technical book, *Public Policy* contains interesting ideas about and analysis of the dynamics of the exercise of public power for those interested in understanding the workings of government. ● MS

*BITS* was compiled by Michael Easton, Miranda Stewart and Frith Way. ■