

2012

The Scent of Cordite: Sydney's Gangland Wars of the 1960s

Camilla Nelson

University of Notre Dame Australia, Camilla.nelson@nd.edu.au

Follow this and additional works at: http://researchonline.nd.edu.au/arts_conference



Part of the [Arts and Humanities Commons](#)

This conference paper was originally published as:

Nelson, C. (2012). The Scent of Cordite: Sydney's Gangland Wars of the 1960s. *Crime Cameras Action!*.

This conference paper is posted on ResearchOnline@ND at http://researchonline.nd.edu.au/arts_conference/46. For more information, please contact researchonline@nd.edu.au.



Schedule of Proceedings

| | | |
|------------------------|--|--|
| 9am-9.30am | <i>Opening and welcome</i> | Rob Carr Gordon Bradbery, Lord Mayor of Wollongong Glenn Mitchell John Hatton |
| 9.30am-10.50am | <i>Crime in Wollongong: past, present, future</i> | Anne Mobbs Henry Lee and Glenn Mitchell Rob Carr |
| 10.50am-11.10am | Morning Tea (building 20 foyer) | |
| 11.10am-12pm | <i>Changing Perspective: Police, Policy and Pubs</i> | Neil Webster Ben Gallan |
| | 5 minute changeover | |
| 12.05-12.50pm | <i>Plenary Session</i> | Roseanne Catt, 'TEN YEARS' |
| 12.50pm-1.30pm | Lunch break | Table dining, sandwiches and coffees available in building 17 at 'Out to Lunch' (see map at back of this guide) |
| 1.30pm-2.40pm | <i>TV Crime and 'Underbelly'</i> | Sue Turnbull Felicity Packard Jason Wilson |
| | 5 minute changeover | |
| 2.45pm-3.55pm | <i>Crime and the Big "(Br)other"</i> | Matt Allen Michael Gross Michael Organ |
| 3.55pm-4.10pm | Afternoon Tea | |
| 4.10pm-5.50pm | <i>Crime, media and fiction</i> | Nick Hartgerink Camilla Nelson Angela Williams Josip Matesic |

About the Presenters (in alphabetical order)

Matthew Allen (Faculty of Arts, UOW), 'Becoming Legitimate? Yakuza and white collar crime's consequences in contemporary Japan'

In the new millennium Japan's organised crime syndicates – *bouryokudan* or *yakuza* – have increasingly diversified their interests to meet the current economic and social climate. With laws passed in the 1990s restricting their activities, and with less popular support for many of their more 'traditional' activities – drugs, weapons, gambling, protection, prostitution – they have increased their investments in the more legitimate corporate world. Yakuza shelf companies own shareholdings in multinational companies, majority stocks in construction, real estate, and development corporations, large percentages of banks and other financial institutions including securities companies, and many small to medium sized finance companies. They have also invested heavily in online quasi-legitimate activities, including international pornography productions, online gambling, and targeted fraudulent online investment schemes.

This paper looks briefly at the emergence of the yakuza in the post-World War 2 environment, and then at the implications of their current diversification of activities for the overall economy of Japan.

Roseanne Catt (plenary speaker), author of *TEN YEARS: An incredible true story of corruption, injustice and the triumph of the human spirit*

About TEN YEARS: In 1991, Roseanne Catt was sentenced to twelve years imprisonment, falsely charged with attempting to murder her husband. She was to spend ten long years behind bars before a growing public outcry over the obvious miscarriage of justice saw her released on special bail in 2001. Since then Roseanne's extraordinary case has been the subject of an 18-month judicial inquiry, resulting in a damning report delivered to the Court of Criminal Appeal in late 2004. That report shockingly exposed the dishonesty, manipulation and malice of the police officer who charged her, and the lies and deceptions of her husband as they successfully hoodwinked the justice system. This is the horrifying true story of how an innocent woman came to be the longest-serving female prisoner in New South Wales, and of her fight for justice. It's a story of corruption and brutality – both inside and outside of jail – that will appall and outrage, and it's a story of Roseanne's extraordinary courage and spirit that will uplift and inspire.

Robert A. Carr (Faculty of Arts, UOW), "'Crime, Cameras, Actions!": Media, Misperception and the Misuse of Wollongong CCTV by NSW Police'

In February 2011 the NSW Police Association leaked CCTV footage of Wollongong CBD to the media. A month out from the NSW state election, the public drama that ensued was based on a claim by police that night time violence was 'out of control' in Wollongong. The *Illawarra Mercury* and other media fanned this (mis)perception. The *Mercury* encouraged vigilantism, publishing still frames from the leaked footage on its front page and calling for local residents to 'fight back' and 'reclaim our CBD'. Wollongong was a city virtually under siege and gripped by fear, police politics, media and the city's surveillance network.

This paper explores why and how Wollongong City Council's CCTV system has been used since being installed in 2007. The rationale underpinning use of the CCTV network, as outlined in Wollongong City Council's CCTV Code of Practice, is highlighted by recurring use of the phrase 'perception'. Have these cameras been used lawfully, for political ends, or to serve the interests of the status quo, the powerful, the moneyed, careerists and bureaucrats? While the site of action for this case study is Wollongong, this paper elaborates on how unchecked misuse of surveillance technology has set a precedent in NSW for police officers with political

agendas. The investigation touches on why misperception is such a powerful tool in governance. It unpacks how the media has actively participated in fanning moral panic about Wollongong and the perceptions that nighttime violence is 'out of control'. Particular emphasis is on reporting by the *Illawarra Mercury*.

Rob Carr recently submitted his PhD in History and Politics at UOW (Faculty of Arts). He argues that Wollongong needs a new perception of its past, present and therefore its future. That cannot happen without facing facts, dealing with the truth about crime, moving beyond misperception and curbing misuse of the city's CCTV network.

Ben Gallan (UOW), 'Hassle Free Nights'

Day and night hold deep material and symbolic value in how we interpret cities and urban processes. Through paradigms as diverse as circadian rhythms to the night-time economy it is stated that day is one thing and night another (Gallan & Gibson 2011). My argument, as a geographer, is that concepts of night and the urban remain contradictory, are under theorised, and are often held in tension. However, concepts of the 24 hour city and night time economy continue to gain popularity in both academia and policy circles. Looking at Wollongong's Crown Street Mall this paper explores the tension between competing versions of 'night' in the city.

Ben Gallan is a PhD candidate at Australian Centre for Cultural Environmental Research (AUSCCER) at the University of Wollongong.

Michael Gross (UOW) 'Corruption at Wollongong City Council 2002-2008: A Preliminary Processual Analysis'

Between 2002 and 2008, a number of individuals at Wollongong City Council (WCC) engaged in various forms of individual corruption that ended in a major scandal, an ICAC investigation and the sacking of the Council, the reverberations of which continue today. In his paper, the author provides an explanation of the context and process by which WCC became an 'organization of corrupt individuals' (OCI) (Pinto et al, 2008), differentiating between those who committed the corrupt acts and those who enabled the corruption.

Michael Gross is a lecturer in the School of Management & Marketing at the University of Wollongong. He has recently completed his PhD thesis on the subject of 'organizations of corrupt individuals'. Michael is a former senior officer of Wollongong City Council with experience in building and planning, community services development and economic development from 1959-1994. As Executive Assistant to the Lord Mayor, he was involved in the efforts to revive the economy of the city and region in the 1980s.

Nick Hartgerink, 'Reporting crime in Wollongong'

In the 1990s Wollongong gained an unwanted reputation as the paedophilia and murder capital of New South Wales. A series of grisly murders – including the particularly gruesome death of a former Lord Mayor in 1998 – had the city reeling. The local paper, the *Illawarra Mercury*, had exposed paedophilia in the Catholic Church in an expose that was to make national headlines and lead to the jailing of one priest and the death by apparent suicide of a prominent teaching brother and school headmaster. The *Mercury* had long had a reputation for taking crime reporting very seriously – critics would say sensationally. But how do you sensationalise the death of one of the city's best known citizens, a man who had been embroiled in child

pornography and paedophilia scandals in the years leading up to his death and who was found with his head smashed in and tie pins stuck in his eyes?

Journalist and author NICK HARTGERINK worked at the Mercury from 1977 to 2001 – the last six years as Editor. He will talk about the Mercury's approach to crime reporting in that era, and the community's reaction to the way it reported some of those crimes.

Nick Hartgerink spent 24 years at the Illawarra Mercury, and was Editor of the paper from 1995-2001. He now runs a media consultancy in the region and is the author of five books, including a best-selling biography of Australia's first world 500cc motorcycle world champion Wayne Gardner, published in 1989, and a history of the University of Wollongong, published in 2011.

Henry Lee (UOW) and Glenn Mitchell (Faculty of Arts, UOW), 'The Dictionary of Wollongong Project: The Secret Life of Commander Hook'

The Royal Commission into the NSW Police Service had a surprising consequence – it produced evidence that challenged Wollongong's conventional history. The Commission's Inquiry 6 (Anthony Bevan) and Case Study 3 (Father Peter Comensoli and Brother Michael Evans) revealed another side of Wollongong. This paper has its focus the Bevan inquiry. Anthony (Tony) Bevan was a prominent businessman and Wollongong's Mayor from 1965 to 1968. However, there was also another side to Tony Bevan. He was also Commander Hook, a member of an extensive ring of paedophiles.

The paper is part of a larger project – an alternative digital and online history of Wollongong. Rather than focus on the Bevan case *per se*, the paper uses the case to raise questions about power and authority in Wollongong; Why did Bevan attract police surveillance for more than 20 years, have a private life which was widely known in Wollongong and avoid prosecution and media scrutiny. When looked at in this way, his case raises fundamental questions about the use of power in Wollongong – who had power; how was it used and why; and how those who had power and influence obtained, deployed and maintained it. The paper concludes by arguing for an online history of Wollongong where details of every aspect of Wollongong's past can be explored.

Josip Matesic (Faculty of Arts, UOW), 'Corruption and *The Illawarra Mercury* in the 1990s: Two Cases of Child Sex Crimes, Trial by Media and Silence'

Since its earliest days, corruption has existed in Wollongong. There have been times when the local media has shown complacency towards corruption. A curious example of this is seen in *The Illawarra Mercury* in the 1990s selectively publishing cases of child sex crimes by prominent local members. *The Illawarra Mercury* committed a public trial by media of Brother Michael Evans in 1994, listing the sordid details given by some teenage boys in their affidavits. *The Illawarra Mercury* also documented the flight of Brother Evans from Wollongong, and his subsequent suicide in Queensland shortly thereafter. *The Illawarra Mercury* however was largely quiet when it came to child sex crimes allegedly committed by Alderman Brian Tobin, along with his suicide in 1996. In fact, the little that *The Illawarra Mercury* did publish on Alderman Tobin and child sex crimes only occurred six months after he committed suicide. The contrast between these two cases could not be any greater. This event however raises a number of significant questions that are not simply isolated to a city like Wollongong. Why did the (local) media fail to systematically pursue some abusers of power and not others? Is there such a thing as too much coverage of an issue? Is the media a sufficient watchdog on corruption and criminality? Can the media always be trusted to report in the public's interest? Is there such a thing as too much knowledge being a bad thing? These are just some questions that are raised in this case of corruption in the city of Wollongong.

Anne Mobbs, 'Care and Punishment in Convict Illawarra 1818 – 1826'

This paper looks at one early case in the Illawarra; of the relationship between, crime, corruption and the judiciary. The case examines the alleged murder of Aboriginals by a group of vigilante members, some of whom were employed by a magistrate on his Illawarra property, and describes each person associated with the murder. The vigilante group is initially exonerated of the crime, through the activities of a judicial colleague. The case was held in Sydney as it was a serious crime, the Illawarra-Camden bench was non-existent and the nearest local bench was located at Appin. The ruling of the court was overturned when New South Wales Governor Lachlan Macquarie intervened, displeased at the outcome of the trial. The only conviction that remained is that of a convict. Put simply the free settlers continued to remain free.

Anne suggests that a genealogy of crime has existed in the Illawarra since its frontier beginnings. She leaves open, to debate as to whether colonial crime entrenched the values and attitudes, which have emerged in recent commissions of inquiry relating to crime and corruption in the Illawarra.

Anne Mobbs, P.H.D. candidate has been involved in local and family history for thirty years. Anne has been researching the early colonial period of the Illawarra district for the past four-five years. Her interest, as an expat, of the district was raised when discovering that little had been published on the old 1858 Wollongong Court House and that two family members were identified in local sources. Her Honours degree identified a gap in history, which is a lesser known theme connected to the Illawarra district; that it was a penal settlement.

Camilla Nelson, 'The Scent of Cordite: Sydney's Gangland Wars of the 1960s'

On Sunday June 26, 1967, the well-known Sydney baccarat operator Richard Reilly stepped out of his mistress's flat in Manning Road, Double Bay. He adjusted his fedora, loosened his silk tie, and flicked a wrinkle from his bespoke tailored suit. He stood there, silhouetted in the streetlight, as a spray let off from a sawn-off shotgun cracked the night air, cutting a swathe through his chest and shoulder, the stray pellets shattering into the brickwork behind. Reilly was the latest victim in a gangland war that had engulfed the Sydney underworld for almost four years. But he was more than just another prosperous racketeer. He was the most feared gambling boss in the city with more than a dozen murders committed at his instigation. Reilly had proven ties to the Labour Party that had ruled NSW for decades. He had worked as a 'chucker-outer' for Eddie Ward, at political rallies around the inner city, and had demonstrable ties to Jack Mannix, a former State Minister for Justice, who had taken an interest in Reilly's case since his release from jail for wartime racketeering. In 1965, the NSW government changed hands in a cliffhanger election that brought one of the State's most notorious premiers to power, Robin Askin — and it seemed that the changeover in Macquarie Street was having peculiar reverberations in the underworld that would remain a puzzle several Royal Commissions and half a century later.

Camilla Nelson lectures in Literature and Communications at the University of Notre Dame Australia. She is the author of two novels, including Crooked, a book about the death of Richard Reilly, which was shortlisted for the Ned Kelly Awards in 2009. Her academic work has been published in Australia and internationally.

Michael Organ (UOW), 'Fear and loathing in the north: Sandon Point's St Valentine's Day stand'

On St Valentine's Day, 2002, a phalanx of the heavily armed New South Wales police tactical response unit

marched down Point Street, Bulli, over the railway bridge and towards a group of some 2-300 local residents, protesting at the Stocklands residential development site. On that day the protestors comprised young children, kids wagging school, workers, the elderly - in fact, a representative and broad section of the local community. As the police engaged with the crowd blockading the entrance to the site, one by one they were taken away, arrested, and transported to the nearby Bulli Police Station and Court House. The scene, though somewhat noisy, was one of non-violence. Passions were high amongst the protestors, fighting to protect and preserve the heritage of the site - Indigenous, non-indigenous and environmental. The police were there to do a job, but it was on behalf of the developers. The lord mayor and councillors stood by and watched as the local community made a stand. For many, this was their first encounter with the law. Their crime?

Felicity Packard (University of Canberra), 'Is that what really happened? – The true crimes of writing *Underbelly*'

Aristotle tells us that that plot is the "first principle" and that narratives must be whole with a beginning, middle and end. The three-act structure is the informing agent of mainstream television drama, none more so than police/crime drama. Screenwriting guru Robert MacKee asserts that screen crime narratives operate from rigid conventions involving a detective character, clues, the ultimate solving of the crime and punishment of the criminal. This inflexibility of structure is born out in the worldwide success of the crime drama, *CSI*, a show with minimal character development and formulaic repetition of structural elements. Yet the *Underbelly* franchise, with its open ended episodes, uneven spread of series story arcs versus individual character arcs, attention to criminals' private lives, and many unanswered - and unanswerable - plot questions, does not "fit" neatly into the generic conventions of tv crime drama nor the formal three-act design. For the writers of *Underbelly*, the challenge of effectively dramatising their chaotic source material meant by and large setting aside the conventions that inform the creation of the generic crime tv screenplay. Yet at the same time, *Underbelly* scripts needed to meet the expectations of a commercial, free-to-air drama audience.

This paper is a reflection on my own practice and process as both a teacher of screenwriting and one of the writers of all four series of *Underbelly*. It offers a discussion of the informing elements of selected episodes, seeking to discover how a show so structurally atypical should have also been so appealing to an audience accustomed to more conventional narrative forms. It examines my process of, to paraphrase Yoda, "unlearning what I had learned."

Sue Turnbull (Faculty of Arts, UOW), "'You're Nicked": The television police procedural and the drama of crime'

From documentary roots (*Fabian of the Yard* BBC 1954-56) to postmodern self-referentiality (*Ashes to Ashes* BBC One 2008-10), the police procedural has played a vital role in the ways in which crime, criminality and policing has been imagined. The British progress of this particular sub-genre of the television crime drama therefore offers some illuminating insights into how crime has been represented and debated in the media. Of particular significance in this story are the television police series of the seventies which addressed the issue of police corruption including *The Sweeney* (ITV 1975-78) and *Law and Order* (BBC 1978). These shows will be discussed in their particular social and historical context as a case study which points to the particular dilemma of the television crime drama as it walks the tightrope between fiction and 'the real': a dilemma which was not lost on Channel 9 when the first series of *Underbelly* was banned in Victoria because of an impending murder investigation.

Dr Sue Turnbull is Professor of Communication and Media Studies at the University of Wollongong. She has published broadly in the fields of media education, audience studies and television, with particular attention to both crime and comedy. She is currently working on a study of the television crime genre for Edinburgh

University Press and her most recent publication, co-edited with Dr Rhonda Wilcox, is entitled, *Investigating Veronica Mars: Essays on the Teen Detective Series* (McFarland 2011). Sue is crime fiction reviewer for the *Sydney Morning Herald* and has been a convenor of Sisters in Crime Australia since 1992.

Angela J. Williams (Faculty of Creative Arts, UOW), 'Is home detention really the sexy new prison?: A critical reading from inside/outside the program'

Since being introduced in NSW in 1997 home detention has been touted as the answer to rising prison populations, offender recidivism and imprisonment costs. Recent celebrity cases, such as Derryn Hinch, have brought media and public attention to home detention and there are plans afoot to expand the program throughout regional and rural NSW. It is feasible that home detention can function as promised in the policy documents and audits; as a way of removing less 'serious' or 'dangerous' criminals from the system and reducing the risks of reoffending by interfering with the 'educational' aspects of prison. However, the reality is that home detention is a system which gives almost unfettered control of the offender's life over into the hands of a small group of individuals. The checks and balances which exist in full-time incarceration are removed, any sense of transparency in administration or accountability by officers are absent (at least from where the prisoner sits). Media representations of home detention are limited to presenting the sexy, exciting or publically palatable aspects of the program. This paper will examine media impressions of home detention and official understandings gleaned from policy and audit documents and contrast these with the author's lived experience serving a ten-month sentence on the program during 2010.

Angela J. Williams is a PhD candidate at the University of Wollongong who is writing a thesis about surveillance technologies and a memoir about power. She was a teenage delinquent and high-school drop-out who now plans on making it big in academia after realising that crime and the big house are much less glamorous than the movies make them out to be.

Jason Wilson (University of Canberra), 'Badlands: How regional Australia is depicted in true crime texts'

Australian true crime texts tend to figure the urban criminal underworld as a city within a city, to be disavowed or embraced by the audience as an exotic underbelly which is essentially separate from ordinary urban life. But in depictions of non-metropolitan Australia, crime becomes a distorting lens through which regional communities in their entirety are viewed, and places tend to take on the characteristics of the crimes which have been committed in them. This paper identifies three ways in which regional Australian communities are transformed by true crime texts: they become gothic, ethnic or lawless. The paper considers the depiction of communities like Hobart, Snowtown, Griffith, Rockhampton, Darwin, Cairns and Wollongong, and considers texts including *Born or Bred*, *Things a Killer would know*, *The Killer Within*, *The Straits* and *Underbelly*.