



Law in Context

by **Stephen Bottomley and Stephen Parker**; *The Federation Press* 1997; 2nd edn; 391 pp; \$49.95.

'But y'know, wh' the funniest thing about Europe is? It's the little differences'

Vincent Vega, Pulp Fiction

There are two things to look for in a new edition of an old work. The first is whether it contains any significant changes in response to previous criticisms. The second, and to my mind much more fascinating, is whether it reveals any 'little differences'. The latest edition of *Law in Context* is rich in this second respect — it is not so clear whether it manages to satisfy the first.

The first edition of *Law in Context* was, in many ways, a magisterial book. For me, it presented a powerful new way of looking at and teaching jurisprudence. The new edition does take this a further step. Changes have been made to many of the chapters at a level of detail that would impress even Vincent Vega: index entries have been changed to reflect Australian spellings (from 'maximization' to 'maximisation' for example); in the text, 'suspected criminal' has become 'wanted person'; the belief of 'many' scholars is now the belief of 'some' (although the sources referred to remain the same); 'using... lawyers in some way' now reads 'using... the services of lawyers...'; and my

favourite, 'identikit' pictures are now 'photofit' (where did this change come from, one might ask?)

The larger changes, notably a completely reworked thematic structure, and substantial changes to the chapters on Law and Power and Access to Justice/Law-Making make the book more readable. The addition of discussion questions at the end of each chapter is also welcomed. However, more work could be done. I still find that some sections bear an uncanny resemblance to other works, which should be properly attributed. For example, large parts of the Marxism section seem to come straight from Hugh Collins' *Marxism and Law* but only passing reference is made to it. Other sections suffer from arguably spurious scholarship — the chapter on Law and Race is particularly troublesome in some of its basic assumptions. But this is still mostly quibbling.

Overall, the second edition of *Law in Context* is an even better read than the first edition, which is saying quite a lot, given the excellent standards it set back in 1991. Everyone with even a passing interest in law should ensure it is given prominent bookshelf space. ● RH

Unnatural Exposure

by **Patricia Cornwell**; *Little, Brown (Penguin)* 1997; 338 pp; \$22.95; softcover.

Benton Wesley is divorced, Lucy is a fully fledged FBI agent, Marino is still Marino but Dr Kay Scarpetta is haunted by the ghost of Mark and afraid of a possible future with Benton.

The portrayal of the intercourse between the various personalities is the best part of the Scarpetta saga yet it is done in a subtle, unobtrusive way. Mercifully, Cornwell avoids the turgid prose and endless pages of introspection that seem to be the stuff of too many current crime writers.

Unnatural Exposure revolves around scary contagious diseases of the type that require complete patient isolation and researchers in orange plastic bubble suits. While this theme has been dealt with quite a lot recently — for example in the book *The Hot Zone*, the film *Outbreak* and the TV show *The Burning Zone* — Cornwell manages to keep the plot compelling through a terrorist twist. *Unnatural Exposure* is an excellent read because it all seems so frighteningly possible.

There are a few twists and turns, a semi-surprise epilogue and a bit about an objectionable state police officer named Ring who apparently gets his comeuppance from Scarpetta (although

we want to know more about this — perhaps this plotline has been deliberately left open by Cornwell).

As ever, Cornwell provides a humane perspective on violent death and balances forensic detail with plausible character development. *Unnatural Exposure* tells you all you ever wanted to know about autopsy saws. Readers also get the bonus of a detailed account of how the US federal bureaucracy responds to an infectious disease emergency during a time of budget cuts.

Perhaps because of the constant gruesome descriptions of diseased and decaying flesh there isn't as much time spent on descriptions of the delicious Italian meals cooked by Scarpetta in this novel. Although there is an alarming number of references to stew which, let's face it, isn't nice even when your mother calls it casserole.

Unnatural Exposure has a recommended retail price of \$22.95 which is a little steep but we're pretty sure die-hard Cornwell fans won't be able to wait for the cheaper version. And if you feel the need to rationalise the purchase: 6.7 cents a page isn't too bad. ● W1 & W2

Silent Witness

by **Richard North Patterson**; *Hutchinson*, 1996; 494 pp; \$19.95; softcover.

In his new novel *Silent Witness*, Richard North Patterson delivers a pacey thriller replete with courtroom drama, young love and some insights into the tricky nuances of friendship and loyalty. I was new to Patterson, hailed on the novel's cover 'as destined for celebrity status alongside Scott Turow and John Grisham'. I've got to say, this was a great read — on several occasions I couldn't read fast enough. While hardly a Great American Novel, *Silent Witness* proved an excellent antidote to Howard-inspired cosmic depression.

Successful criminal lawyer Tony Lord is recalled to his small home town of Lake City to defend his once best, now estranged, friend Sam Robb. Sam has become the primary suspect in the murder of a teenage girl who was also one of his students. Tony must face

some nasty demons to take on this job, not least the fact that in 1967 he was himself a suspect in the brutal murder of his first love. Although wrongly accused, Tony did it tough and his friendship with Sam, among other things, was fundamentally altered by the experience. I guess you don't need help seeing the parallels here.

Silent Witness has it all: full bodied and complex (enough) characters, love, sex, murder and, best of all, an ending that brings resolution on a number of

levels. Although less gory and medically technical than Patricia Cornwell — lets face it, some of us just can't get enough of that kind of stuff! — this book is well worth a look. It even attempts some consideration of the vexed moral issues facing criminal lawyers as they fight for the acquittal of their sometimes highly dodgy clients. One hint — don't spend \$19.95 on the glossy trade paperback, wait until it comes out in its smaller incarnation at \$14.95 or, better yet, borrow it from a friend. ● CD

in Crown's innocence) at odds with Louisiana powerbroker Buford La Rose. La Rose who is descended from a wealthy and powerful Louisiana family is a candidate for governor and is author of a book on Aaron Crown and has a particular interest in seeing him remain in jail.

Add to this a battle between the Mafia and Afro-American interests for predominance in the New Orleans construction industry, drug and wet-back (illegal immigrant) smuggling across the Mexican border and the fact that Robicheaux and Karyn La Rose share a sexual history and you have a potent mix.

Bourke weaves the various threads together with consummate skill. His descriptions of Louisiana are extremely evocative. The sights, sounds and smells of the bayous and backstreets are conjured up before the reader. In the same way the reader can almost feel the sexual tension that Burke creates between Robicheaux and Karyn La Rose. The delineation of this tension and its ripple-like effect on other relationships in the novel resonates with truthfulness.

A key element to *Cadillac Jukebox* is the way in which Burke peels back the layers of each character in order to map the way past events influence their present behaviour. In the same way that Ellroy in his last novel *American Tabloid* exposes the shaky foundations of the 'Camelot' myth and America's love affair with the Kennedys, Burke exposes the dark past of Louisiana's best and brightest.

In terms of atmosphere, plot and character Burke has created a rich and satisfying novel. The humanity of its protagonist and the carefully drawn characterisation combine with a sharp and graphic plot to ensure that the reader's attention never lapses. ● AM

Requiem for a Glass Heart

by David Lindsey; Warner Books 1997; 614 pp; \$14.95; softcover.

What do spies do now that the Cold War is officially over? According to Lindsey, they collaborate to target international organised crime. Which, judging from the plot of *Requiem for a Glass Heart*, is about as effective as that red string in a band-aid.

This qualifies as a 'fat book' on all fronts: it is over 500 pages long, has a

shiny, tactile cover and is not taxing on the brain. It is, however, fairly entertaining and the plot twists are not always predictable. What's more, there's a lesbian sub-theme to keep the reader tantalised although it is based on some dodgy assumptions — the old 'first same-sex bonk under duress that is spiritually uplifting' chestnut. ● FW

Concise Legal Research

by Robert Watt; The Federation Press 1997; 3rd edn; 264 pp; \$29.95.

This little gem has been updated twice since it was first published in 1993. It is testament to the author's understanding that the field of legal research is changing so rapidly that the only right and proper thing to do is to keep changing with it.

The format remains unchanged from previous editions. The main difference is the complete integration of electronic researching tools with traditional methods. I especially liked the way elec-

tronic services are broken down by type: for example, in the 'Reports of the High Court, Territories and Federal Jurisdiction' section, separate information is provided for CD-ROM, On-Line and Internet formats. There is also an appendix listing internet addresses for legal research — this will be helpful for beginners but may be a little scant for seasoned surfers. All in all it means an even better book than before. ● RH

Cadillac Jukebox

James Lee Burke; Orion Books Ltd 1996; 297 pp; \$19.95

James Lee Burke could well be described as the James Ellroy of the American south. While Ellroy has become famous for his gritty descriptions of urban Los Angeles, Burke could claim a similar fame for his descriptions of Louisiana. *Cadillac Jukebox* is Burke's thirteenth novel and features Detective Dave Robicheaux. Images of smouldering southern sensuality and the swamps and forests of Louisiana mingle with depictions of the seedy underbelly of life in New Orleans and Baton Rouge.

Cadillac Jukebox revolves around four main characters, Aaron Crown, Buford La Rose, Robicheaux and Karyn La Rose. Crown is a dirt poor timberman from northern Louisiana and former klansman who years earlier had pleaded guilty to the murder of a prominent Louisiana black activist. The novel opens with a belated proclamation by Crown of his innocence in relation to the murder. This proclamation and the attempt by a Hollywood film maker to discover the truth immediately sets Robicheaux (who believes

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