

2001

EDITORIAL

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Recommended Citation

Collett, Anne and Rutherford, Anna, EDITORIAL, *Kunapipi*, 23(1), 2001.

Available at: <https://ro.uow.edu.au/kunapipi/vol23/iss1/6>

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Abstract

'The Don is dead. At 92, the man who set standards that will never be attained and records that will never be broken, died peacefully at his Adelaide home. Sir Donald Bradman, the greatest cricketer to ever play, was and always will be, Australia's sporting inspiration. He was the Invincible.' This is the epitaph (I guess no one is Invincible) given Sir Donald Bradman on the front page of a 'Tribute Edition' of The Australian (Tuesday, Feb 27, 2001). I

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‘The Don is dead. At 92, the man who set standards that will never be attained and records that will never be broken, died peacefully at his Adelaide home. Sir Donald Bradman, the greatest cricketer to ever play, was and always will be, Australia’s sporting inspiration. He was the Invincible.’ This is the epitaph (I guess no one is Invincible) given Sir Donald Bradman on the front page of a ‘Tribute Edition’ of *The Australian* (Tuesday, Feb 27, 2001). It was to be repeated with minor variation across the newspapers, radio and t.v. channels of Australia for some weeks after. I picked up a copy of this paper on my way to Anna Rutherford’s funeral service. Anna, being something of a sports enthusiast and a talented sportswoman in her own right in her younger days, might well have been gratified to know that she was in such good company. I, however, was not so impressed — where, now, would the literary and scholarly achievements of a life-time sit in relation to the long shadow cast by the Bradman legend? Where do the accomplishments of intellectual culture sit in relation to the accomplishments of physical culture in Australia? Sport and sporting achievement dominate Australian culture. It is a masculinist and matey locker-room and pub culture (well, at least that’s the stereotype). It came then as something of a surprise to me to discover the degree to which Bradman did not fit ‘the mould’. He did not drink. He was said to be something of a loner — an intensely private man who went his own way and held to his personal convictions with courage and tenacity. Well, I reflected, of course he did. Although Bradman became the symbol of everyman — ‘the country boy who made good’ — he necessarily had the quality of champions, that being the capacity to combine knowledge and skill with Imagination. He was a man ahead of the game. To quote the *Australian* again, this time, Richie Benaud (cricket commentator and former Australian captain): ‘He was always a couple of overs ahead of the play’ (4). In this Bradman had something in common with every talented man or woman who not only leads their field, but determines the field; and in this the Don and Anna had much in common. This does not put my question of the unequal relationship between sport and literature in Australia in the dustbin (or the trash can as it has come to be known in an increasingly Americanised lingo); but it does say something about Anna’s ability not only to read the game but to make the game. Anna had conceived the idea of an issue of *Kunapipi* devoted to Sport some time ago. It has only now, regrettably, come to fruition; but this issue represents a fascinating meld of intellectual and physical culture, that examines subjects as diverse as Rwandan high-jumping, the queer in the canoe, Australian sporting legend ‘Snowy’ Baker, sex on the squash court, Ulysses’ part in the Boer War, and the high of kite-flying to name just a few. If imagination be the game of life, play on.

Anne Collett (& Anna)