

A map to Paradise Road: a guide for historians.

[Print](#)

Author: Nelson, Hank
Geographic Code: 8AUST
Date: Mar 1, 1999
Words: 10805
Publication: *Journal of the Australian War Memorial*
ISSN: 1327-0141

1. In the early afternoon of Saturday 14 February the British ship Vyner Brooke, carrying some of the last civilians to escape from Singapore, was steaming just off south-east Sumatra. Among the passengers and obvious in their uniforms of grey dresses, white cuffs and Red Cross armbands were 65 women of the Australian Army Nursing Service. Having come straight from duty in crowded temporary hospitals in Singapore the nurses wore a variety of headgear-white caps and red capes, tin hats, and felt hats with scarlet, brown and grey bands (brims, as matrons instructed, neither curled nor set at a provocative angle). Although the Vyner Brooke carried only about 300 passengers, there were no bunks and no meals for most, and the nurses had slept on the deck. At around 2 pm the ship's siren sounded a warning, passengers crowded below deck, and six Japanese aircraft attacked with bombs and machine gun fire. On the first pass the bombs missed, the Vyner Brooke changed course sharply, and its one gun fired token resistance. The Japanese planes returned, the Vyner Brooke convulsed under the tearing crash of bombs, and its engines stopped.

2. Following a planned reaction to just such a disaster, the nurses, carrying emergency dressings and morphine, went to different points on the shattered and rapidly-sinking ship to give what help they could to the wounded. As the nurses had been told, they were not to abandon ship until all the civilians were off. They were keen to help the wounded and hesitant scramble into damaged life boats, slide down ropes, or simply jump. "Believe me", Sister Betty Jeffery wrote, "we didn't waste time getting them overboard!" [1] One of the youngest of the nurses, Sister Vivian Bullwinkel, jumped over the side with a group of other nurses and swam to a partly submerged lifeboat [2]. Twelve nurses (three of them wounded), two civilian women, a civilian man and a ship's officer climbed into or clung to the side of the lifeboat. Although they were in sight of land it took them eight hours, and night had fallen before they landed on Banka Island. Attracted by a fire about two miles away they walked along the coast and found survivors who had landed earlier. Others joined them during the night. Betty Jeffery and her group paddled desperately to reach the fire on the beach, but twice the currents swept them away, and they landed hours later further down the coast. The next morning three groups went in different directions to find food, clothing, news, a way of escape, even rescue. Vivian Bullwinkel was with a party of women and a ship's officer who went inland. After walking about four miles they came to a village where the women offered them a drink, but the men would not let the women give them any food or clothing to take back to the beach. The village men said that the Japanese were in control of the island: the villagers were now free of any obligation to the whites and they feared retribution if they gave them any help. The other groups came back and reported an equal lack of success.

3. In the night the survivors on the beach heard and saw the shelling of a ship at sea, and two hours later a lifeboat holding about twenty English soldiers joined them around the fire. By

morning on Monday 16 February there were nearly 100 people, including children and wounded, on the beach. An officer from the Vyner Brooke explained that as they had no food, no help for the injured and no chance of escape, they should give themselves up to the Japanese. He agreed to walk to Muntok, a town on the north-west of the island, and contact the Japanese. While he was away Matron Irene Drummond, the most senior of the Australian nurses, suggested that the civilian women and children should start off walking towards Muntok. At mid-morning the ship's officer returned with about twenty Japanese soldiers. Having separated the men from the women prisoners, the Japanese divided the men into two groups, and marched them along the beach and behind a headland. The nurses heard a quick succession of shots before the Japanese soldiers came back, sat down in front of the women and cleaned their bayonets and rifles. A Japanese officer, smaller and more "nattily" dressed than his men, told the women to walk into the water. A couple of soldiers shoved those who were slow to respond. Twenty-two nurses and one civilian woman walked into the waves, leaving ten or twelve stretcher cases on the beach. Vivian Bullwinkel said that when the women were up to their waists in water the Japanese

started firing up and down the line with a machine gun.... They just swept up and down the line and the girls fell one after the other. I was towards the end of the line and a bullet got me in the left loin and went straight through and came out towards the front. The force of it knocked me over into the water and there I lay. I did not lose consciousness.... The waves brought me back on to the edge of the water. I lay there 10 minutes and everything seemed quiet. I sat up and looked around and there was no sign of anybody. Then I got up and went up in the jungle and lay down and either slept or was unconscious for a couple of days [3].

4. By Wednesday Bullwinkel had recovered enough to walk to a fresh water spring close to the beach. She was stopped by a question: "Where have you been, nurse?" Startled and mystified, she turned to find another survivor. Private Kingsley, an English soldier, had been one of the stretcher patients left on the beach. The Japanese had bayoneted the wounded after they had shot the nurses, and Kingsley who was already suffering from shrapnel wounds had been struck in the middle of the chest, but the blade had missed vital organs. The rest of the wounded still lay on the stretchers where they had been killed.

5. Bullwinkel dressed Kingsley's wounds as well as she could and helped him into the edge of the jungle. Over the next days she made several trips to the village where the women gave her food, and she and Kingsley gradually recovered from their wounds. After about twelve days, when they thought they were strong enough to attempt the trip, they decided to try to walk to Muntok. On the way they were picked up by a Japanese officer in a car and driven to naval headquarters, where they were questioned and then sent to the coolie-lines already crowded with prisoners and refugees. The civilian women, whom Matron Drummond had told to start walking north, had arrived safely in Muntok. And in the coolie lines at Muntok on 28 February Bullwinkel met 31 other nurses who had landed at different points on Banka Island. From the 65 nurses on the Vyner Brooke twelve were presumed drowned, 21 had been shot, and 32 had been taken prisoner. Over 80 people had been killed on the beach; a quarter of them women [4].

6. Bullwinkel was intensely aware that, if the Japanese found out that she was a witness to and survivor of the massacre on the beach, they would kill her. She decided not to tell anyone of her escape, not even her fellow nurses. But in the emotion of reunion and under their persistent questioning about what had happened to the other nurses last seen clinging to the lifeboat, Bullwinkel told her terrible story. Then all had to give up hope that at any moment they might see Sisters Tait, Keats, Kerr, Harris, Halligan and the others straggling into their makeshift quarters in Muntok. And all agreed that Bullwinkel's escape would have to be secret among the nurses: it was not to be talked about, even when they thought they were alone [5]. Bullwinkel, the lone survivor and the one link with so many dead colleagues, was both precious and dangerous to the other nurses.

7. But knowledge of the massacre itself was not confined just to the nurses, and they could not prevent news of it spreading widely. Kingsley knew what had happened, and two other men had survived the massacre [6]. They were in the second group marched around the headland, had made a dash for the sea, evaded bullets and swam out to sea. They too turned up in the coolie-lines at Muntok. The villagers knew about the killings, and so of course did the Japanese. Not long after the shooting one of them had talked to Albert Coates, a senior Australian surgeon with the 8th Division. Coates had been working with the nurses in the last chaotic days in Singapore, and after his capture in Sumatra he talked to a Japanese officer who alluded to "certain incidents" and tried to excuse the killings that had followed. Coates presumed he was talking about the nurses [7]. On 20 July 1942 in Changi POW camp, Singapore, Captain Adrian Curlewis noted that a group of prisoners had arrived from Sumatra, and the next day he collected news from them. He wrote in his diary: "65 nurses sailed. 33 were shot or drowned" [8]. Amid the many wild rumours that spread through the prison camps those figures were startling in their accuracy. A day later Gunner Frank Christie on a work squad out of Changi wrote in his diary: "50 of our nurses on ship, sunk, 21 driven back into water & shot, 30 either brothel or solitary confinement" [9]. News of the nurses had already crossed from officers to men and from unit to unit. Christie subsequently worked on the Burma-Thailand railway before he was shipped to Japan. The story of the nurses spread, adding to the anger and anguish in nearly all the camps where the 22,000 Australian POWs were held.

8. Early in 1943 the Japanese allowed the nurses to write brief messages, and these were broadcast on radio. Letter cards written by the nurses also arrived at the homes of relatives late in 1943. Along with requests for vegetable seeds and vitamin tablets, a nurse from Adelaide asked for a copy of Shakespeare; her letter was published in the Advertiser, and her mother was inundated with copies of Shakespeare, but none reached Sumatra [10]. So during 1943 it became known internationally that 32 Australian nurses were being held in a civilian internment camp in Sumatra, and the names of some of them had been released [11]. But detailed knowledge of what had happened to the nurses did not reach the Australian public until a month after the war had ended [12]. On 16 September 1945 the nurses were flown from Sumatra to Singapore. By then another eight had died of starvation and disease, and only 24 remained to be photographed, recorded and quoted. The journalists, Betty Jeffrey said, "had a glorious time by the look of their gear which they kept falling over" [13]. The headlines in the most conservative of the newspapers were: "Nurses Horrible Experiences", "Eye-Witness Accounts of the Massacre", "Sister was Left for Dead on the Beach" [14]. A month later the nurses reached Australia, and there were more photographs and more interviews. The hunt for the Japanese from O Battalion of the 229th Regiment thought responsible for the shootings on the beach continued, and Sister Bullwinkel was among those who gave evidence at the Tokyo war crimes trials in December 1946. The Australian Women's Weekly expressed the general mood of the Australian public:

If ever, anywhere in the world, a plea for

mercy or leniency for the Japanese race is heard, there will rise before Australian eyes the accusing picture of 22 gallant women walking, with heads held high, into the sea as the Japanese machine-guns opened their murderous fire [15].

The Weekly italicised its judgement for emphasis. But the Australians were unable to bring any Japanese to trial for the shooting of the nurses. One lieutenant from the 229th Regiment was traced to Manchuria, and perhaps he was the "nattily" dressed officer in tailored uniform seen by Bullwinkel, but he slashed an artery in his neck and died in Sangumo prison in Japan before he could be tried [16].

9. Australian official and private anxiety about the nurses had been intense throughout the war. In spite of the many revelations of other and greater horrors at the end of the war, it was probably the shooting of the nurses and the miraculous escape of Sister Bullwinkel that became the best known of all the POW stories of death and defiance. Her grey, faded dress, with its two small bullet holes near the hip, went into the Australian War Memorial. It was what happened to the nurses on the beach on Banka that most fuelled the immediate post-war anger of Australians against the Japanese. And those responsible for the deployment of the nurses faced difficult questions. The Australians suffered over 2000 dead in the fighting in Malaya and on Singapore, and by early February the nurses were working to exhaustion in 1000-bed hospitals [17]. Skilled and experienced nurses were saving lives: even the sight of the red capes moving between the temporary beds on floors in tents, private houses and garages lifted morale. But once Australians learnt that the British nurses in Hong Kong had been raped and murdered by the conquering Japanese, they were determined to try to get the nurses away. The senior Australian officer, General Gordon Bennett, and the British command opposed evacuation because they considered it would have been bad for civilian morale [18]. By the time agreement was reached, the nurses had to leave from a harbour already littered with evidence of Japanese dominance in the air, and the chances of any ship evading bombing was slight. All through those days of heavy work within a contracting perimeter on Singapore the nurses had wanted to stay. When she was ordered to leave Sister Veronica Clancy said it was the "saddest moment of my life". After the war she said bluntly that their physical condition would have been better, and mortality less, had they been allowed to stay in Singapore. Given what happened to the British women who stayed and were interned in Singapore, she was almost certainly right [19].

10. The massacre on Banka Island, so prominent in the news and in the minds of Australians in the immediate post-war years, did not retain its importance in the stories told of Australians at war. Nurse Bullwinkel was awarded an MBE and the Florence Nightingale Medal, was appointed a Matron, and has always been held in high regard among ex-prisoners, but as Mrs Statham (following her marriage) she was not well known by 1980. The story of the nurses on the Vyner Brooke did not become a favourite of teachers, parsons and politicians on ANZAC Day, perhaps because it was so awful. It has none of the compassion and selflessness of the old favourite, Simpson and his donkey. The fate of the nurses became a memory of the war generation not transmitted to many of successive generations [20].

11. Bruce Beresford's feature film, Paradise Road, announces itself in large print to be "based on a true story". The preview, as previews often do, goes further, and claims it as "the extraordinary true story". The "media information kit" for the film asserts that "Beresford and producer Sue Milliken researched the story over more than two years". They interviewed survivors, read books

and consulted unpublished diaries. Beresford is acknowledged as writer/director, but elsewhere David Giles and Martin Meader are also credited as writers. The film is said to be centred on a group of women who are on a ship fleeing Singapore. Having survived the bombing and sinking of the ship they think that "the worst is over", but they find that the tough times are in the prison camp, and that is when they face their harshest test of survival. The women who gather in the camp are the ones who meet in Muntok and later in Sumatra: Australian nurses, Dutch women from the East Indies, English women from Singapore and Malaya, Protestant missionaries and Catholic nuns, and other women-diverse in nationality, race and social status.

12. When introducing viewers to setting and characters, and getting the characters into a prison camp, Paradise Road makes an obvious change from "true incidents": the killing of eighty people on the beach is completely omitted [21]. This is a serious gap. The omission is important, not simply because it leaves out the most violent and brutal act committed by the Japanese against the women, but because the killings had a profound effect on the women, particularly the Australian nurses, during the rest of their imprisonment. From that moment of the emotional reunion with Bullwinkel on 28 February 1942 in the coolie-lines at Muntok, the nurses knew that the Japanese would kill prisoners; that there was no safety in numbers; and that they, and particularly Bullwinkel, eyewitness to the killings on the beach, were particularly vulnerable. They had entered life as prisoners of war with terrible knowledge and under a terrible threat. In all of their subsequent dealings with the Japanese, or as they watched other women enter into relationships with Japanese, they could not forget that the Japanese were responsible for killing 21 of their colleagues. Also, by not making mention of the killings on the beach, Paradise Road cannot make any connection with Australians who know about the massacre; the central evocative moment has been left out. This is Breaker Morant without the firing squad at the end, or Gallipoli without the charge at the Nek. Without the killing on the beach a major factor explaining the post-war anger of Australians against Japanese has been omitted. Without the killing on the beach many of the arguments about whether the women should have been evacuated and when the evacuation should have taken place lose their impact.

13. Several factors probably stopped the writers of Paradise Road from including the shooting on the beach. It occurs so early in the sequence of events and is so powerful in its impact that it would be likely to make everything that follows anticlimactic. The film-makers having chosen to make the voice orchestra, the triumph of human accomplishment and the beauty of sound over constraint and squalor, central to the film, then it becomes all the more important for the film to make an early shift from the violent action of the escape from Singapore and the sinking of the ship to the deprivations of the prison camp. One more scene of even greater violence would have made it impossible to change the style and mood of the film.

14. A novelist or historian wanting to write primarily on the voice orchestra would have much less difficulty mentioning the killings. The writer can more easily control the space and emphasis; the writer can decide whether or not to mention that the Japanese came back from killing the men and cleaned their bayonets in front of the women, whether or not to mention the way the women fell like dominoes as the machine gun swept across them, whether or not to mention the blood in the water, whether or not to mention the wounded on the stretchers, those impotent and doomed watchers. But it is difficult to imagine how a film maker who chose to include the shooting could do anything other than run at least part of the incident in real time. Once a scene is set up then there is little choice but to include a mass of detail. Some of the nurses are wearing their uniforms and the red cross arm band, others, forced to abandon their clothes in the swim to shore, are in salvaged men's shirts and makeshift sarongs, and the extent to which they talk to each other and the way that they walk all have to be specific. Viewer expectation and the crafts of camera operators and director would demand several camera angles and close, medium and long-range

shots. Film makers lust for events that are compact, quick-moving, emotionally engaging and revealing of greater forces and themes; but events like these are hard to condense, and they cannot be dismissed with an aside and a footnote giving directions to the full story. The shooting of the nurses on the beach had to be left out of Paradise Road because its inclusion would have distorted the structure of the film and set a tone and direction contrary to the dominant theme and also because the nature of the medium makes it difficult to diminish in time or impact a scene that is so intrinsically visual and disturbing. Once the central story line has been selected, form and medium influence the history that we see in a feature film. Of course they influence the history presented in other media, but in both radio and writing the choice between inclusion and exclusion is less stark.

15. As soon as Paradise Road was released in the United States in 1997 Beresford was accused of racism for showing the Japanese as excessively and consistently brutal [22]. Ex-prisoners of war were questioned by journalists and they uniformly supported Beresford. Tom Uren, ex-prisoner and ex-Minister in the Whitlam government, made a clear distinction between "Japanese militarists" and their sadism and brutality and the different Japan and Japanese of today [23]. A question was even asked in the Australian Parliament, and the Minister for Veterans' Affairs, Bruce Scott, assured members that ex-prisoners had told him the film was accurate. He went on to give a homily about the importance of "telling history as it really was" [24]. In his own defence Beresford said that, if anything, the atrocities had been "played down" [25]. As the massacre on the beach, the worst act of violence against the women, had been left out, of course that was true. But it was also true that some of the most dramatic punishments inflicted on women in the film did not occur, or at least not in the camps where the Australian nurses were imprisoned [26]. The needs of the film forced the dramatic scene of the shooting on the beach out of the film, and the needs of the film meant that other dramatic events had to be imagined or transferred from other camps and made relevant to its main themes.

16. As with all historical films, the makers of Paradise Road faced the problem of finding locations. Viewers see the outside of Raffles Hotel and are then taken inside. But the interior scenes of dining and dancing at Raffles were in fact shot in the Marrickville Town Hall which, with its wood panelling and high ceiling fans, has the appropriate feel of time and place. The scramble to get on board the Prince Albert was filmed on the waterfront in Cairns, not Singapore, and two prison camps were built near Port Douglas in north Queensland. Where a specifically Asian landscape or streetscape was needed, those scenes were photographed in Penang. Singapore wharf, central Muntok, or the Dutch bungalows of Palembang in 1942 cannot be restored or rebuilt with all details accurate. The film does not show the skyline of mountainous Lubuklinggau that the women glimpsed through cloud and trees during the last months of their imprisonment. Viewers think that they see a filmed re-enactment of six aircraft attacking the Prince Albert and flak exploding; in fact there was one aircraft, while the other five and the flak were computer-generated. The images on film were manipulated to make them more real: the viewer sees not a re-enactment, but a virtual re-enactment. Insofar as that enables the film-maker to create more accurate images, and it saves money and prevents stunt men from being forced into unnecessary danger, that is probably desirable. In historical films, settings and complex sequences of action will always be approximate, but concern with that level of accuracy, often the cause of much time-consuming research for the film-maker and the historian, is essentially different from reshaping or expunging incidents critical to defining an experience.

17. In Paradise Road the young and attractive women are taken off to a splendid Dutch colonial home occupied by Japanese officers. It is 1943, and the women have already suffered prolonged deprivation. The Japanese interpreter tentatively puts an invitation to them as they stand nervously in a clean room looking at a table piled with rich food. In effect, he asks them to leave

the squalor, starvation, disease and fear of death in the internment camp for the food, soap, hot water, satin sheets and hope of life in the officers' club. There is, of course, a cost for making the change: the women who live in the club will have to give sexual pleasure to the Japanese. And there is an added moral and practical complication. Adrienne Pargiter wants some of the women for the camp's voice orchestra. If they go to work in the officers' club they will be giving up their own place in the orchestra and reducing the power of the orchestra to transform momentarily the camp for those who remain its prisoners. As Pargiter says to one waverer, Topsy Merritt, if you go I will be an alto short. Those who exchange the receipt of some sensual pleasures for the provision of other sensual pleasures are told that they are weakening the orchestra, and so weakening all women in the camp. Topsy agrees to "starve and sing", but many other women go to live in the Japanese officers' club.

18. The incident on which the film scene is based took place soon after capture, in March 1942. The orchestra was not formed until several months later and thus could not have been a factor in the decisions made by the women propositioned for the club. An English woman with an "obvious overdose of sex" and fellow passenger on the Vyner Brooke acted as recruiting agent for the Japanese officers [27]. When she had limited success the Australian nurses were told to go to the club. The "club" was in fact an ordinary Dutch bungalow in Palembang, and for the fortnight they were under duress the nurses lived in the houses next door [28].

19. Fear of being compelled to provide sexual services for the Japanese distressed the nurses intensely. "We felt sick; we couldn't eat", Betty Jeffery wrote [29]. As they waited, Veronica Clancy said, to hear the "steps of the loathsome creatures" on the gravel path, "Nights were just hell" [30]. Pressure was increased on the nurses when the Japanese cut off all food rations to the camp until the nurses complied. The nurses felt the same anger as the other women prisoners at their own lack of power and the same repugnance to be sex servants, and as women in the military they had additional worries. They were conscious of their duty not to assist the enemy, and by appearing to cooperate with the Japanese could have faced degrading enquiries and court charges in the after the war; they knew the Japanese as the soldiers who had inflicted terrible injuries on the Australians they had nursed in the crowded temporary hospitals of Malaya and Singapore and as the murderers of 21 of their fellow nurses on the beach; and they feared that even if they survived the experience and were not formally charged with any offence their personal and professional lives after the war would be destroyed. If things came to the worst, they wondered if an individual nurse could attach herself to a particular Japanese in the hope that he might protect her from the others, and if they could ensure silence among themselves as a group. When the Japanese told Sister Win Davis what she had to do or be killed, she said that she chose death. At the time it was not an unlikely alternative. If the nurses did not know the details of what had happened to the British nurses in St Stephens College Hospital, Hong Kong, they certainly had a general idea. On Singapore the nurses had heard a rumour that an officer had been detailed to shoot them to save them from "a fate worse than death". At the time one of the nurses had said, "I'll risk it. Death is too permanent" [31]. Now at Palembang, one of the nurses, reflecting on the days before capture, said, "To think of all the times I said, 'No'. A long pause. 'I wish I hadn't now'" [32]. Most of the captured men, still in contact with the women in the early weeks of imprisonment, were "useless ... indifferent". One of the leaders of the men's camp suggested that they comply lest something happen to "us". The nurses were "speechless with horror" [33]. A priest told Veronica Clancy that she should just pray; she wanted more immediate and practical protection. The nurses thought that the other women should be warned of the dangers of venereal disease but one "old mission lady" literally ran when they mentioned VD [34]. Eventually a Dutch doctor, who had some freedom because of his profession and because he had been the Red Cross representative in Palembang, appealed to the head of the Japanese civil administration, and he told the Japanese military to abandon their "club" [35].

20. The concerted attempt of March 1942 to recruit women for the officers' club was significant for the nurses, but many of those who joined the "satin sheet brigade" (or provided a quick sexual service under a bush) made their decisions at other times during internment. Even before the attempt to recruit women for the officers' club some of the interned women were exchanging sex for cash or food and other supplies. That trade continued: some of the "girlfriends" or "free women" were given the privilege of living outside the camp. In the early months of imprisonment the women in the camp put pressure on those thought to be letting down the side, and to be in the "side" was to be British, white and virtuous, not a soprano or contralto. But many of the first women who chose to have sexual relationships with the Japanese had been prostitutes or had had a succession of sexual partners before capture, and many of them were Eurasian. Most were women who were least comfortable in the hierarchy of the camp and might have been keen to escape the intensely crowded conditions where they were likely to be constantly reminded, by word or gesture, of their lowly status. Later, the capacity of the "girlfriends" to provide information and life-saving medicines and to act as agents for other women wishing to sell watches, pens, jewellery or clothes to the Japanese changed the general attitude to some of them. But by then the camp virtues of resourcefulness, hard work, and not adding to the chorus of querulous whingeing had started to break down the values and barriers that the women had brought into camp with them.

21. In Paradise Road both the time and place of the attempt to persuade the women to serve in the officers' club have been changed (from early 1942 to sometime in 1943, and from a nearby suburban bungalow to distant palatial building). These minor factual details are not of great significance. The change in timing, so that the incident occurs after the first rehearsals for the voice orchestra, has clearly been made to serve the structure of the film: the importance of the orchestra is increased and it becomes the link between events. What is more important is the simplification of a range of possible sexual transactions and threats. Women could trade sex for food and medicines when the alternative was death. They could sell sex for the benefit of children who might otherwise die. They could decide to sell sex for minor luxuries and freedom in the early days of imprisonment before malnutrition threatened health and when the prisoners had no idea whether their captivity would be brief or extended. They could establish a relationship with a particular guard or officer that might last over several months, or they might engage in brief encounters with one or several Japanese. They could, in spite of all the physical, social and mental barriers, form a romantic relationship with a Japanese man. And the question as to which women chose to have sexual relationships with the Japanese and the changing judgements that other women made about them raise important issues about men and women and women and women when the women face conditions of extreme vulnerability, fear and deprivation. Paradise Road reduces this multiplicity of sexual possibilities to the one choice at the one time [36].

22. Similar errors of fact and simplification can be found in other parts of the film. The film begins in Raffles Hotel on the night of 10 February 1942. The dance floor is crowded with soldiers, nurses and civilians, Julie Anthony is singing "Mad about the boy", the fans hanging from the high ceiling are turning languidly, the military and civil elite of Singapore are dining, and some privileged men are making confident statements about the strength of Singapore and the incompetence of myopic, tin-toy-making Japanese. Suddenly a shell lands outside. A colonel takes the microphone and announces that the Japanese have crossed the Straits of Johore, broken through the British lines and have the city within range of their guns. All European women and children are to be evacuated immediately. The city, he says, will fall in a few days. The colonel ends his speech with a clipped, "Good luck."

23. In fact, the city had suffered its first air raid on the 8 December 1941, the day the Japanese

made their assault on the Malay Peninsula. By 31 December the Japanese had won a series of victories down the Malay Peninsula, and the British were confined to Singapore Island. The Japanese assault on that began on 8 February, and two days later they were close to the city itself. On 10 February the nurses working in the 2/10th and 2/13th Australian General Hospitals were receiving hundreds of casualties straight from the battlefield, shelling, counter-shelling and aerial bombing were close ("the noise was terrific", one nurse recorded) [37], and staff, but not nurses, had been killed at the 2/10th. Already the first group of nurses had left for the wharf, and the second group were about to leave. General Wavell had issued his order of the day stating, "There must be no question or thought of surrender [38]." On the night of 10 February nurses still in the crowded temporary hospitals were working desperately in the blackout, on the edge of and within a battlefield, with wounded lying everywhere. There were no nurses dancing at Raffles that night.

24. What Beresford has done is collapse events of several weeks into a few hours of real time and a few minutes of film time. That is effective compression, but a distortion of the facts. Not only was the British command not conceding publicly that Singapore was about to fall, it was exhorting a fight to the finish. The nurses might reasonably feel cheated when they see no mention of several weeks of hectic nursing of battle casualties, and the film avoids basic questions about what the senior officers really knew as opposed to what they were prepared to make public.

25. Simplification and consequent distortion are also apparent in the Paradise Road's presentation of the formation and first performance of the voice orchestra, and that is central to the film. The orchestra is shown as emerging from a bleak camp in which there is no entertainment and in which all meetings, including religious services and children's lessons, are forbidden. Two women alone create the voice orchestra, Adrienne Pargiter (played by Glenn Close and based on Norah Chambers) and Margaret Drummond (played by Pauline Collins and based on Margaret Dryburgh). In the film they bring a transforming high art to a place without music or entertainment of any sort.

26. The diaries of the prisoners give a completely different picture. After being shifted from Banka Island to Palembang, Sumatra, the women were settled into the new camp. From April 1942 they gradually organised their basic services and some entertainment. A newspaper, the Camp chronicle, each issue up to sixteen or eighteen pages, was produced on a typewriter, and carbon copies issued to house groups. Women competed in quiz shows, charades and debates. On ANZAC Day, "a day so sacred to us", the nurses held a service and sang "Advance Australia fair" [39]. The Dutch nuns and various Protestant missionaries conducted weekly church services. The nurses salvaged a piano from a Dutch house and, with great effort, wrestled it into their quarters [40]. What began as community singing developed into concerts. People sat outside, but the concerts still had to be repeated to meet demand. "Even the Nips", Jessie Simons wrote, "came and enjoyed our efforts" [41]. Margaret Dryburgh, a missionary, accompanied many of the singers in popular and semi-classical songs; comic lyrics commenting on life in Palembang were written to fit known tunes; and plays and sketches were performed. From mid-1942 the women were regularly singing Dryburgh's "The captive's hymn", and they have continued to sing it ever since. The program for the special Boxing day concert of 1942 began with nursery rhymes, continued with songs such as "Men of Harlech" and "Polly wolly doodle", a Dutch song, and then the orchestra performed various items, including a Waltz by Brahms, a "sea song" and Bolero [42].

27. Dryburgh and Chambers developed the voice orchestra after September 1943 when the women were shifted to the thatched atap huts of what had been the men's camp in Palembang.

The orchestra depended on Dryburgh's amazing memory for music: with little more than prompting by those able to hum a few missing sections, she wrote down the music to at least thirty classical orchestral pieces. Norah Chambers, who had trained as a violinist at the Royal Academy in London, copied the scores, and Dryburgh and Chambers arranged them for voices. The women did not imitate instruments, but by humming on selected consonants and singing sounds rather than words, they created their own unique art. Dryburgh and Chambers combined other qualities to persuade and inspire forty women to train for long hours, and then perform at such a level that they could momentarily liberate themselves and their listeners from their squalid camp. Betty Jeffrey wrote:

This music is quite the most wonderful thing that has happened in this camp so far. None of us have ever heard women's voices anywhere better than this orchestra.... To sit on logs or stools or tables in the crude old attap-roofed kitchen, with only one light, and then to be lifted right out of that atmosphere with this music is sheer joy [43].

Turner wrote: "Enthralled and awed we sat through every performance drinking to the last their melodies and music. If the artists could only go on and on" [44].

28. Beresford was right to make the voice orchestra central to his film: Dryburgh and Chambers deserve to be remembered and their achievement celebrated. But in Paradise Road much of the pre-eminence given to Dryburgh and Chambers is achieved because they and the voice orchestra are seen against a wasteland of deprivation and suppression, physical and mental. In fact, included in the voice orchestra's first performance was Ena Murray, the younger sister of Norah Chambers. Her name had appeared as producer and performer on variety show programs from the first Palembang camp, and on the night of the vocal orchestra's first concert Betty Jeffrey said: "Mrs Murray, with her glorious soprano voice, sang the "Fairy song" from The Immortal Hour" [45]. The Japanese did at times ban concerts, or restrict them with what the women thought were capricious acts of harassment. For example, at one time they were instructed that they were not to clap at concerts, but they could express their appreciation of acts by tapping heels on the floor [46]. Although the first voice orchestra concert was organised during a time when the Japanese were being officious, it was not so obviously unique or an act of risk and defiance as suggested in Paradise Road.

29. The frequency with which feature films simplify events by compression and omission, by increasing contrasts, and by reducing complicated arguments to short statements raises the question whether the medium itself demands simplification. But just as newspapers and novels can range from simplistic to subtle so can films. The need to fit the film into two hours or so and to attract audiences are real constraints; but conforming to prescribed space and appealing to readers, listeners and viewers are common in other media. Those who make feature films on historical subjects and distort, simplify and change events are not always compelled to do so because of the nature of feature film. The changing of events for reasons of structure-to give the film a beginning, middle and end, and to make the whole coherent-has to be argued case by case. When conclusions are drawn from distorted history or forced from events that do not in fact support them, that has nothing to do with the medium. Film makers are as responsible for their judgements and moralising as any others who make public pronouncements.

30. In Paradise Road three women, having struggled ashore from the sinking Vyner Brooke,

emerge from the mangroves into sunlit paddy fields. They formally introduce each other: they are Adrienne Pargiter, Rosemary Leighton-Jones and Susan McCarthy. As they walk along a dirt track, indifferent Japanese soldiers cycle past, and then a car stops and all three are ordered into the back seat. A Japanese officer, Captain Tanaka, sitting beside the driver, turns around and engages the three women in conversation. He explains that for some years he had been a newspaper correspondent in Singapore. When the women say they were on a ship sunk by Japanese aircraft, Tanaka, in an apparently friendly gesture asks, "What can I say? Attacking the enemy is a characteristic of war." Not placated by small talk, Pargiter tells Tanaka that the Prince Albert was carrying only women and children and that they were protected by the Geneva Convention. Tanaka, now colder and more menacing, says that Japan did not sign the Geneva Convention and "If war has begun, the time for rules has ended. The aim is to win." He turns abruptly, ending the conversation, and the women realise they have entered a world where the physically powerless are without appeal to protective rules.

31. In the film the Prince Albert is shown as a grey ship identified by the letters M1121, and with its one anti-aircraft gun it returns fire. The dark grey Vyner Brooke of 1942, flying the British white ensign, and the Prince Albert of the film were both legitimate targets of war. By contrast, the Wah Sui, another of the ships leaving chaotic Singapore, was painted white with a large red cross clearly visible and was carrying wounded and six women nurses; clearly a hospital ship, the Wah Sui was protected by the conventions of war. While the Wah Sui was anchored in Singapore harbour the Japanese did not attack it, but warned that it was too close to other ships and facilities that would be bombed, and so should shift. When the Wah Sui sailed on 12 February, Japanese planes flew low across it but did not attack [47]. When the Australians and the British used like the Empire star and the Vyner Brooke to evacuate civilians from Singapore when the Japanese completely dominated the air, had already occupied points to the south in Borneo and Ambon, and were about to capture Singapore, they knowingly took a terrible risk. They had strong arguments in 1942 (and others since) to justify the decision, but it troubled some of those who took it for the rest of their lives.

32. When Tanaka says "Japan has signed no Geneva Convention" he is nearly correct. The Japanese government had not ratified the Geneva Convention of 1929, but it had said that it would abide by its rules. Sometimes the Japanese did comply, as with the hospital ship Wah Sui, and sometimes they were guilty of gross violations, as in the shooting of the men and women on Banka Island. The two most visually horrific atrocities shown in the film are when Wing, a Chinese woman in the camp, has petrol thrown on her and is incinerated in front of the assembled camp [48], and when Susan McCarthy, an Australian nurse, is made to kneel for a long period in the sun with spikes threatening to impale her if she collapses from pain or exhaustion. But in the immediate post-war period, when Australian investigators asked the nurses to describe violations of the rules of war, they mentioned much "face-slapping and punching", and Bullwinkel said that a "couple of women lost one or two teeth and got black eyes" [49]. Women were also made to stand in the sun as punishment. Nesta James gave the example of Sister Wilma Oram, who did not see a guard, failed to bow, and was made to stand in the sun for two hours [50]. There is no mention of incineration or other cruel punishments. Asked about causes of death, Bullwinkel said the dying was "only" the result of starvation and diseases [51]. And from 1944 what dying there was! The cumulative effect of malnutrition and the virulent malaria of Banka island were lethal. The women were digging two or three graves a day. The first Australian nurse died in February 1945, and the last three days after the war had officially ended. In total eight (one quarter) of the nurses died in prison. The death rate among the civilian women and children was probably higher because many were vulnerable because of age and entered the camps with lower levels of general health. Total deaths in the shifting populations of the camps are difficult to calculate, but it was almost certainly over one third, and that means more

than a hundred civilian deaths [52]. The worst atrocity of the Japanese committed against the women-worse than the shooting on the beach-was that they starved them. The Japanese treated them with indifference, neglect and contempt. This was not peculiar to women or Europeans. In fact, the death rate among white male prisoners on Ambon or of civilian Chinese shipped to New Guinea to work for the Japanese was greater.

33. The problem for film makers is that it is impossible to show the reality of a camp in which ill, emaciated stick-figure prisoners, almost without energy attempt to cut wood, light fires, fetch water, cook, bury the dead and carry out the other tasks that are necessary to support the living. It is, for a start, impossible to show women deteriorating from malnutrition until they are on the edge of death. And as one of the surviving nurses, Patricia Darling, said, much of camp life was both desperate and boring, but "you can hardly do a film and say how bored everyone was because that would make a boring film" [53]. As a result, Paradise Road shows starvation, dying and listless enervation as much less severe than they were in fact, and the violent-the filmable-crimes are greater. Writing and radio are not so restricted in subject.

34. From the written sources and from talking to the women who were there it is possible to show that Paradise Road varies considerably from what could be expected of a written history. It is apparent in the opening scenes: the date that the Japanese crossed the strait and landed on Singapore is changed; the nurses were working desperately tending the wounded with shells whistling overhead, not dancing at Raffles; and the evacuation of civilians and nurses did not begin with an announcement on 10 February. The decision to leave out the shooting on the beach, the most violent Japanese atrocity against the women, means that viewers have little idea of the sense of vulnerability and anger that the nurses took into the prison camps with them. The omission of the massacre, the assertion that the bombing of the Vyner Brooke was a war crime and the inclusion of violent assaults against the women which did not take place in the Banka and Sumatra camps distort moral judgments. The simplifications, such as reducing the threat and opportunity of sexual relations to one incident and presenting the voice orchestra as coming from a camp without music or entertainment of any sort, are frequent. Four women doctors in the camp are reduced to one, Dr Verstak, played by Frances McDormand. The Verstak of the film varies considerably from the real Dr Goldberg, a German Jew, who escaped from Singapore on the Vyner Brooke. In Paradise Road Verstak is a tough, cynical, worldly outsider and, Susan Macarthy (Cate Blanchett), the main Australian nurse, comes to appreciate her shrewd advice. At the end of the film Verstak confesses that she is a doctor of philosophy, not a doctor of medicine. But the real Goldberg was not trusted by the Australian nurses: they thought she had picked up a rumour about Bullwinkel's story and tried unsuccessfully to wheedle the full story from her; they had doubts about her qualifications; and they resented the way she appeared to curry favour with the Japanese, at times controlled medicines, was always well dressed and had access to money. The other doctors and the Dutch hospital seemed to accept Goldberg as a medical doctor, and nothing was resolved at the end of the war. The nurses retained their suspicions about Dr Goldberg and followed reports of her career after the war [54].

35. In Paradise Road the prisoners are seen in contrast to the Japanese; and other people-inside and outside the wire-are almost entirely left out. But as Sister Nesta James reported: "In addition to the Japanese guards we had native guards known as heihos. They were a military youth movement based, I think, on the German youth movement" [55]. In Paradise Road the Asians who cooperated with the Japanese, others who were neutral or hostile to the Japanese and the Eurasians in the camps do not complicate the stark separation of male Japanese guards and white women prisoners [56].

36. Some of the changes may be necessary to give the film its structure and increase the

significance of the voice orchestra, and some because the images simply are not available or because they involve protracted time and little movement and neither is easily turned into compressed, arresting images. But some may be simplification that comes from underestimating the capacity of audiences to grasp subtleties and complexities, and some may be a result of inadequate research.

37. In the reviews of Paradise Road nearly all the references are to other films. Eye Weekly listed many of them: Stalag 17, King rat, Bridge on the River Kwai, Schindler's list, and Empire of the sun. Other reviews almost complete the list: The great escape, A town like Alice, Playing for time, Three came home, and Merry Christmas Mr Lawrence. Most evaluations are often made by comparisons (sometimes flippantly: "A girl's own bridge on the River Kwai") [57], either with the prisoner of war films or with other films by Beresford-Driving Miss Daisy, Tender mercies, Breaker Morant and Black robe. Film reviewers, whether they express themselves on paper, radio or screen, make their comments within a film world, and even judge the capacity of Paradise Road to convey "truth" by comparing it with other prisoner films. No film reviewers was concerned with Paradise Road's frequent claims to be "based on a true story": they all simply accepted that it was. They did not mention that the shooting on the beach was omitted.

38. It is strange that not one reviewer in the dozens of reviews surveyed consulted any of the three books written by women involved in the "true incidents" of the film, despite the fact that they are acknowledged in the credits [58]. Film reviewers, and the majority are writers, do not refer to other writers. The questions that were raised about whether the Japanese in Paradise Road had been treated fairly came not from those who had knowledge of prisoner of war camps, but from simplistic 1990s assumptions about how one race should portray another. Had Paradise Road been a book, reviewers would almost certainly have referred to the reminiscences and to works of subsequent researchers; book reviewers operate in a literary world [59].

39. Today's undergraduates live in a screen world. They do their banking on screens, they consult library catalogues on screens, they correspond on screens, they have their entertainment on screens, they collect their information from screens, they create on screens, they meet partners on the screen and, it is said, seek sexual pleasure on the screen. The influence of Paradise Road on undergraduate impressions of what happened to women prisoners of war under the Japanese will be more influential than any book on the same topic. Insofar as the difference can be quantified, the film may have a thousand viewers for every reader of the book. The dominance of film on the interpretation of history has been demonstrated in Japan, where the film *Pride: a fateful moment*, which gives a sympathetic account of the wartime Prime Minister Hideki Tojo, has been one of the most popular Japanese film with home audiences in 1998. The power of the film over the book is apparent in the 1997 reprint of Betty Jeffrey's *White coolies*, in which the words Paradise Road compete for prominence with *White coolies* and the picture on the cover is from the film: the reader is not introduced to the faces of those whose names are in the book-Betty Jeffery, Vivian Bullwinkel, and Veronica Clancy-but to the faces of Jennifer Ehle, Penne Hackforth-Jones and other actors who have briefly pretended to be prisoners of war. This is not to imply that film makers should not exploit the past for plots, themes and settings. Of course they will. Of course they should. Problems arise because of the power of the media: the "based on" history becomes the history for most people. Even reflective film-goers have few readily available alternative perceptions of events exploited on film. The conclusion seems inescapable: historians must involve themselves in the screen world. They have an obligation to write about films, to make sure that films and writing intersect, and beyond that they should do research for what goes on to the screens and express their own findings on screens [60]. They cannot assume that what they write will eventually have its impact on screens: page and screen may never meet [61].

Notes

- (1.) Betty Jeffrey, *White coolies*, Angus and Robertson, Sydney, 1954, p. 6.
- (2.) Bullwinkel gave a sworn statement on 29 October 1945, Australian War Memorial, 54 1010/4/24; evidence before The Tokyo war crimes trial, edited by R.J. Pritchard, S.M. Zaide and D.C. Watt, Garland Publishing, New York, 1981, pp. 13,454-76; and in a recorded interview with Tim Bowden (see H. Nelson, *Prisoners of war: Australians under Nippon*, Australian Broadcasting Commission, Sydney, 1985, pp. 71-83. Vivian Bullwinkel was born in Kapunda, South Australia, on 18 December 1915, so she was 26 when captured. The minimum age for appointment of nurses was 25, and they were required to have "several" years experience and hold a certificate beyond their basic nursing qualification.
- (3.) AWM 1010/4/24.
- (4.) The Tokyo war crimes trial, says 50 men, 22 women and ten stretcher cases were killed. p. 40,196.
- (5.) Betty Jeffrey in her book gave an account of Bullwinkel's escape, but in her diary she simply said that "another lass" came in and that she had been "living in the jungle until food ran out". AWM, DRL 1857, vol 1 of three small exercise books.
- (6.) Kingsley died soon after he was taken into captivity (Jeffrey p. 25).
- (7.) Albert Coates and Newman Rosenthal, *The Albert Coates story*, Hyland House, Melbourne, 1977, p. 87.
- (8.) Philippa Poole, *Of love and war: the letters and diaries of Captain Adrian Curlewis and his family 1939-1945*, Lansdowne, Sydney, 1982, p. 141.
- (9.) F.W. Christie, *The war diary of VX 35135 Gunner F.W. Christie 4th Anti-Tank Regiment, 8 April 1941 to 18 October 1945*, typescript, p. 28.
- (10.) Veronica Clancy (Turner) AWM MS 1086, p. 5 (But in the four folders of the ms there are several page fives).
- (11.) Simons, *While history passed: the story of the Australian nurses who were prisoners of the Japanese for three and a half years*, William Heinemann, Melbourne, 1954, pp. 59-60.
- (12.) News had reached Australian officials. Australian prisoners of war were being shipped to Japan on the Rokyū Maru when it was sunk by a US submarine. A few of the prisoners were rescued by the Americans, and on their arrival in Australia they reported on the shooting of the nurses. Frank Forde, Acting Prime Minister, reported some of the news that the rescued men had brought to Australia but did not mention the nurses. (Australia, *Parliamentary Debates, House of Representatives*, Vol 180, 17 November 1944, p. 1921.)
- (13.) Jeffrey, letter written at end of war and with diary, AWM, DRL 1857.
- (14.) *Sydney Morning Herald*, 18 September 1945, p. 3.

- (15.) The Australian Women's Weekly, 29 September 1945, p. 10. Note that the one civilian women had fallen out of news reports, and fell out of history.
- (16.) Yuki Tanaka, Hidden horrors: Japanese war crimes in World War II, Westview Press, Boulder, 1966, p. 88.
- (17.) Jeffrey, p. 3.
- (18.) Bennett and Colonel Alfred Derham, commander of medical services, had clashed on other matters, A.B. Lodge, The fall of General Gordon Bennett, Allen and Unwin, Sydney, 1986, pp. 61-7.
- (19.) Veronica Clancy, MS. In her diary (AWM DRL 1857) Jeffrey said that leaving the wounded "was the rottenest thing I've ever done in my life".
- (20.) It is not a case of the story not being available. It has been told in several books: Jan Bassett, Guns and brooches: Australian Army nursing from the Boer War to the Gulf War, Oxford, Melbourne, 1992; Jeffrey (1954) and reprinted many times; Catherine Kenny, Captives: Australian Army nurses in Japanese prison camps, University of Queensland Press, 1986; H. Nelson 1985 (and the ABC radio series produced by Tim Bowden); Jessie Simons (1954, and reprints); A. Walker, Medical services of the R.A.N. and R.A.A.F. (The Official History of Australia in the War of 1939-1945), Australian War Memorial, Canberra, 1961; and L. Warner and J. Sandilands, Women beyond the wire: a story of prisoners of the Japanese 1942-45, Michael Joseph, London, 1982. Women in other camps have also written illuminating accounts of internment under the Japanese-for example, Sheila Allan, Diary of a girl in Changi 1941-45, Kangaroo Press, Sydney, 1994; Natalie Crouter, Forbidden diary: A record of wartime internment, 1941-1945, Burt Franklin, New York, 1980; Daphne Jackson, Java nightmare, Tabb House, Padstow, 1979; Celia Lucas, Prisoners of Santo Tomas: based on the diaries of Isla Corfield, Leo Cooper, London, 1975; and Jan Ruff-O'Hearne, 50 years of silence, Editions Tom Thompson, Sydney, 1994.
- (21.) It is mentioned in two sentences in the Media Information Kit.
- (22.) Keiko Tamura tells me that the Japanese actors mostly speak what is an obviously "foreign" Japanese, and that therefore this film was obviously not intended for a Japanese audience.
- (23.) Weekend Australian, 7-8 June 1997.
- (24.) Canberra Times, 6 June 1997.
- (25.) Interview on the Movie Show, SBS Television, Sydney, 4 June 1997.
- (26.) Apart from Bullwinkel's testimonies, Sister N. James, the senior surviving nurse, made a statement on atrocities, AWM 54 1010/4/78.
- (27.) Simons, p. 36.
- (28.) Bullwinkel, Clancy, James, Jeffrey and Simons all left accounts of the officers' club incident.
- (29.) Jeffrey, p. 31.

- (30.) Clancy, p. 116.
- (31.) Clancy, p. 112.
- (32.) Clancy, p. 123.
- (33.) Clancy, pp. 112 and 117.
- (34.) Clancy, p. 117.
- (35.) Warner and Sandilands, p. 92; Simons, p. 54.
- (36.) There is a brief suggestion of another sort of relationship when we see a young guard and young internee eye each other off.
- (37.) Jeffrey, diary, AWM DRL 1857.
- (38.) L. Wigmore, *The Japanese thrust*, Australian War Memorial, Canberra, 1957, p. 341.
- (39.) Clancy, p. 13.
- (40.) The Dutch had a harmonium and debated whether it should be restricted to church services. Helen Colijn, *Song of survival: women interned*, Millennium Books, Sydney, 1996, p. 92.
- (41.) Simons, p. 48.
- (42.) Simons, p. 49 reprints the program. Another program for a Choral Society Concert to be held on 24 and 31 October 1942 ("by courtesy of the AANS") is in Clancy.
- (43.) Jeffrey, p. 87.
- (44.) Turner, MS.
- (45.) Jeffrey, p. 87; and Warner and Sandilands p. 141 have reproduced a variety show program.
- (46.) Turner MS.
- (47.) By contrast the hospital ship *Centaur*, fully lit, painted white and with red crosses displayed, was sunk off the Queensland coast with the loss of 268 lives, including eleven nurses. David Jenkins has investigated the extent to which the sinking of the *Centaur* by a Japanese submarine could have been an accident (*Battle surface! Japan's submarine war against Australia 1942-44*, Random House, Sydney, 1992, pp. 277-85).
- (48.) The character Wing, played by Pauline Chan, is based on Nellie, an Ambonese woman, who was the main trader in the camp. Dressed in black pyjamas, she slipped out of the camp at night, carrying objects to sell to willing local buyers. Once an alarm clock she was carrying started to ring and alerted a guard (as in the film), but Nellie escaped undetected. (Jeffrey, p. 119.) Nellie was not publicly incinerated.
- (49.) Bullwinkel, statement of 29 September 1945.

(50.) James statement of September 1946.

(51.) Bullwinkel, statement of 29 September 1945.

(52.) Colijn, p. 148 gives a death rate of 37 per cent. As the civilian death rate was likely to be higher than that of the nurses, this seems plausible, but it still needs to be considered with caution. In her Tokyo statement Bullwinkel says there were about 500 women and children in the first Palembang camp (p. 13,465), between 500 and 600 in the second Palembang camp (p. 13,469), about 450 were shifted to Banka, where another 200 joined them (p. 13,471), and about 500 began the trip to Lubuklinggau in western Sumatra, twelve dying on the journey and 50 in that camp (pp. 13472-4). If there were sixty deaths in the last six months, twice that number would have died over the full period of imprisonment.

(53.) Australian, 23 May 1997.

(54.) The four doctors in Banka camp in 1944 were Goldberg, McDowell, Thompson and Smith (Bullwinkel AWM 1010/4/24). Wilma Young (Sister Oram) in an interview on 16 October 1998 made comments on Dr Goldberg. See also Lavinia Warner and John Sandilands, *Women beyond the wire*, p. 237 and on other pages; and Simons p. 67.

(55.) James, AWM 1010/4/78.

(56.) In Paradise Road the Chinese woman prisoner, Wing, and the German Jewish doctor, Verstak, give slight diversity to the prisoners, but they are clearly inside the camp, not somewhere between the prisoners and the Japanese.

(57.) LA Weekly. All the US reviews were taken from the Internet.

(58.) The three books are by Colijn, Jeffrey and Simons. Only Jeffrey's book is named. Colijn is thanked for help. Jessie Elizabeth Simons is listed as Elizabeth Simons Hookway.

(59.) When films with the impact of Steven Spielberg's *Amistad* and Schindler's list were released they generated discussion among historians with relevant expertise, but those films are exceptional, and the writings by historians are still proportionately minuscule in influence and quantity.

(60.) David Hay has made the observation that, given the power of publicity machines to swamp adverse reviews, the writers on film may now be of slight influence. *Titanic*, a poor film in terms of its script, historical accuracy, sugary sentiment and plot--in fact in almost everyway except effects and spectacle--swamped the Academy Awards (*Sydney Morning Herald*, 30 May 1998, p. 5).

(61.) I have written about some of these issues when considering *Blood oath*, directed by Stephen Wallace, 1990 ("*Blood Oath: a reel history*", *Australian Historical Studies*, No 97, October 1991, pp. 429-42).

The author Hank Nelson is with the research School of Pacific Studies at the Australian National University.

