

In memory of our friend and colleague Bernard Hickey who is now merrily dancing with angels.

BERNARD HICKEY

Bernard Hickey not only introduced me to the opportunity to teach Australian Literature in Italy but also to the pleasures and joys of meeting eager and intelligent students, making friends with Italian colleagues, attending their conferences and sharing in their research interests and from time to time being able to entertain them when they visited Australia. Indeed Bernard's kindness, generosity, hospitality and enthusiasm was quite overwhelming, something beyond the bounds of expectation in the normally cool and sedate world of academia - something perhaps to do with his being Australian and also, he would stress, a Queenslander. Perhaps an account of my first encounter with him will give some idea of what I am trying to say. It was my first time in Italy but someone, a colleague perhaps or someone in the Australian Embassy in Rome, had suggested that I get in touch with him and offer to do some teaching for him in Venice. He replied with his usual enthusiastic invitation to Venice, telling me to phone him when I arrived and that he would arrange things after that. So I took the train from Rome. It was in the bad old days of Italian trains and it was a long, slow and tedious trip, taking about 10 hours - though it was supposedly a 'fast train'. So I phoned him from the station when I arrived--which was about 9.30pm - and a cheerful voice called me 'darling' and told me to take "vaporetto uno" - or perhaps "duo" by this time I was a bit confused - to Ca' Foscari and that he'd meet me there. There was no mistaking the cheery figure at the wharf; it could only be "Professore Hickey", a well known Venetian identity, as I discovered whenever I walked with him through the city - as he greeted me and lead me straight away to a nearby restaurant where another Australian academic and his wife, Brian and Susanne Kiernan, were already installed. The dinner which followed with Bernard, as always, the most generous of hosts, gave me a taste of the best Italian hospitality after which escorted me to an *albergo* not far from his house where I had coffee with him next morning. Then later that day a seminar - on Patrick White, a special interest of mine and of Bernard's, of course - introduced me to the pleasures of teaching Italian students.

From then on I was an admirer of theirs and, of course, of Bernard who managed to do so much with so few resources and often with some opposition, not merely in helping to spread interest and research in Australian literature in Italy and elsewhere in Europe through his involvement in the European Association for Commonwealth Literature Studies. The conference he hosted in Lecce where he had finally become a fully fledged Professor stands out particularly in my memory.

In many respects then the friendships and mutual understanding he helped to establish between so many Australian and Italian academics and students is perhaps his lasting monument. Personally, I also owe to him my abiding love of Italy, its people and its culture. But it is the man himself I most want to honour, his indefatigable and sometimes engagingly eccentric manner and enthusiasms, his generosity and unfailing kindness, his courage and enjoyment of life even in the midst of difficulties and occasional opposition. He is someone I will never forget and will sorely miss.

Veronica Brady
University of Western Australia

Bernard Hickey R.I.P.

I knew Bernard Hickey for twenty years. We were acquaintances become friends who didn't manage to see each other for years at a time. Yet Bernard's death upsets me more than anyone's I can recall. Why? Because it seems that with his departure, good fun, fellowship and joy have left the world and only gray cloud remains.

His Italian friends might wonder where his personal magic originated. I would guess that coming from a big family in the empty spaces of a fresh continent where life called for independence and initiative had a lot to do with it. Dublin, congenial and intimate, surely added its touch. Trinity College put a particular stamp of urbanity on him and encouraged his gift for easy communication. Bernard's Irishness had nothing parochial about it, just as his Catholicism was anything but sectarian. Some months ago he reminisced with me about his first years in Rome. Half a century hadn't taken the edge off his youthful enthusiasm for the revelation he felt in that city of cities. Much of his time there was given to music, and anyone who has heard Bernard burst into song will know that music was a multicolored thread running through his life.

To my mind Bernard belonged to Venice more than the Venetians born there. When we walked around the city so many locals from all walks of life greeted him with a smile that I used to tell him he should run for mayor. I can't forget meeting him at some university conference on the Isola San Giorgio Maggiore. He spirited me away from the academic infighting as if it were of no great importance - it wasn't - and took me off to a secluded spot to contemplate a little known statue of Ezra Pound.

When the mysterious workings of the Italian university system decreed that Bernard should leave Ca' Foscari, he was naturally distressed. He

owned a house and had made a life there. But his admirable buoyancy soon won through. Once he decided to continue his career in Lecce he gave all his energy and devotion to his new task. With the years, just as in Venice, he would belong more to Lecce than the natives did.

His arrival corresponded with my leaving. I had a little house in the old town and after a five-minute perusal he bought it from me. Neither of us knew the first thing about business and while arranging the transaction we gleefully discussed, not price, but which of my books I would bestow upon him and the virtues of the cumbersome Adler typewriter, too heavy to move, that he had taken a fancy to. In later years we used to speak of our real estate deal as the least businesslike and the most pleasurable in the annals of property speculation.

Of all Bernard's qualities, for me one stands above all the rest. That he was courageous in adversity, uncomplaining and forward-looking till the last goes without saying. But what always astonished me was that no matter how hard I tried, I could never get Bernard, playfully or in anger, to say anything nasty about anyone. May his kindness stay with us.

Peter Byrne

American Writer living in Lecce

John Newlove

Autobiography	Autobiografia
I used to think I was just like you. Then I started writing poems.	Solevo pensare di essere proprio come te. Poi ho cominciato a scrivere poesie.
They took years to teach me that I was right.	Ci vollero anni per farmi capire che avevo ragione.
Apology for Absence: Selected Poems 1962-1992. Ontario: The Porcupine's Quill Inc. 1993: p.182.	

<p>Autobiography</p> <p>This job is making my voice shrill. I used to grumble along like an old movie.</p> <p>It calmed bartenders. Now even women don't trust me.</p>	<p>Autobiografia</p> <p>Questo lavoro rende stridula la mia voce. Solevo borbottare come nel sonoro di un vecchio film.</p> <p>Ciò calmava i barman. Ora neppure le donne si fidano di me.</p>
<p>Grain, 20/1, Spring 1992: p.277</p>	
<p>You</p> <p>You are not like this Like that, not as one would have you. One does not have you, one can only take what is given. This frivolity, so truthful, that I love you for, I hate you for, lovingly.</p>	<p>Tu</p> <p>Tu non sei come questo o come quello, nè come gli altri ti vorrebbero. Non si può avere te, ma solo ciò che regali. Questa tua frivolezza, così vera, per cui ti amo e ti odio, amorevolmente.</p>
<p>The Cave, Toronto/Montreal: McClelland and Stewart Limited. 1970: p.14.</p>	

*Traduzione inedita di Carla Comellini
Università di Bologna*

VALE BERNARD HICKEY: OUR MAN IN VENICE

Friends of Bernard Hickey were saddened to hear that he passed away after a short illness in Lecce, Italy on 31 July this year. Bernard was a larger-than-life figure who worked for many years as honorary ambassador, or Consul, for Australian literature abroad, in Italy mainly, but also elsewhere in Europe. I met him back in the 70s, being introduced to him by Professor Ken Goodwin on one of the first of many visits Bernard made to the University of Queensland, including the Fryer Library. Born at Maryborough and having taught for two years at Meandu State School, Bernard left to study in London and in Dublin, graduating in arts from Trinity College in the latter city. On his way home he stopped off in

In Memory of Bernard Hickey.
Le Simplegadi, 2007, 5, 5: 39-55. - ISSN 1824-5226
<http://all.uniud.it/simplegadi>

Rome, where he completed a doctorate in literature on Patrick White and was at one time secretary to the legendary Mario Praz.

Bernard then decided to stay on in Italy where he took up his lifelong work devoted to teaching and to promoting in variety of ways the study of Australian and commonwealth literature in Italy. He taught for many years as Associate professor at Ca Foscari University, soon becoming identified with that city for his generous hospitality to visiting Australian academics and writers. He promoted Australian literature with imaginative zest and zeal. He was ebullient, idiosyncratic, exuding joie de vivre, one of the most generous people I have ever met. He became fluent in Italian – not only the language but the buoyant gestures -- at times seeming to 'out-Italian' the Italians. Desmond O'Grady captured his Irish spirit by describing him as a leprechaun, a rather rotund but sprightly one. His passion for his role was as infectious as his activities were varied. He worked as translator and editor, published articles and books, organised conferences, readings and also special lectures among community groups as well as at the university. With the assistance of the Literature Board, which appreciated his activities, he set up an Australian Writer's studio in Venice. It hosted many writers including Paul Sherman, Val Vallis and Lionel Fogarty, all from Bernard's home state of Queensland. Later he helped to establish a writers' studio in Rome named after the British poet, B. R. Whiting, by the latter's wife, painter Lorri Whiting (sister of Malcolm Fraser) who works in that city.

Bernard's energy and enthusiasm appeared boundless, concealing the dedication behind it. He was a great traveller, often on the move, something of Pimpernel in the way he could turn up out of the blue on flying visits round the world, trips packed with meetings and plans. I recall his asking me on a visit to Venice to look through the proofs of his book on the Australian short story, *Lines of Implication*. The local printer was disorganised, deadlines were pressing. We floated in a vaporetto down the Grand Canal discussing the proofs – the only opportunity we seemed to get – as Bernard simultaneously offered me a running commentary on the main palazzi. He was an incomparable guide to the city he loved.

Bernard found it difficult coping with the academic bureaucracy in Venice and after many years moved to a position as Professor at the University of Lecce, the capital of Puglia, in the far south, just north of Otranto, south of Brindisi. Here he energetically built up a centre for Australian studies. Upon nominal retirement, last year Bernard's plans for development attracted the sponsorship of Felice Montrone of Sydney for the establishing at Lecce of a Centre for Australian Studies in the Mediterranean. Bernard was to have been foundation Director. He has donated his library of Australiana to the Centre, some 7,000 volumes. Truly it may be said of him: 'We shall never see his like again'.

Laurie Hergenhan
University of Queensland

IL MIO STARGATE PER L'AUSTRALIA

I have never been to Australia. I met Australia through a team of archaeologists from Sydney University who had come to "swing their pick abroad," as the Australian poet Paul Sherman put it in one of his occasional poems and, most of all, through the Bernard Hickey. As so many others of the baby boom generation, in the 60's I had discovered America reading books and going to the cinema. But Australia had remained no more than a pink spot on the world map. Meeting Bernard flung open a window on the antipodean world, a stargate to a new dimension.

Non sono mai stato in Australia. Il continente antipodeo l'ho conosciuto prima attraverso gli occhi, le parole e i racconti di Bernard Hickey. Poi attraverso i libri che mi allungava sul tavolo del soggiorno a casa sua, nel corso di lunghe chiacchierate durante le quali gli argomenti e le idee si inseguivano e si accavallavano come le nuvole che, in un documentario sull'Australia, correvano sotto cieli cobalto e proiettavano lunghe ombre scure sulle sabbie rosse.

Per la verità, un pezzo d'Australia l'avevo già incontrato nel 1988, sul finire dell'estate, poco prima di conoscere Bernard. A Salve, in una masseria a pochi passi dai resti di un villaggio messapico, soggiornava un'equipe di archeologi dell'Università di Sydney, venuti a "roteare i picconi oltremare," per usare le parole del poeta australiano Paul Sherman. Mi era sembrato incredibile che una squadra di archeologi fosse partita dall'altro capo del mondo per venire in un luogo certamente non riportato su nessuna carta geografica reperibile in Australia, a studiare un popolo vissuto qui nell'età del bronzo e che, tremila anni fa, costruiva città protette da possenti mura megalitiche, quando Roma non era ancora che un villaggio di pastori. La curiosità di conoscerli era troppo forte e, complici gli amici proprietari della masseria, riuscii a intrufolarmi una sera a cena. Il giorno dopo ero già sul campo a dare una mano, a spostare tonnellate di terra, a setacciare, a lavare frammenti di ceramica rossa, nera, a figure e a decorazioni geometriche e ossa di animali in quantità e varietà incredibile. Lavorai nel campo per il resto della stagione di scavi, come avrei continuato a fare per i nove anni successivi, un mese l'anno, archeologo dilettante, membro non ufficiale e ufficiale della spedizione. Ma quel primo anno, un pomeriggio, dopo il diario della giornata, il direttore della spedizione mi chiese se volessi unirmi a loro per la serata. Con un piccolo gruppo di collaboratori andava a trovare un professore australiano che insegnava all'Università di Lecce. Che a Lecce ci fosse un "professore australiano" fu la seconda grande scoperta di quell'estate di afosi scirocchi. Per anni, per me, l'Australia era stata solo una macchia rosa sul planisfero, un luogo remoto tra le affascinanti civiltà dell'oriente e gli esotici mari del sud, che da ragazzo mi incantavo a guardare sui poster nelle vetrine delle agenzie di viaggio. Era stata proprio questa vena escapistica, forse, a spingermi a scrivere la tesi di laurea su R.L. Stevenson, che a Samoa visse gli anni più felici della sua vita, gli ultimi. Sogno ancora di salire sulla vetta del monte Vaea a leggere "under the wide and starry sky..." sulla tomba di Tusitala. Ma l'Australia, per noi della generazione degli anni cinquanta, che

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Le Simplegadi, 2007, 5, 5: 39-55. - ISSN 1824-5226

<http://all.uniud.it/simplegadi>

avevamo sognato e scoperto solo l'America, con i libri di Hemingway e Steinbeck, Dos Passos e Truman Capote, i film di John Ford e Albert Hitchcock, che avevamo imparato l'inglese con le canzoni di Frank Sinatra prima e di Bob Dylan poi, l'Australia era "terra incognita", più di quanto lo fossero state le vastità africane per i cartografi latini: "hinc sunt leones". Dell'Australia sapevo che c'erano i canguri, gli unici marsupiali di cui fossi a conoscenza, e le pecore merino, con la lana delle quali era fatto l'abito gessato blu che avevo indossato al mio matrimonio. Ma ora, questi due segni, l'incontro già avvenuto con gli archeologi australiani e quello possibile col misterioso "professore australiano di Lecce," se la semiologia aveva un senso, mi dicevano che qualcosa di cruciale stava per verificarsi, che andare a quella festa, quella sera, poteva aprire una sorta di stargate, una porta su una dimensione nuova, l'ingresso in un mondo diverso, come quando da bambino mettevo la maschera e mi tuffavo in acqua e il mare, che fino a quel momento era stato solo un tavolo blu, mi appariva come un universo parallelo di luce verde e azzurra, con i colori dei pesci, dei coralli, delle madrepore, con le stelle marine, i granchietti nelle conchiglie, le attinie e il brulicare di vita della posidonia. Accettai l'offerta.

La prima porta che si aprì fu quella dell'Hotel Patria, dove all'epoca, Bernard Hickey riceveva i suoi ospiti di riguardo. Verso la fine degli anni sessanta, da studente, dopo le lezioni, avevo accompagnato spesso al Patria il mio professore di Storia Americana Gianfranco Corsini. Mi fermavo lì di fronte e lo vedevo sparire nella penombra della hall, inghiottito dalla porta girevole, col suo loden verde scuro, il berretto intonato e la borsa di cuoio.

L'altra porta, il mio stargate, anche se allora ancora non lo sapevo, attendeva sorridente e vestito di scuro al bar dell'hotel, nelle vesti di un paffuto signore dalla rada chioma canuta e dalla bianca barba. Di che parlammo quella sera di fine estate nella sala da pranzo del vecchio e glorioso albergo leccese, rinomato per la sua buona cucina? Con Bernard, scambiai poche battute nel corso di quel primo incontro, ma bastarono a stabilire un contatto, che si sarebbe trasformato in un'amicizia inossidabile nonostante i venti anni d'età che ci separavano. Ho sempre pensato che, tra noi due, il più giovane fosse lui, per lo spirito vigile, sempre attento, curioso di scoprire ancora una nuova prospettiva, un'altra angolatura da cui osservare la vita, la letteratura, la poesia, l'arte, sempre con un nuovo progetto in mente, un altro libro da scrivere, un nuovo numero di una rivista, un'altra conferenza da convocare. Quella sera, Bernard fu, come sempre l'avrei visto in seguito, star incontrastata della cena. Si interessava agli scavi, si appassionava ai dettagli dei reperti, alle ipotesi sull'origine dell'antico popolo salentino che aveva suscitato l'interesse dei suoi connazionali. Fui subito colpito dalla profondità delle sue conoscenze archeologiche, nonostante fosse una materia lontana dai suoi interessi accademici. Anni dopo, mi capitò di tradurre per Guanda la biografia di Kahlil Gibran, di Robin Waterfield. Ero particolarmente orgoglioso di questo lavoro. Per migliaia di giovani in tutto il mondo, Il Profeta, il capolavoro di Kahlil Gibran, era stato, e forse lo è ancora, una specie di moderna Bibbia e il libro al quale stavo lavorando era la prima biografia di Gibran ad essere pubblicata in Italia. Come sempre, quando lavoravo ad una traduzione, ne parlai con Bernard un giorno

In Memory of Bernard Hickey.

Le Simplegadi, 2007, 5, 5: 39-55. - ISSN 1824-5226

<http://all.uniud.it/simplegadi>

che pranzavamo all'Obelisco, a pochi passi dall'ateneo. Bernard si illuminò, abbandonò le posate e mi chiese se per caso fossi in contatto con l'autore. Naturalmente, quando è possibile, tento sempre di tenermi in contatto con gli autori dei libri che traduco.

"Potresti domandargli se per caso sia imparentato con Gordon Waterfield, che descrisse la scoperta di Ninive ad opera di Austen Henry Layard?"

Cominciò a raccontarmi la storia del grande archeologo inglese e della sua straordinaria scoperta di Ninive, celebrata da Gordon Waterfield in *Layard of Niniveh*. Quando tornai a casa sua un paio di settimane dopo e gli riferii che Robin Waterfield era il nipote di Gordon, sorrise, si alzò e sparì dietro gli scaffali dei libri che troneggiavano nell'ingresso. Tornò con un libro in mano e scoprii che aveva curato, assieme a Frederick Mario Fales, gli atti del "Simposium Internazionale Austen Henry Layard tra l'Oriente e Venezia", tenuto appunto a Venezia nel 1983. "Vedi, grande," disse con la sua proverbiale giovialità, "il mondo è troppo piccolo, io ho conosciuto il nonno, ora tu parli col nipote." Il volume omonimo, nel quale Gordon Waterfield era ampiamente citato, era ormai una rarità, credo fosse l'unica copia che avesse, ma Bernard me lo regalò, "Questo devi tenerlo tu, mio grande," porgendomelo come se mi offrisse un bicchiere d'acqua, ma sapendo di fare un dono prezioso, che ho sempre custodito gelosamente. Questa era, del resto, una delle sue doti più incantevoli: Bernard sapeva donare, con spontaneità e semplicità. Con la stessa semplicità sapeva parlarti di cose straordinarie ma senza mai farti sentire il peso di una cultura e di un'esperienza di vita uniche, mentre ti raccontava episodi che per gli appassionati di letteratura hanno il sapore del mito, gli incontri e le frequentazioni con i grandi delle letterature inglesi del ventesimo secolo: W.B. Yates, Ezra Pound, che abitava a pochi passi da casa sua a Venezia, dietro la Chiesa della Salute, e poi Witi Ihimaera, Sally Morgan, Kath Walker (Oodgeroo Noonuccal), conosciuta su un battello mentre la scrittrice andava a Sydney ad incontrare la Regina Elisabetta, Les Murray che non mancava mai di mandargli il suo ultimo libro di poesie, Peter Carey, Vance Palmer, David Malouf e tanti altri: su ognuno aveva un aneddoto, una storia da raccontare, una notazione critica illuminante.

La passione per la letteratura australiana me l'ha fatta germogliare così: coi suoi racconti, le sue raccolte di foto, i libri dei suoi tanti amici scrittori, che a volte mi regalava e, soprattutto, mi prestava. Tra la mia casa e la sua di Vico dei Rainò, il traffico dei libri è stato incessante. Mi portavo a casa i suoi e gli prestavo qualcuno dei miei. Sapevamo entrambi che erano in buone mani. Ogni tanto, quando riordinavo i miei scaffali, riempivo uno scatolone dei libri che gli appartenevano e andavo a bussare alla sua porta. Si affacciava dall'alto delle scale e sentivo risuonare la sua contagiosa risata, mentre salivo col viso nascosto dallo scatolone "Ah, ah, una scatola che cammina!"

Bernard mi invitava ad andare a trovarlo ogni volta che a Lecce c'erano scrittori, poeti o artisti australiani o passava loro il mio indirizzo, perché mi mandassero i loro romanzi, i loro racconti, le loro poesie, nella segreta attesa e certezza che qualcosa, prima o poi l'avrei tradotta in italiano. Sono felice di aver ripagato, almeno in parte, quelle attese. Non dimenticherò mai la luce di

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gioia nei suoi occhi, "l'indomita fiamma," come avrebbe detto il suo amico Ezra, quando gli portavo una traduzione di racconti aborigeni, un numero di una rivista letteraria dedicato all'Australia o il contratto per tradurre un romanzo di uno scrittore australiano. Sono sicuro che da lassù ride soddisfatto, strizzando l'occhio ad un angelo di passaggio, ogni volta che mi vede seduto al computer, a dannarmi perché ancora non trovo la parola giusta in un romanzo di Michael Wilding, un racconto di Frank Moorhouse o una poesia di Tom Petsinis. Quando la trovo, so di essere stato ispirato.

Aldo Magagnino
ICS Gallipoli Polo2 "Borgo"

Dear Antonella

I was touched by the title you have chosen for the memorium of our friend Prof. Bernard Hickey for the "poetics" section/ column of your journal to be published in the Autumn.

"Merrily dancing with Angels" is so appropriate for Bernard who always had a twinkle in his eye and his happy and chirpy spirit aroused enthusiasm in all those with whom he came in contact.

I had known Bernard since 1960 when he was teaching in Rome.

I can recall Bernard's tireless endeavours in his efforts in pioneering interest in the study and teaching in Italy of Australian literature. In fact, I think we all know that he pioneered Australian studies in Italy and his students loved him.

I never ever heard Bernard utter a harsh word about anyone.

He was a dear friend to me and I shall always remember him as the jovial, smiling, kind and helpful Professor.

Warm regards,
Clelia

Clelia March
Cultural Relations
Australian Embassy – ROME

15TH AUGUST 2007*

He was standing at boat stop 14 in the shadow of Santa Maria della Salute, a rotund, slightly gnome-like figure with a shock of just-graying hair and a huge smile that managed to appear both joyous and mischievous. The year was 1974, the place Venice, and I was about to meet Bernard Hickey for the first time. This encounter would change my life.

My job was to teach for a term in the Australian literature course he had founded and, to begin with, personally funded at Ca' Foscari, the University of Venice. He presented me with a timetable that would have kept a whole department flat out for months and we got down to work – though I was disconcerted to find him on edge, tense – a condition which I would soon discover was wholly uncharacteristic of him.

Slowly, over several pleasant dinners at the end of some rigorous classroom days, the truth emerged. The Sirocco – one of the more notorious of Mediterranean winds – had made an unseasonable appearance and was causing him agonising sinusitis. And the Australia Council, which had been providing critical financial support, seemed to be threatening to pull the plug. Since the Council was funding my visit, he told me, I would be required to write a report on the work going on at Ca' Foscari and on that report would probably depend the future of the whole enterprise! Such was my first, but not remotely my last experience of a Hickey bombshell.

But all was well. Within a few days I realised that the Prof, as I ever after called him, was a brilliant teacher whose students adored him; that the courses were exceptional, especially given the difficulties of language, acquiring texts and finding reference material; that my impossible schedule transformed itself into a demanding but comfortable rhythm by virtue of subtle metamorphoses known only to Italians; and that Hickey himself was a cornucopia of ideas, allusions, amazing erudition, innovation, cheek, daring and sheer old fashioned pzazz.

In Venice he was an institution. When we walked through the Venetian campi or along a canal or a rio terra he would be greeted constantly by passers-by and shopkeepers standing at their doorways. Waiters and chefs would call out from their restaurants and pizzerias, 'Buongiorno Professore'. Bar keepers would wave him in for a drink – a grappa or un'ombre di bianco – and since Hickey almost never refused any of these invitations, the long walk after work from Ca' Foscari to his apartment in Dorsoduro might begin in sober, end-of-the-day gravity but would often end riotously with friends tagging along and a dinner in some favourite trattoria.

Once, when my friend and colleague, Syd Harrex and I were travelling with Hickey by train to a conference in Frankfurt, an Irishman who was heading for a conference of ophthalmologists in Basel came into our compartment by mistake. Within minutes Hickey had captivated him with his blarney, his apparent familiarity with the world of ophthalmology and his massive if uncontrollably quixotic range of reference. The Irishman, joined us in a few drinks, swapped anecdotes and ideas with Hickey, declared him 'a scholar and

a gentlemen' and then, discovering he had missed his stop and was on his way to Mannheim, settled down happily for more talk and laughter.

If any test were needed to establish Hickey's uncanny ability to lead, to motivate and inspire, it came when his attainment of a Professorship took him to Lecce – about as far away from Venice as he could be and still stay on the peninsula. He conquered Lecce and became as dazzling an institution and cultural hero in that city as ever he had been in Venice. He died there, at the end of July, aged 76, within months of having realised another of his dreams – the establishment of a Centre for Australian Studies in the Mediterranean, to which he donated his library of 7,000 books.

Bernard Hickey devoted his life to the cause of Australian literature and Australian culture in Europe, often at the cost of great personal sacrifice. He was known, loved and profoundly respected wherever Australian writing and literary culture were studied and wherever Australian writers and academics gathered. His nurturing influence on the whole field was prodigious. His astonishing energy, his capacity to encourage in ways that excited students and colleagues; his sharp wit; his totally infectious joy and ebullience; his philosophical attitude to, though never meek acceptance of, the vagaries of fate, circumstance and bureaucracy; and perhaps above all his determination to celebrate his Australian heritage all marked him out as exceptional – a force for good and for excellence.

As Mark Antony said of Brutus: 'His life was gentle; and the elements/So mix'd in him that Nature might stand up/And say to all the world: "This was a man"'.

* Published in the Jesuit online magazine Eureka Street.

Brian Matthews
Australian writer

Bernard

On the platform you
pose for a final shot
before our train pulls out.
Marvellous, we smile,
when your digital self
fills our screens, uploaded,
downloaded, soon to be
quality printed.

Last April we rode thirty
hours by train to Lecce
in Italy's dark blue foot
doubting the wisdom of it
but thank God - how much worse

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than downtime in transit
would be thinking if only...
We met in Easter rain

took to the streets with you,
shared hot chocolate, jazz, green
apples and ice-cream, anti-
pasta and praise be yours,
limoncello! and waited
for you more than once dear
outside the cathedral –
as now you'll wait for us.

Our kids dubbed you Santa -
of course, white beard, jolly girth,
such cheer, splendid - but more
your talent for giving
undiminished by age,
potions, brazen bedside
tank of air; no saviour,
was it, but you rallied.

After sharing mossies
and meat and grace with you
one warm night in Perth our
rebel teen (yes, once your
bella bambina) said,
'Santa's so goddamned loud'.
Competitive, aren't they,
at that age: unforgiving.

Once, in mid-afternoon
you fell asleep upstairs
precariously parked
on the edge of the bed;
your uncharacteristic
stillness, silence - we feared -
but then, a hoot! You jerked
awake, cried marvellous.

Yes, kick-started trusty
old Holden you revved till
midnight, notorious
for your stories, the memoir
you were going to write...
how I wish you'd stopped long

enough for that, although
perhaps you'd say my dear,

enough is enough.

October 2007

Ffion Murphy

Edith Cowan University

IN MEMORY
BERNARD HICKEY
LAST TIME

Window-shutters were open to April sun,
Foreign swallows, livelier than God,
Were snipping, pinning, patching the eaves
Of Lecce's unrenovated churches,
Binding walls for generations to come.

We met at the gate on Via Gallipoli
And parted traffic, on to the Faculty of Arts -
Your step irrepressible as spring,
Words fluttering from the winter of your beard,
Eyes sparkling with premonition.

You greeted each tradesman by name
As they whistled 'O, sole mio' in the room:
Bolting steel book-shelves to light,
Sanding plaster smooth for shadows to pass,
Realising a dream decades old.

Still quick as a rover with your wit,
And never one to let the moment go begging,
You raised my book of footy poems
And declared it first, a fitting forerunner,
As though baptising your infant space.

A season later, your work was done:
Having seen a home for the library you loved,
A place where younger minds could grow,
You flew South, beyond the equator,
To your boyhood in Australia.

Tom Petsinis

Victoria University

Letter to Bernard Hickey
The Grand Host of OZlit.
Angel's Lane

Pordenone, 28th August 2007

Dear Bernard,

I'm writing this letter to you for I know you'll happily read and enjoy it in your new home in Angel's Lane, while you're dancing and parading with Angels (my dad is there too).

It is a letter of recollection and happiness for having you in our lives... you, who made us meet so many friends in Australian literature and worldwide.

You have this gift (among the many) of creating contacts, special occasions, memorable meetings, of letting the talents of those around you freely bloom, guiding and hinting but never imposing, jokingly but seriously engaged in the game of life, like a child but never childish.

That sense of ease, levity and joy you always communicate is very special!

I remember when, back in 1983, we were reading Patrick White's *Voss*, at Ca' Foscari, in Venice, with your entire library hanging all around and above us students, a small group, where I was the welcomed guest, being a (fresh) graduate from the University of Udine. Accompanied by your dynamic scholarship, rich but subdued, full of broad-mindedness, humanity, humility and simplicity, animated by your unerring and unwavering enthusiasm, we read and debated, talked and laughed and meditated on the grand issues of life and death, as White presented them and as we responded. You also gave us the wonderful chance of meeting Veronica Brady then, who became a close friend. *Voss* later became the subject of my first study/book on Australian Literature.

It all seemed very simple to us then, easy, direct, immediate. Only later I realized how much energy and perseverance you had to exercise, in order to teach Ozlit then, and even much earlier than that (1968)... to transfuse with human warmth and ebullience all the new serious issues of 'Commonwealth' literature, as it was called... very daring, very heretic, certainly against the 'canon'. "Do they have a literature?" my very British lecturer used to say, with a slight frown and a very clear condescending accent on they...

Our relationship goes much further back than that... back in the Sixties, when my father Luigi Riem organized with your help a Conference on Ezra Pound in Maniago (very daring, very heretic too). You always remembered with the usual joy this parental antecedent to our meeting and friendship... You said it was meant to be: I was 'a great investment' for Australian studies; this you said, and has become common saying, when I won the Australian-European Award Programme scholarship in 1985, that granted me the wonderful chance ("Aren't we lucky!") to live and study in Brisbane and meet many other friends there.

And remember that time in Lecce, at your place, with another Luigi (Natale, my husband), this time, when you recited Yeats' "Sailing To Byzantium" in English and he followed with the Italian verses.

But this, of course, you already know and well recall, and much more there would be in the telling. The (other) thing is that we all miss you, even if we well know you're there with us, in this wonderful, stunning Earth journey, which you graciously shared with us, just for some time.

With much love
Yours,
Antonella (Stunning!)

Antonella Riem Natale
University of Udine

I alter and adapt lines by an Irishman to salute Bernard Hickey: Irishman, Australian, Italian and, above all, a human being, a man who had a wonderful mind, a warm heart and a generous spirit. What matters is not death but life - and Bernard's was a life of reaching out to others and generously giving of himself.

And that enquiring man
Chose the living world for text
And never could have rested in the tomb
But that, long travelling, he had come
Towards nightfall upon a certain place,
Towards nightfall upon people
Passionate and true like his heart.

(Adapted from W. B. Yeats', 'In memory of Major Robert Gregory')

Charles Sarvan
Professor of English

Lady Effie's Teapot
Bernard Hickey and the Battle of the Plate

When I arrived to Lecce, November 1996, Bernard warmly welcomed me and patiently taught me many things about the town and its University. Despite of his peculiar Italian and my English "to be used in emergency case", we always spoke English and a nice friendship began. I miss his long telephone calls, I miss his joy of life, I miss his being so cheerful. Lecce is no more the same for me without him.

There was a curious little link between us. In December 1939, the first naval battle of Second World War was fought in the River Plate (huge estuary of the two rivers Paraná and Uruguay), but its end was "not fought". German cruiser Graf Spee was in the South Atlantic Ocean and, after a crude encounter with the British war ships Achilles, Ajax and Exeter, took refuge in Montevideo, Uruguay (where later, in the 60s and 70s, I grew up). A war ship was allowed to stay in a neutral harbour up to three days. British ambassador, Eugene Millington Drake, later distinguished as "Sir" for his ability in this affair, managed to convince Uruguayan authorities to accept Graf Spee and later to oblige her to stay in Montevideo for three days, by means of another rule: a war ship couldn't leave the harbour less than six hours after an enemy vessel. Millington Drake organized the outgoing of British and French ships every six hours so as to 'kidnap' the Graf Spee. In the meanwhile, other ships of British navy had approached and were able to avoid her entrance into the Ocean from the River Plate; after three days, Millington Drake pointed out that Graf Spee had to leave or she would become Uruguayan until the end of the war. The ship was not yet repaired, so the German commander decided to scuttle her to avoid battle or surrender. Some sailors went back to Germany to continue the war, while others decided to stay in Uruguay, where they gave rise to peaceful descendants. The commander fled to Buenos Aires where a few days later he supposedly committed suicide.

Bernard's favourite teapot was bought in an auction, I don't know when, I imagine in London or in Rome, and its earlier owner was Lady Effie, Millington Drake's wife. When we had tea at Bernard's home, we imagined Lady Effie, in British Embassy of Montevideo, serving tea to the future Sir Eugene, in order to keep him awake during the Battle of the Plate. The three days of Graf Spee in Montevideo were very stressing for Millington Drake, and the Ambassador - we supposed - drank many cups of tea, poured from Lady Effie's Teapot. Around sixty years later, at Bernard's home, we used to have tea, poured from the same teapot ... It was pleasant to discover a curious link between so distant countries (Italy, Australia, Britain, Uruguay...) and old memories hidden in a teapot.

A teapot may be something more than a simple teapot. Bernard was capable to give it a special meaning: it was the Lady Effie's Teapot.

Diego Simini
University of Salento

SONG

(i.m. Bernard Hickey)

Lost if I steer
Time will take over again
Willing me down the asphalt
Avenues of fear.

A tourist in my life,
Having mislaid the map
I steer by setting suns,
Minimizing strife.

Whoever wove the rope,
Plaiting it justly to size,
Has left me a few feet more
Twined with uneasy hope.

With your spry energy
You spun a spreading shawl
Sheltering all of us
In the web of courtesy.

Chris Wallace Crabbe
University of Melbourne