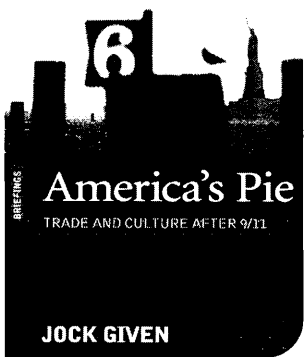


Reviews



America's Pie: Trade and Culture after 9/11

by Jock Given, UNSW
Press, Nov 2003; pp 96;

\$16.95

America's Pie: Trade and Culture after 9/11.

Jock Given's 'America's Pie: Trade and Culture after 9/11' is an excellent new edition to the screen industry, culture and policy research series 'Briefings', which is jointly funded by the Australian Research Council and the Australian Film Commission.

America's Pie examines the treatment of cultural products in international trade arrangements, approaching the topic as a contest between two ideas—"the idea that people should be free to make and trade their wares, and the idea that people should be free to create, distribute, receive and engage with things, practices and people that offer meaning to their lives". A major theme is the tension between free trade and the support and protection of local cultural products.

America's Pie takes the reader through a chronological account of the history of international trade in cultural goods, specifically movies, and later, television. Given tells the story of how international trade negotiations in relation to these products shaped both international markets in such goods, and affected local film and television industry. The book pays the Australian film industry particular attention, giving the reader an engaging account of the broader context in which the Australian film industry developed to its current world position. The book also gives insightful accounts of each stage of major international trade negotiations in relation to cultural products, from the early part of the 20th century, through the 1944 Bretton-Woods conference, the development of the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT), and up until the preliminary stages of the United States-Australia free trade agreement.

The book is clearly well-researched, and Given appears at ease with his material. He imposes an organised structure on a topic that might otherwise have proved difficult to engage with for readers who have little background in this area. By weaving a basic account of the intellectual background to ideas of free trade, with concise coverage of the various international agreements on trade and their local implications, Given manages to skillfully develop the reader's understanding of this necessary contextual material, while continuing to advance his analysis of the book's central themes.

At times, however, *America's Pie* suffers a little from the restraints imposed by its brief length. While in the main, the brevity is the book's strength, at some points a more detailed account of the history of an event or the details of a particular agreement are needed to enable readers with no background in this area to make sense of the discussion of the issues. The book is perhaps best viewed as a short introduction to a range of issues, rather than an exhaustive treatment of a particular area of interest.

Overall, *America's Pie* makes many interesting points about the role of cultural products in the general context of international trade, and how debate over the treatment of culture is a vital part of Australia's economic and political relationships with other nations. It also provides a lucid, informative introduction to a perhaps sometimes overlooked issue in international trade discussions.

△ Imogen Goold

The Legal Labyrinth: The Kisch Case and Other Reflections on Law and Literature

The Kisch case is a fascinating episode in Australia's immigration history. Egon Kisch was a left-wing Czechoslovakian journalist who sailed to Australia in 1934 to address an anti-war rally. Upon arrival, he was declared an 'undesirable person' under the Immigration Act 1901 (Cth), and refused permission to land. After obtaining a writ of habeas corpus, he was made to sit the immigration 'dictation test'. Kisch was fluent in several languages, so the officials gave him dictation in Scottish Gaelic. He failed, and appealed—ending in a High Court ruling that Scottish Gaelic was not a European language for the purpose of the Act.

In 1999, Nicholas Hasluck released a fictionalised account of the Kisch case, *Our Man K*. Now, in *The Legal Labyrinth: The Kisch Case and Other Reflections on Law and Literature*, he uses the Kisch case to introduce several themes on law and literature.

Hasluck provides a lively, well-researched account of the Kisch case as it unfolded, and the political context in which it occurred. He also paints a vivid portrait of Kisch the man, speculating as to why officials were so intent on excluding him from Australia. In this section of the book, Hasluck draws on both Kisch's own account of the events (his memoir, *Australian Landfall*), and an unpublished manuscript by Kisch's barrister, AB Piddington. He argues that the case is an example of Australia's "ongoing fear of the outsider, its tendency to resist new and unsettling ideas".

Hasluck follows this section with a 100-page account of his travels in Vietnam, recounting the development of his ideas for *Our Man K*. In this section he draws certain parallels between Kisch and Ho Chi Minh. In particular, he compares Ho's "journey through the legal labyrinth"—in the form of deportation proceedings in Hong Kong in the early 1930s—with Kisch's experience in Australia several years later.

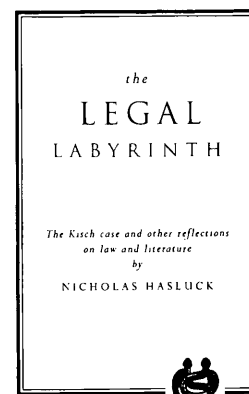
One of Hasluck's central themes is the role of fiction in capturing turning points in history. He suggests that the role of the novelist is to capture the "moment of alteration", in which an individual or group realises that one era is ending and a new one beginning. Hasluck

appears to regard the Kisch case as one such turning point.

Another central theme is the portrayal of law in literature and film. In the third section of the book, Hasluck explores the portrayal of the law and legal proceedings in various novels, including Kafka's *The Trial* and Wolfe's *Bonfire of the Vanities*. He then critiques Justice Ian Callinan's novel, *The Lawyer and the Libertine*.

The Legal Labyrinth provides an interesting account of an unusual episode in Australia's immigration history. On the whole, however, the book is disjointed and at times difficult to follow. The middle section on Hasluck's travels to Vietnam is perhaps too long and detailed in the context of the short book. The final section contains an interesting discussion of law and literature, but the structure seems to lack any overarching order, and his point is not always clear.

△ Gabrielle Carney



The Legal Labyrinth: The Kisch Case and Other Reflections on Law and Literature

by Nicholas Hasluck,
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