

# climate



mind." John Howard's poet Les Murray opposes the war, while the ageing angry young man Alan Sillitoe and science fiction legend Brian Aldiss give it their blessing.

Of the 71 responses to the Iraq survey, about 50 authors come down against the invasion. In the Gulf War section — apparently salvaged from a book aborted in 1991 — the percentage is slightly less, although the peaceniks are still in the majority.

Doubtless the result will confirm the Murdoch press's fears about the seditious tendencies of the chattering classes, but the book does not pack much punch: more parlour game than manifesto.

It is worth comparing this to the 1937 pamphlet that inspired it, Nancy Cunard's legendary *Authors take Sides on the Spanish War*. What made that book so important? Partly it was the cast — Auden, Spender, Pound, Eliot etc. But more than that, Cunard's pamphlet burst on to a political scene that was polarised and catalysed by the Spanish Civil War. Her authors really did take sides: joining organisations, attending meetings, travelling to Spain.

Today, the atrophy of participatory politics makes the transformation of opinion into commitment much more problematic. And that's a problem for all of us, not just the literati.

Jeff Sparrow is reviews editor of *Overland* magazine and co-author of *Radical Melbourne 2: The Enemy Within*.

journalism. On the pro-war team, Tory stalwart William Rees-Mogg goes a step further, dispensing with a lordly wave an excerpt from *The Times*.

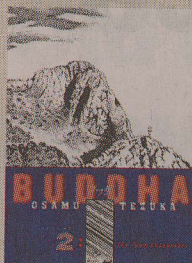
*Authors take Sides* works best when it produces jarring disjunctions between political attitudes and literary reputations. Jilly Cooper — the original bodice-ripper — declares, "I was utterly against the war on Iraq". That nice mandolin-strumming Louise de Bernieres delivers the following clanger: "Arabs have no natural tradition of democracy and their religion gives them an ultra-conservative, patriarchal, authoritarian and absolutist cast of

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idea of decline. Carroll's guiding light through much of his story is Friedrich Nietzsche, and

state we're in now gives rise to nothing worthwhile, according to Carroll. Modern art is pretty

## FICTION CAMERON WOODHEAD



### Buddha Vol. 1: Kapilavastu

Osamu Tezuka  
Vertical, \$44.95

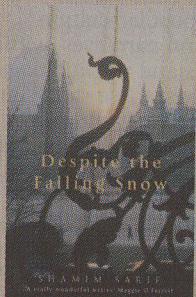
Osamu Tezuka, the creator of *Astro Boy* and grandfather of manga, also produced graphic novels. His eight-volume masterpiece is an immense work that captures with eloquence, humanity and irrepressible humour the life and teachings of the Buddha. In the first instalment, Tatta, a beggar with spiritual powers, and his friend Chapra, a slave boy, are driven from their village by war. Chapra becomes the adopted son of a general, but disaster strikes. Meanwhile, in the nearby palace of Kapilavastu, a special child is born. Buddha combines Tezuka's original characters with traditional lore to create a quirky and entertaining epic that will appeal to all ages.

The Age  
July 10, 2004



### Tender Hooligan

middle-aged Scottish gangster now for his mother's funeral. out of the game, Blaney best-selling memoir, Chopper Read-style. Now he has to face the music. Back on home turf, there are a lot of former associates who want to wipe him out for spilling the beans. And others who want him to resume his notorious career. In the middle of all this, Blaney relates the darkly funny story of his dysfunctional childhood and how he came to bash people's heads in with hammers for a living. This is a black comedy/gangster drama reminiscent of the film *Sexy Beast*, relocated to the impoverished lowlands. Pattison's central character is a profane delight; his masterful evocation of the Scottish underworld compelling.



### Despite The Falling Snow

Shamim Sarif  
Review, \$32.95

Now a successful businessman in the US, Alexander Ivanov was a senior political attache to the Soviet government during the 1950s. But his young wife, Katya, never made it out of Russia alive. When Estelle comes into his life four decades later, Alexander is tempted to love again. But at the same time Estelle's daughter, Melissa, and Alexander's niece, Lauren, embark upon a quest to uncover the truth about what really happened to Katya, reopening the wounds of the past. Shamim Sarif's first novel, *The World Unseen*, was received to critical acclaim. Her second is a well-executed tale of love and betrayal that moves between Khrushchev's Russia and modern-day Boston with consummate ease. For the most part, this is a vivid and dramatic book although it doesn't attain quite the degree of fleshed-out realism that its plot requires.