

Rush trial will leave behind nothing but wreckage

Even once the judge reaches a verdict, we will learn precisely nothing of value.

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IMAGE CREDIT: PETER RAE/AAP

I remembered hearing titters of laughter, murmuring of responses around the rehearsal room ... I opened my eyes and Geoffrey was kneeling over me and he had both his hands above my torso and he was gesturing stroking up and down my torso and gesturing groping or cupping above my breasts. He was looking up to the front of the room and kind of raising his eyebrows and smiling and licking his lips. I heard [the director] say 'Geoffrey stop that'.

That was Eryn-Jean Norvill, unfamous young female actor, telling the Federal Court about one of the things she claims Geoffrey Rush, famous old male actor, did to her while they were rehearsing her death scene in *King Lear*, and what she says the rest of the cast and crew did about it.

Norvill is giving evidence, not to pursue her rights or reclaim her dignity and career, but to save *The Daily Telegraph* from a potentially massive defamation payout to Rush, as he seeks to vindicate his reputation and stare down the allegations that he says are slanderous lies.

Norvill was preceded into the witness box by a parade of luminaries; a who's who of Australian theatre. *I didn't see him do anything*, said those who were in a position to see. *He wouldn't*, said those who weren't. Nope, she never complained to me. As Norvill had plaintively said to Robyn Nevin in a text message when the story first broke, "I'm fairly alone now". Nevin expressed sympathy. But she swears she didn't say to Norvill, "I thought Geoffrey had stopped doing that".

Norvill had said more in her texts to Nevin: “And the truth is I tried to keep out of it. But here I am, in the eye of the storm. I just want to do my job and feel safe.” That hope is gone.

The media haven’t had so much fun in ages. How often do they get to chase Judy Davis down Phillip Street? The narrative is positively Shakespearean; pounds of flesh being carved out of passionately heaving breasts for our evening entertainment. The law demands that there be an objective truth at the bottom of this. Either Norvill is lying, or Rush is lying. If this case doesn’t settle (my bet is it probably will) before it’s finished chewing up the scenery and the public resource of our court system, the judge will have to conclude that one of these fine actors was acting. From that verdict, we will learn precisely nothing of value. We will be no closer to knowing what really happened. This case is creating only wreckage. We are in the wrong forum. If we want to learn anything new, if we would like to evolve as a society, then we have to find something better than forcing young women into the witness box to tell their stories and be retraumatized repeatedly, in the quixotic quest for the “truth”.

**Thanks to Lane Saintry of BuzzFeed, I totally stole your quoting of Norvill’s testimony.*