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41

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WINTER, 1969

# OVERLAND

**Temper democratic, bias Australian**



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PAT FLOWER

## watching Barbara Stanwyck

The visitor threw his right foot over his left knee. "Who's that?" And lighted a cigarette. Not asking Mrs. Stafford whether she minded.

"For heaven's sake! It's Barbara Stanwyck. Can't you tell by the satin housecoat?" The ignorance of some people, Mrs. Stafford thought.

"That walk, too," Mr. Stafford said, raking about in his pipe with a dead match.

"Oh, so that's Barbara Stanwyck," the visitor said, fiddling with the sock at the ankle of his elevated right foot.

"I thought everybody knew Barbara Stanwyck." Mrs. Stafford felt a bit suspicious. Had this man been shut away somewhere? After all, what did they know of him, except that he was urging one-way parking in their street and didn't know Barbara Stanwyck?

"Give me Joan Crawford," Mr. Stafford said, stuffing tobacco in his pipe.

"Joan Crawford, Joan Crawford, Joan Crawford." Mrs. Stafford's smile forced a path through resentment. "You're always going on about Joan Crawford."

"I suppose it's the age group." The visitor, half their age, put his right foot back on the floor and stretched. "I like the with-it kids, with their Minties and Cokes and Kools and Berlei Sarongs."

"The commercials?" Mrs. Stafford unwrapped a TeeVee sweet. The man was impertinent as well as shifty.

"Very well done," the visitor said, "bags of talent."

"Talent, yes . . ." Mrs. Stafford felt she'd scored a point putting it like that.



Mr. Stafford guffawed. "Trouble is, they keep interrupting 'em with Barbara Stanwyck." He laughed so much he had to put his pipe down. His wife wished he wouldn't sit in his braces before a visitor, even an offensive psychopath. She wondered again, for the seven hundred and forty second time, why she'd married him.

"Variety, too," the visitor said, "Tonight with Whosis, and talent quests and Mavis." He wriggled pruriently on the sofa.

"You don't mind queers?" Disapproval and triumph fought for top place in Mrs. Stafford's tone.

"Got to make a living, same as everybody."

"You don't object, then?" She could nail him down here to something nasty.

"I don't have anything to do with them, do I? So long as they've got talent."

"Talent, yes," Mr. Stafford said, as though he knew anything about it.

Barbara Stanwyck's eyes glittered as she muttered something to a man you could only see the back hair of.

"Take commercials," the probably-queer and certainly-offensive psychopath said (they should have dealt with him at the door), "they make the programs possible, don't they?"

"Who's behind the opera on the A.B.C., then?" Mrs. Stafford could afford to smile in open victory.

"Probably goes right back to Duckmanton."

"He's good, that Charlie Drake," Mr. Stafford said.

"Oh, do shut up, Fred," Mrs. Stafford said, "you don't know anything at all about the telly. Mr. Duckmanton isn't Charlie Drake the Worker, he's the General Manager of the A.B.C."

"Might even go back to the P.M.G.," the visitor said, "or even Gorton."

"She's just put a gun in her pocket," Mr. Stafford said, his eyes glued to Barbara Stanwyck's swift glidings in the satin housecoat as the climax neared.

"Then there's westerns," the visitor said, leaving it at that.

"Barbara Stanwyck does more shooting than Joan Crawford." Mr. Stafford had got his pipe alight at last and a blue haze spread in front of the screen.

"I just don't know who writes it all," Mrs. Stafford said, "that's if it is written."

"Writers write it," the visitor said, a know-all. "Playwrights."

"Make a fortune." Mr. Stafford felt a thrill as he watched B. Stanwyck walk into a trap, into the next room where death lurked, although he knew it would all come out all right in the end.

"That's just where you're wrong," the visitor said, "not in this country, they don't. It's like this one-way parking, it's something that's got to be straightened out."

"Are you in business?" Mrs. Stafford asked, knowing him for a racketeer and child-strangler.

"Furniture . . ."

"What about Australian Playhouse?" Mr. Stafford said.

". . . junk mostly, and removals. Half the time I can't park my pantehnicon."

"Oh, so it's self-interest . . .?"

"Shut up," Mr. Stafford said, concentrating on the screen.

"Don't you tell me to shut up, Fred . . ."

"Been trying to tell you for years . . ."

"Fred, there's a stranger present . . ."

An explosion made them all jump. It was Barbara Stanwyck shooting her cruel husband. A neat, simple way out. Especially as she'd snarl her way out of it and marry the other bloke.

Mrs. Stafford's mind, when she went to bed later and was just dropping off after having got the visitor a cup of tea which she'd offered by saying You don't like tea, do you? and been confounded and angered by his Don't mind if I do, and after finally getting rid of him with a promise to sign his petition and telling Fred, who went on so, to shut up—was a moving montage of detergents, Bonanza, crunchy biscuits, The Fugitive and The Avengers. Thoughts of murder wriggled through it.

But hadn't they always? Was it Fred she wanted to wipe out, or was it the definitely-queer, offensively-impertinent, tea-swilling, teenager-tolerating maniac? Or Mr. Duckmanton? Or Channel Ten or Dominic McGooley? The weather men, perhaps? Or perhaps the entire A.B.C. and Screen Gems? Or all the writers (if indeed writers there were) who wrote it all? Or the television set itself? Or perhaps after all it was just Barbara Stanwyck.

Such a headache.



## SOCIETY

'Society', when I was young—  
a word that bristled on my tongue—  
meant fashion and my-lady's dress  
and Women's Pages in the press  
and girls who, prickly and polite,  
would numb a fumbling lout with fright;  
while 'social' was a word (to give  
'society' its adjective)  
which stood for brutes in modish clothes  
with cultured manners that one loathes  
if one is conscious of one's hands,  
the way one speaks, the way one stands,  
and hatches vengeful, inward plots  
fit for the claws of sans-culottes.

One knew that, sour residuum,  
'society' had "dregs" and "scum"  
whom 'social workers' might retrieve—  
a thing not easy to achieve  
by church, police or 'socialist';  
but soon one learns how terms can twist  
and definitions grow entwined  
with bent assumptions of the mind;  
and then 'society' becomes  
neither the mansion nor the slums  
nor meeting-place of lad and lass,  
but life's whole tangle and morass.

Therein—though I have neither graced  
gay, brilliant company, nor faced  
distresses, for mankind, and lent  
to councils, unions, parliament,  
the service of what gifts I had—  
I yet, like most men, have been glad  
to work and live and be exposed  
to joys and ills that time disclosed,  
and family matters, change and chance—  
the tumbling dice of circumstance;  
and since this churns me too within  
the ferment of all human kin,  
now, in these latter days, forgive,  
'Society', your fugitive.

ROBERT D. FITZGERALD



JOHN McLAREN

# electronic progress

"It is the task of the arts to enable man to choose, to give him back his past and put the present into his possession"

The faith of the twentieth century is neither in science nor in technology, but in progress. The notion permeates our culture from highbrow to low, from the critics who spurn yesterday's painters, writers and musicians because they belong to the past, to the fans of the disco who now regard the Beatles as old hat. Progress, disguised in the rhetoric of growth and development, ensures the election and re-election of the most reactionary governments. It is in the name of progress that we despoil our bushland, exterminate our fauna, defile our shores and rivers, and pollute the atmosphere of the globe. It is the ideology of progress, individual and national, with its myths of self-made men and the free way of life, seen in terms of democratic elections and a car, a washing machine, a telly set and a bottle of coke for everyone, which has led directly to the disaster of Vietnam.

The idea of progress combines with the Australian hedonistic myth to prevent any questioning of either the reality or the direction of the progress. The ideal of the good life, so sedulously cultivated by advertisers and politicians, is so self-evidently true that no-one stops to ask whether there is any use for a car without a road to drive it on, or, more pertinently, of a road without anywhere worthwhile to go.

It is notable that the symbols of progress are almost entirely material—automobiles, television, computers, space rockets. Each of these devices certainly represents a triumph of human ability, yet, ironically, technology is probably the major victim of the myth of progress. This has happened because the technologist is the servant, albeit the willing servant, of the merchandiser and the bureaucrat. The automobile, symbol of the twentieth century, represents a triumph of advertising, not of technology. Automotive engineers and designers are not concerned with producing

vehicles which will transport people more efficiently from place to place, but with designing bigger, glossier, more powerful symbols of success. These have to be sold in bigger numbers each year, not so that a mass market will lower prices, but so that the cost of the annual re-tooling of the factories can be justified. This in turn demands an ever increasing number of workers, a greater level of expenditure, a proportionately greater share of the available resources.

So we find that in every western economy the automobile industry occupies a critical place, and can demand preferential treatment in order to preserve the livelihood of millions. As sales and employment increase annually with progress, so we become ever more dependent on this single industry. Meanwhile, we have no resources to spare to produce a safe, an efficient, or a non-poisonous vehicle.

The motive of private profit is not a necessary factor in producing this waste and misdirection of economic and technological resources. Precisely the same phenomenon can be seen in the space programs of Russia and America, which, at fantastic cost, are duplicating each other's work for reasons of national prestige and defence.

The common factor in these technological phenomena is electronics, which is most familiar to us in the television screen and the electric guitar. It is electronics which, in Marshall McLuhan's words, has enabled man to tune himself in to the nervous system of the world. Electronics has made possible instant communication, the storing and retrieval of immense amounts of information, and the swift calculation of problems too complex to be dealt with by the human brain. In effect, electronics extends man's reasoning, sensory, perceptual and emotional systems in a way analogous to that in which mechanics extends his physical range. But whereas the mechanical rev-



olution extended man as an individual, the electronic revolution threatens to destroy his individuality by plugging him into an anonymous global mass of circuitry. Whereas the economic order was once maintained by the bonds of custom, ignorance, social order and religion, the new order is cemented by artificially created wants, a simplified and falsified view of the world, anonymous corporations and raucous slogans and symbols.

The decisions of the individual can only be made within the pattern provided by society. The individual soldier may command enormous firepower, but he cannot choose his war. The consumer can purchase only what it is expedient for society to offer him. The question of what he has to buy for himself and what will be provided from his taxes is decided for him, and decided differently in different countries, but the decision is presented to him as the operation of a natural law. The producer, whether laborer, technologist, or executive, finally works for the combination of three hundred or so anonymous international combines which, assisted by a dash of Keynes, set the pattern of the non-communist world's economy. The whole complex ideology of capitalism has been boiled down to two meaningless words—profit and growth, which between them justify any insanity.

The situation in the communist world is not so different. Communist economies may be less subject to market forces and more open to arbitrary decisions, but these decisions are made on the basis of rhetoric or as a result of internal power struggles, and certainly have not attempted to increase the freedom of the individual. In both east and west, the individual is in the control of bureaucrats, public or private, who merely serve the apparatus as they are allowed. At the head of both systems are the machine men, trained as bureaucrats but with that additional ruthlessness which has brought them to the top. Once at the top, however, they find themselves either, like Wilson or De Gaulle, subject to forces beyond their control, or, like the American and Russian leaders, the prisoners of their own rhetoric. Decisions are therefore made on the basis of day to day expediency, and the major task of creating a social and natural environment fit for man to inhabit is left to go by default. Both the Russian invasion of Czechoslovakia and the American assault on the people of Vietnam have occurred because the men in power, and their propagandists, see any departure from the system they have ordained as a threat to themselves. In neither case have the interests of either the invaders or the invaded been served by the operation.

Yet the individual does still possess residual power. No government can operate without at

least the acquiescence of the people. In a country like Spain, with an autocratic tradition, rigid society, widespread ignorance and bitter memories, it may be able to retain this acquiescence for an indefinite period. In more developed countries, however, it must educate an increasing number of people merely to maintain the machine. Moreover, the machine, both computer and television set, puts these people in command of a great array of facts, and some will have the capacity to analyse the facts. Complete censorship is ultimately impossible. Even the thoughts of Chairman Mao must eventually lose their centrality in an expanding universe, although the western world is doing its best to postpone this outcome by abetting the Chinese desire for isolation.

Both the extent and the limitations of this residual power of the individual were revealed by the events of the American election year and by the resistance in Czechoslovakia. In each case, the resisters have, at present, been defeated, but also in each case they partially thwarted the ambitions of the enemy. President Johnson was forced to abdicate, and the Czechoslovak leadership does still hold office, if not power. The immediate future is gloomy, but both episodes are tremendously encouraging as examples of the continuing human ability to resist. The most urgent political task, therefore, would seem to be, not to storm the commanding heights of power, but to strengthen this potential for resistance.

This is where the new media of electronics, and particularly of television, are crucial, because of their ability to 'tell it like it is'. It may be that the small screen reduces everything to the same level of triviality, but certain shots, like the tanks in Prague or the Viet-Cong captive crumpling at his executioner's bullet, have had the power to galvanise the world. The Vietnam newsreels may be only a less-smoothly-produced western, but they did lend force to McCarthy's crusade. Nor does the blurring of fact and fantasy matter in an age where the distinction is less meaningful anyway, both because today's fancy may be tomorrow's fact and because my fantasy determines the facts I see. The very immediacy, even the triviality, of television makes it the obvious medium for exploring a world which seeks to reduce the individual to a trivial cog without either memory or anticipation. Television can dramatise this reality in terms which can restore its dimensions without losing its immediacy.

Moreover, television seems to attract many of the most creative talents of the generation. Its constant search for novelty demands imagination on the part of the producer, even if it suppresses it on the part of the consumer. But, if it demands



imagination, it can also exhaust and emasculate this imagination until only fancy is left. If man is to remain master of the machine, using it for his creative purposes instead of merely serving it for bread, he must first free himself from the myths which rationalise his servitude. It is no use pretending that the operator is merely giving the public what it wants, when he is manufacturing those wants, but not on the basis of any choice freely made by the public for itself. It is absurd to pretend that the advertiser is rendering any service by promoting identical types of petrol for different companies, or establishing brand differentiation for competing soaps manufactured by the same company. It is a fallacy to believe that advertising provides free television services—it is not even an economic method of diverting resources to this purpose.

Once the television operators have freed themselves from their mythology, they will be in a position to free themselves from their bureaucracy. They should insist that programming decisions are made co-operatively, so as to give the public a real choice, instead of providing the same kind of offering simultaneously on every channel. The operators should insist, if necessary with industrial strength, that station managers be given complete authority, and that the owners be allowed to lay down only the financial guidelines. Academic freedom is more necessary in a television station than in a university, but few television operatives seem to understand the phrase. Those that do are no longer seen on our screens. Yet the airwaves are, in theory, public property, and should be available to anyone who has something to say, rather than to the few who are prepared to say what others tell them.

If television can be freed for the operators instead of remaining the property of owners and administrators it could restore to man the control of his own destiny. It can do this by dramatising

the issues which confront him, by dispelling the fantasy with which the propagandists have clothed our vision of the world, by restoring his faith in his own power of choice. If the operators cannot take this control, we face a future when the television set, receiving its signals direct from the IBM satellite above, will be the main instrument by which we are all plugged in as units in a global computer.

Yet, in the present state of affairs, even a temporary take-over by the producers, on the French pattern, seems highly unlikely. Nevertheless much could be done by the use of underground tactics, particularly by the technical staff. Norman Mailer, in "Advertisements for Myself", describes how a clever manipulator can commit murder in the mass media. He himself was, on two occasions, the victim. However, this tactic can work in both directions. The difficulty today is that television in Australia is left too much in the hands of the smooth-faced deep voices who believe their own myths and pour syrup over every topic that could possibly bring a blush to the face of the old person. Their only idea of rebellion is to make a brief comment on a forbidden topic while the boss is safely overseas, or to make a personal attack on any guest presenting a non-establishment point of view.

We rely too much on the panel interview, where no point can be properly developed because there is always something else to be questioned. We have too few producers or interviewers who are prepared, or have the opportunity, to find the people who have something to say and then subject them to a long, probing interview on the subject. When we do have a program which attempts to examine a subject in depth, using television rather than lecture-room methods, it fares like "Tiny World in Space", which was subjected to bitter attacks by one of the participants who had failed to understand the whole purpose of the session.

---

But chiefly the suborners: Common Tout  
And Punk, the Advertiser, him I mean  
And his smooth hatchet-man, the Technocrat,  
Then let my malediction single out,  
These modern Dives with their talking screen  
Who lick the sores of Lazarus and grow fat,

Licensed to pimp, solicit and procure  
Here in my house, to foul my feast, to bawl  
Their wares while I am talking with my friend,  
To pour into my ears a public sewer  
Of all the Strumpet Muses sell and all  
That prostituted science has to vend.

A. D. HOPE: From "A Commination"



What is needed above all is a point of view. In any public affairs program the producers should have decided what they think before they start filming—but their decision should be the result of hard work on the subject. In the course of the actual production, they may change their mind, but this will be because their further study of the facts, by way of the camera, forces them to reach a different conclusion. The myth of objectivity needs to be discarded—it is meaningless, for a man can see only what he has learnt to see, and one of the tasks of television is to show him what the producer sees. Anyway, is a topic we view on the screen the subject or the object of our attention?

The whole trouble with the bland diet offered on our screens is that the lack of any point of view prevents it, except on a few outstanding occasions when the fact itself has a drama which bursts through the normal apathy, from actually showing things as they are. Certainly, there are programs which come closer than others. Drama series like "Dr. Finlay's Casebook" or "Softly Softly", to mention my own favorites, do show us recognisable human beings caught in real dilemmas. Comedy shows like "Meet the Wife" or "Hancock's Half Hour" also derive their interest from the normality of their situation, a normality the more recognisable because it is so slightly twisted. Better still are shows like "Steptoe" or "Till Death Us Do Part", for they show us ourselves not only as we know we are but also as we are not prepared to admit we are. Yet none of these shows is sufficient to dispel our general apathy, for they are all too neatly balanced. Everyone in them is too human, the faults are neatly distributed all round, and everyone collects \$200 as he passes Go. If there are any bastards, they are either lovable old bastards or they have a good case for their actions. No show ever says unequivocally that something is wrong.

The shows which do have the power to disturb are the way out ones . . . the leaping nuns, some episodes of the "Frost Report", "Diary of a Young Man", the middle series of "The Avengers", and more recently "Laugh-in". The only equivalent quality in Australian television is found in the advertisements. There is, however, this important difference. A show like "Not Only . . . But Also" takes a piece of reality, twists it around and thrusts it back at the viewer with its disturbing implications exposed. The advertisement, on the other hand, is made by someone aware of the implications of his theme but concerned to keep them hidden from the viewer. An advertisement like "Sleep wonderfully warm with Linda" appeals to our latent sexuality, but only in the manner of a bar room joke. That is, it raises the subject only

to dismiss it before it is allowed to disturb us into fuller awareness. In this case, the dismissal is less honest than it is in the bar-room, for our attention is diverted to an irrelevant commercial object.

The dishonesty, the cosy apathy, and the irrelevance of most television probably account for its limited appeal to young people. Although the swinging generation is the generation which has grown up with the electronic screen, it now applies the lessons elsewhere. Certainly, it has absorbed the electronic values—the delight in gadgetry, the emphasis on immediate sensation, the impatience with anyone older than twenty years or anything older than twenty weeks—but it finds its pleasure in cars and on beaches, with a transistor or a guitar and drums, rather than in front of the screen. This may be because parents still reign in the living room, but it is more likely to be because the screen holds no more interest for them. Their images of life may have come from "Peyton Place", and one day they may seek to recapture them in "Coronation Street", but meanwhile they don't want the image, they want life itself.

This suggests the essential quality of television for the consumer—its passivity. It is a substitute for life, not an adjunct to it. With radio, you can get up and dance, turn the room into your own discotheque, mime the actions, do what you like. In the picture theatre, you can cuddle or clap as the mood takes you. But before the little screen you are reduced to the compulsive auditor and peeping tom. People talk at you, they bare their emotions for you, but all you can do is nibble another slice of TV dinner.

If man is to choose his own future, he must possess his present, and for this he must have an understanding of his past. It is the task of the arts to enable man to choose, to give him back his past and put the present into his possession. But to do this they must speak in the language of today, which they continually fashion. Television is an integral part of this language, but it is too far removed from the other arts which are wrestling with the problem. It is still using the most modern forms to communicate outmoded concepts, and lessening the viewers' ability to adapt their nervous systems to the actual world around them. It will not overcome this deficiency as long as we think in terms of its content, arguing for more 'educational' or 'cultural' programs, or demanding a reduction in the amount of violence or ladies' underwear. Did you ever see a cultural play? Or go to an educational concert? You go to good or bad films and plays and concerts, and

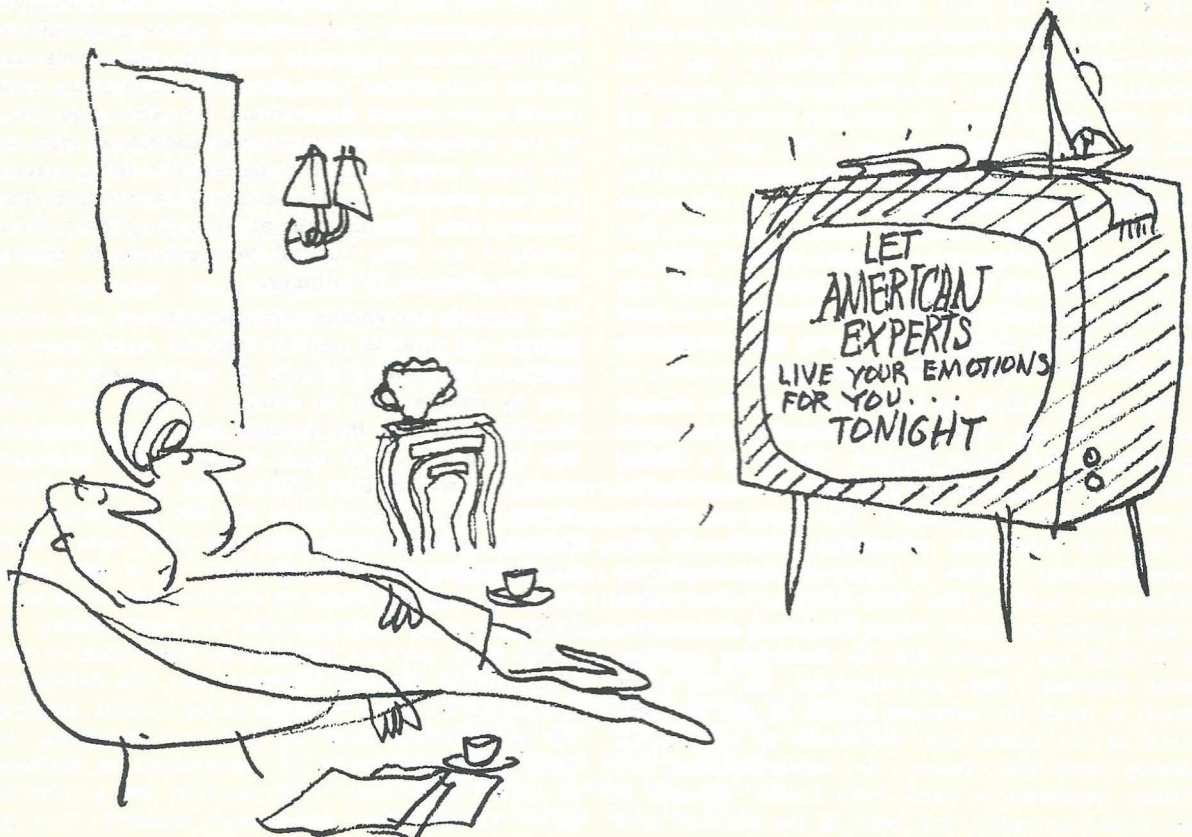


there is only good or bad television—television which liberates, and television which inhibits.

One of the most valuable contributions the Council for the Arts could make to Australian life would be to establish television workshops, on the analogy of theatre workshops. These should be attached to existing commercial television stations, with which they could perhaps share facilities. However, they should be completely autonomous. They would be places where people who want to use television to say something, or to do something, could come together and try out ideas. They would not be training institutions, but outlets for the creative talents which are being frustrated at present. If they produced anything worthwhile—that is, if any of the participants produced anything which their fellows agreed was worthwhile—this should be shown, at the expense of the Arts Council, on the commercial channel outside normal program hours. It would then be available for sale in the normal manner. With proper planning, such facilities

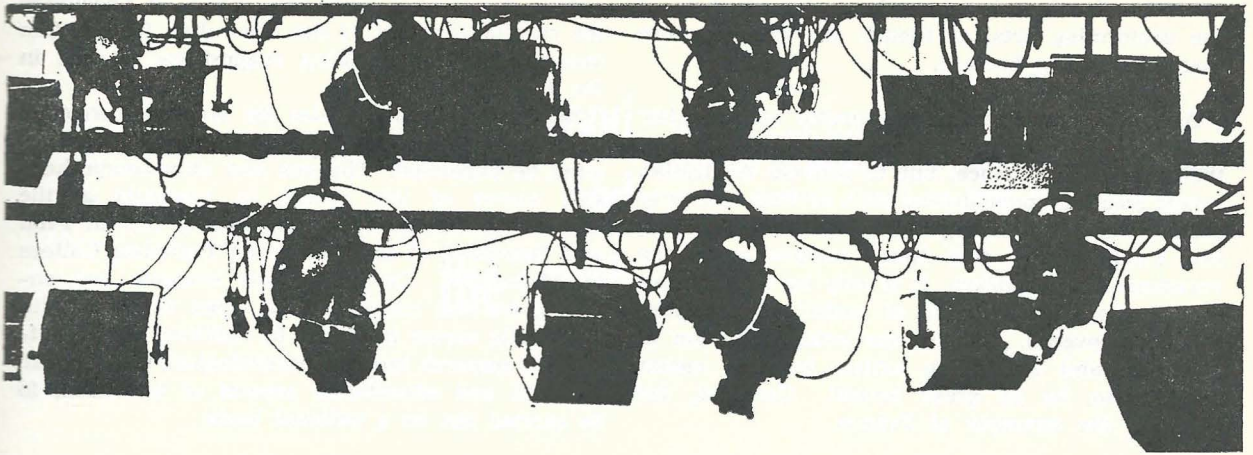
would attract not only people already in television, but also those who are exercising their talent in theatres, restaurants, art studios and the other fringe places of the art world. Yet it should also be planned on a lavish enough scale to develop a genuinely critical atmosphere, and avoid the cliquy little in-groups which always threaten independent creative enterprises.

The primary aim of these workshops would be neither to establish a 'television industry' nor to foster avant-garde experiments, but to throw the airwaves open to everyone able to use them. In this way television could draw from the life of the country, instead of merely feeding into it and manipulating it from outside. The work produced might well be frightening to many people, but man needs to be disturbed if he is going to look at himself without fear. When he can do this, he will be in a position to control the forces he himself has created. Then he may be able to look forward to real progress, not to any utopia, but at least to a genuinely free society.



—Bruce Petty





## BRIAN ROBINSON tv: at what cost?

From the outset, Australian television created an indelible impression of incompetence.

When TV was introduced in Australia thirteen years ago various technicians' courses were established, but training for the key creative personnel was overlooked. Producers, directors, writers, designers—these positions were filled by recruitment from other areas of mass communications, such as radio and advertising.

This was nothing new. Although, as is well known, we produced the world's first narrative feature film in 1901, our film makers through nearly seventy years have always been self-taught. Today they are occupied almost exclusively in producing documentary, instructional and commercial films.

But can we afford not to have a feature film industry, and trained personnel capable of running it? The images presented to Australians are predominantly those of other countries, other cultures. We live in an imaginative vacuum, in which our own lives, experiences and problems count for little. Over seventy per cent. of all drama presented on television comes from the U.S.A., another 19 per cent. from Britain (1967-8 figures). Not more than five per cent. of all drama shown is Australian in origin.

Our acceptance of TV is remarkable. We watch for ninety million hours a week. We have more TV sets in relation to population than any other country, with the exception of the U.S.A., Britain, Canada and Japan. Total television revenue in

1966-7 was well over \$100 million. In 1967-8 thirty-seven years of programs were shown, in terms of running time.

The importation of film for television has already cost Australia \$66,000,000 in foreign exchange. As against this, sales tax on TV sets has reaped the Government \$351,000,000. The loss, on the one hand and the gain, on the other, represent the problem and its solution. A fraction of this new-found tax could go far toward the encouragement of indigenous Australian film for television.

Given a situation in which Australia's dominant medium of mass communication disseminates a predominantly American image, and the fact that Australia's exports of film are negligible, we must accept that not only has Australia failed to project her culture abroad, but that American values are insidiously obliterating our own.

It is incredible that a government could remain apathetic to this prospect. Ironically, the most comprehensive document yet compiled on the nature and direction of the Australian film and television industries, the Vincent Report, has yet to be debated in Parliament, even five years after its release.

Australians have asserted their artistic genius, notably in the fields of opera, ballet and painting. Adequate training is available in these fields and State subsidies apply. However, television, which has undoubtedly eclipsed the traditional arts, enjoys little such support. It could be argued that the traditional arts are dying while television goes from strength to strength. Yet, the Establishment



tends to disdain television, the legitimate heir of the performing arts, as though it were no more than a usurping bastard.

Australia must increase the quality and quantity of her indigenous productions, not just to offset the American influence, but to provide Australian artists creative opportunities such as they currently pursue abroad. Having improved their quality, she would surely find them acceptable to the voracious world market. It is only by export sales that the production costs of ambitious programs can be recovered. The international promotion of Australia and Australian artists by this means would also be of great benefit. Consider, for instance, the example of France.

The government must be urged to encourage the re-establishment of the Australian feature film industry by implementing suggestions set out in the Vincent report.

Educational opportunities for creative personnel intending to enter the film and television industries must be expanded. The one and only comprehensive course of this nature in Australia at the moment is the four-year Diploma of Art in Film and Television at the Swinburne Technical College in Melbourne. Currently fifty students are enrolled, but the course is only open to those with an artistic career in mind. In addition, we urgently need research into the psychological, sociological, financial and educational aspects of television, to be carried out on a national basis.

## THE ACTOR

There once was this actor,  
though not so much acting  
as professionally resting  
in perpetual expectation  
of his next appearance.  
But actors must act  
and this actor acted,  
not under spotlights  
but between the red lights  
of countless zebra crossings.  
here his audience, captive,  
(the dream of every potential player)  
would watch him dance,  
grimace, and bow to the sound of revving engines,  
that seemed to snarl,  
"look at the crazy loon",  
as they eagerly waited for a green light  
to close a curtain  
on the whole embarrassing affair.  
Until, as the lights turned amber,  
with one last leap, the actor  
would somersault, smiling, to the footpath,  
to bow to his audience as it sped away.

One day the actor took his last curtain call,  
overstaying his welcome, and leaping  
as the lights turned green,  
fell beneath a doubledecker tramways bus,  
whose occupants were—almost genuinely—sad.

On his tombstone they wrote—  
"this was the only performance in which  
this actor ever created any real emotional response  
in his audience."

MICHAEL DUGAN



# Hollywood and the bush

DAVID BAKER

"Many young tram drivers are presently directing TV shows. And when they've had enough of this bullshit they'll go back to driving their trams again"

Twelve years ago Cecil Holmes wrote a piece in *Overland*, a piece preoccupied with fantasies and wistful imaginings of what an Australian film industry might become. Television was not long with us. It seemed as though making certain sorts of films was possible if only you had the talent and the will to stick at it long enough. This much later, could he still indulge his hopes like this? I don't know. Probably not. I hear he's given up pictures and works on a paper in Darwin. I wish I'd known him.

Looking back it almost seems as though there never was any real hope. Many isolated and spasmodic efforts have been made to get things moving. But sooner or later people find the going's just too tough and too confusing. As I traipse doggedly over the landscape I sometimes catch glimpses and intimations of my predecessors. I am hitting a distinguished academic for dough to make a picture. It is a random contact. He tells me he once played in a picture shot in Melbourne in the 1920s. It was fun. The picture took money when it was screened in the Town Hall.

Once I was exploring an old farmhouse waiting for the camera car. The front was *Gold Rush* and the rear and outhouses *Early Settler*. I walked around the brick floor in the dusty kitchen; on the sideboard was a pile of ancient *Pix* magazines. One contained a two-page spread headed "The Smallest Studio in the World". There were photographs of Merv Murphy, Gwen Oatley and Eric Porter. The stars were Peter Finch and Ron Randall. The date was 1945.

Another time I approached a well known spark-plug manufacturer to interest him in a feature on Ned Kelly. Tim Burstall and I were associated at the time. He seemed surprised. And a little put out. He said a Melbourne football league club, of which he was then president, had already made

the picture. They'd used one of the rucks to play Ned. It hadn't made any dough.

Lately I hear another hopeful has entered the lists to make Ned. It's a frequently attempted picture. I hope he gets somewhere. I suppose there have always been a lot of pictures about to be made. At this very moment I'd bet anything there are five fevered little groups running round Melbourne all within an ace of pulling off a fantastic \$100,000 production.

It's a heady experience. I suppose, in a way, it's a complete experience. You have a beginning, a middle and an end. The end is hell. But the beginning was nice. Failing to make pictures is a blameless activity; pathetic perhaps but more rewarding and demanding than most. Some people make a career of it. It takes courage to have a go; but it's all unreal.

Since the war a dozen production houses have made their debut. After a confident entrance they pirouette for a few years and then bow out. They all feel they're centre stage but there isn't any audience. Hundreds more whom nobody has ever heard of have had a go. (I'm quite sure Bolte's secretly got a script in his pocket.) Some exit with a splash. One outfit lost £200,000 in two and a half years. You have to have a real flair to get through dough like this. Most just dice a few hundred and scramble back into the real world. They start making breakfast food commercials again or run a library in a country town, and find no difficulty in forgetting all about it. But some poor bastards can't. They won't give up the vision. The scars don't heal till they wobble through middle age, incapable of joy, incapable of pain.

Once a year near Melbourne an interesting social event takes place, *Meanjin* plays *Overland* at cricket. The players present a serene and inexperienced appearance as they bowl wides or get out for a



duck. The Elderly Lefties and the Elderly Poets are at peace. Nothing remains of the fierce passions and rivalries of their youth, their scorching escapades, their moments of blinding truth. Lumpy wives placidly watch while happy kids run round yelling. As evening draws in there is a golden moment round the emptying beer keg. They make last romantic gestures to what they feel their lives should have been. They who loathed each other in life now meet as friends. Elderly film producers are properly of this company.

Why did they loathe each other in life? Why are our obsessions so private, jealous, paranoid and parochial when we should be outgoing and generous with each other? Our outsider situation should help us huddle together for strength. But our crucifying frustrations damage our self-esteem and to compensate we denigrate each other. We view each other as competitive threats. Yes, you have to be pretty kinky to make films in Australia. It's hard to get the members of the Australian Film Producers' Guild together in one room; it's not an association bound together by strong ties of warm regard. Why?

Films and television call for interpretive evaluation. And when there's no agreement on standards and values chaos results. There is nothing and no-one to stop me asserting every film the Department of Information or the A.B.C. ever made is a lot of crap. Everyone else does. Most directors who work for the D.O.I. or the A.B.C. would agree. The D.O.I. has the finest film set-up in the Southern Hemisphere and they've never made a film (Australia makes 600 documentaries a year, all supremely forgettable). The A.B.C. has studio space four times larger than Granada Television yet they've never made a rated series. But these organisations exist to serve a purpose and that purpose isn't necessarily to make films or shows. They are preoccupied with acting out their own life-styles and satisfying their own drives, not other people's. Crawfords, GTV9, the whole bloody lot. They're not dedicated to statement. They're in it because they like it; like the activity for its own sake; like doing the sort of shows they make; like harvesting the rewards (if any) they value most.

But none of them has a commonly accepted style of working nor is there any agreement on values. Many move indifferently from petrol stations and tomato sauce factories into television or films and out again. Many are in it by accident. The spectacle of an ex-metropolitan program manager now working a farm or running a sweet shop or writing copy in an advertising agency illuminates our casually opportunist attitudes to the 'profession'. We have no profession. We set no more store by the directorial or program func-

tion than driving trams. Many young tram drivers are presently directing TV shows. And when they've had enough of this bullshit they'll go back to driving their trams again.

The notion that you might devote a life to mastering the disciplines or this art form never occurs to us. This is the way we work things. And not to accept and recognise this in Australia is to invite the severest sanctions. We play at it. And maybe we're right. Maybe play is better than enduring the agonies and neuroses of art. There's a lot of chi-chi cultural crap talked about it. Maybe the camera and projector lenses actually do most of the work.

When hearings were held in Melbourne to examine applications for a fourth metropolitan television licence no-one thought it unusual when Collingwood Footy Club put themselves forward. Why shouldn't they? They were pretty good at football. The chances were they'd be good at the old TV too. What's the difference? Most of the other applicants were insurance companies and if you can run an insurance company you can certainly run a television station. In the event, a bunch of bus drivers got it. They made a few half-arsed gestures to what they imagined television ought to be but no-one took any serious notice of that. No experienced television director troubled the commission with his advice and the commissioners dealt mainly with how the applicants proposed to structure their companies and how soundly they were backed. That's all. It was naturally assumed and only fair that someone else should have a go. The more the merrier. Any passing interest in what it was all about was on the level of the Senate debate on film in 1960 in which we saw our legislators grappling heavily with unfamiliar concepts they were unable to take seriously.

Anyone who has worked in TV knows there is no good cheap television. All good television is expensive. If you add a fourth channel to distract a small audience of eleven million you merely make a bad situation irremediable. That's what the old government did. They've bugged up TV here for all time as far as statement is concerned. Had we been preoccupied with statement the government should certainly have taken HSV7's licence away. And given GTV9 a good boot up the arse and a warning to smarten themselves up. Like the British Government. They took T.W.W's licence and A.R.'s licence from them; they weren't happy with their crap. Happily, this is not our concern. We are not interested in the indirect experiences of art. Nor in exploring the old mind or our unremarkable lives. Nor are the most emin-



ent culture cranks abroad where the smart thing these days is pure existence.

Often I listen to the heights of rivers on the radio. It has a restful, graphic quality. And sometimes I hear some bright bastard hop up and berate good old Australia for being twenty years behind the times in wool scouring or something. All I say is: Thank God!

Let's assume a few more deathless years of housewives playing banjos in mid shot, soap powder commercials and gentlemen from the railways' institute juggling Indian clubs. People singing the Jewel Song from Faust don't seem to be going over so big and we're becoming a teeny bit jaded with unforgettable moments at the races, plodding soggy 'documentaries' and cans and cans of film regularly arriving by boat. The middle-aged journalists from Moonee Ponds who flounder around on Meet the Press are going home and those reckless visionaries at HSV7 are being collared by clinical psychologists writing theses on apathy. Our audience becomes restless, fickle and bored. Is this the beginning of a millenium? Not likely. And if it were, what then? We have few writers who are really interested in the tempo and flavor of modern life. And none of the rest have ever sought to write for films or television; they've left it to a lot of hacks with a few tired little technical tricks. Nor have the producers sought them out; the producers don't take themselves seriously. Maybe because the public doesn't.

If you're a consumer culture there's all the world of difference between sucking it out of the old umbilical cord and lurching out into the world on your own. It's cold out there, at first; especially when we're all conditioned to a highly finish-

ed product from other more securely established industries abroad. The comparison with our own efforts can be embarrassing. Not that our boys haven't got it. When they go away they crack it solidly enough. But there is a sense in which the producer-audience relationship over there permits this. With them, the producer is required to play an initiating responsible role. With us, he is the servant of the audience, waits for it to give him the go-ahead, follows its lead and does what it wants. Our producers are passive.

We have a public relations view of art. If we are to reflect life as sometimes in a conscience-stricken way we feel we should we suddenly go all funny, limited and strained; and on our best behavior. Life doesn't emerge relaxed and naturally. In fact, if producers feel it's "too close to life" they'll can it; it may offend someone.

Nothing can happen in a strained relation with the audience. The actors can primp and grimace, wink, nudge, cough, pause and wear their 'pretend' faces till they burst a gut; it's all no use if you don't get any feedback. No response; no approval. No sanction. No information. As indifferent to failure as success. Boy, we've really got it made when it comes to the lively arts.

And maybe the lively arts have really had it for moderns. As we all psycho on living out our lives with increasing detachment and quiet desperation maybe the social habit of forming traditional-type audiences just answers no need. Look around you. Do you really like people? Are you intrigued with the outer world? Or are you increasingly sunk in introspection? Life is ghastly. Life is real. Whether or not it's supposed to be ghastly we cannot know. But it **must** be real.

## TV HAIKU

Unreasoning authority  
Speaks from the square:  
Magic eye, I, aye.

VIDA HORN





## VICTORIA MARKET

"Smiler won't pay!"  
 the chalk is scrawled.  
 Smiler won't play,  
 the game is fouled.

The razor is sharp  
 the cat has tails  
 of broken glass  
 and rusty nails.

Mind goes to market;  
 the body does too.  
 Only if you can make it  
 this hullabaloo  
 will do for you.

"Twelve blood for two bob."  
 "Last of the season  
 Riverland navels."  
 Rhyme without reason.  
 "Here cheap banana  
 dozen for twenty."  
 Suns heaped in plenty  
 bending the trestles.



The Chinese girl  
has a sweet roof  
of crow-shine hair,  
archaic smile  
the moon might envy.  
She sells zucchini  
(sweet green zepplins)  
wriggling bean-shoots  
purple egg-fruit  
and feathered fennel.  
Wart-nose and pear-gut  
bald-knob and pea-nut  
pin-head and piss-ant  
deal at her counter.  
Prizz-skirts and frill-pants  
mud-twat and flop-tit  
buzz round her centre.

"Twelve for two bob—banana."  
Cock-crow and crying puppies;  
"Ten for twenty—banana."  
Carnation scent and poppies.  
Cock-crow hullabaloo,  
a crush of wondering bodies.  
"Last of the season—navels";  
a bevvvy of chattering biddies.

Bellofiore and Joe Mimmo,  
A. Prestia and S. Tripodi,  
Mastro (Parla Lingua Italiano)  
Tartaglia and G. Villani,  
Pack Kee and Sang Goon,  
Geraldton Fruit and Hoong Ga Woon,  
S. Soccio also Sicura  
and in several places at once the firm of Moss  
bring this cock-crow,  
'Fat young fowls a special',  
straw and manure perfume,  
pumpkins by the truck  
green with a blue bloom  
and goddess-swollen melons  
to the blue mist landscape  
of exhaust.

And walking back,  
passing Sam Yick's,  
dexter and sinister,  
"Smiler won't pay."

We sense the knives  
in the hidden day.

FRANK KELLAWAY



# SOME PEOPLE

W. N. SCOTT

Bill Scott is one of a rare breed. He once led a stop-work meeting at a Eureka Youth League holiday camp. After his war service in the Navy, he spent his deferred pay looking for gold. He has sung folk songs from Thursday Island to the Adelaide Festival of Arts.

Bill Scott is an adventurer, a yarn-spinner, and his stories endeavour to observe the 'macrocosm in the microcosm'. Meet Black Peter, Uncle Arch and all the other inhabitants of Bill Scott's world.

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**HUGH D. BATTEN  
IAN MOORE**

# tv's fourth dimension

A university lecturer and a television teacher look at TV's educational possibilities

## **HUGH D. BATTEN**

It is just over ten years ago that the Australian Broadcasting Commission's school television service started activities with an initial offering (in Victoria) of thirty-two original programs for primary and secondary schools.

Nine years later, in 1967, about 550 original programs were offered in Victoria alone. It is a remarkable increase. But how far is it based on that "experimental work . . . which will take advantage of the experience of other countries and adapt it to the particular needs of Australia" that the Royal Commission on Television asked for as long ago as 1954, when it held that TV was not yet a suitable medium for class instruction? Does the increased production of educational programs mean that we are now convinced that TV is suitable for class teaching?

The questions come flooding in.

We hear of precious little research in Australia on this topic. Should we be expanding this service at this phenomenal rate? Let us hope that the effort and expense involved in producing these programs has flowed from the knowledge and experience that television is a valuable teaching device. Should the Australian Broadcasting Commission carry the major burden in this area? How do they cope? There can't be enough hours in the day to allow them to continue expanding like this. And, besides, if television has proved itself, schools are not the only ones likely to be interested in using television for educational purposes.

Stop! There we go embarking on an escalation of the existing service without answering any of the basic questions. Can television make a contribution to education? If we are prepared to agree that television in Australia has certainly reached a point in its development where it is sufficiently skilled and ready to make such a contribution, then how should educational television be organised? Can an efficient administrative integration

be achieved between our education and broadcasting systems? What plans have been proposed? What action has resulted?

The use of television as a means of instruction can take on a variety of forms. We have little experience in Australia of the 'total teaching' type of program which presents course work for which people can register, pay fees, receive texts and notes, be examined and gain credit in university or college courses. Rather, the majority of our effort has been given to programs complementing formal instruction. The enthusiasts suggest television used in this way provides the audience with a wealth of experiences not available to the classroom teacher. Everyone has a front seat. There is an element of immediacy with television even from across the other side of the world. The antagonists claim the individual becomes lost. Participation and subsequent reinforcement of a correct response are rarely obtained with this unidirectional type of communication.

But what does the research evidence say? The overwhelming majority of studies (mostly American) have concerned themselves with the problem of information gained by the television class. Wilbur Schramm, Director of the Institute for Communication Research, Stanford University, assembled "393 cases (spread over various subjects and levels) in which instructional television has been compared with classroom teaching." Results, as "measured by the usual final examinations or by standardised tests made by testing bureaus", indicated that in 83 of these cases students learned significantly more from television. In 255 or 65 per cent. of the cases, there was no significant difference between televised and normal classroom teaching. These findings, and similar information from other countries, leave no doubt that students can learn from television. From this point it is probable that administrators have had to be satisfied with the majority findings of equivalent



learning, and then, pressed by problems of accommodation, large classes, inadequate facilities and staffing shortages, they have decided that television is worth the time and expense.

The only certainty in this whole issue, however, is that most important research on instructional television still remains to be done. The high proportion of results showing "no significant difference" must lead to a batch of questions being formulated. Are there factors which may be differentially learned or not learned from television and which are not measured by the usual tests?

Perhaps the real issue is not whether students learn from television, but *how* they learn, and then, how television fits into the learning experience. We do know something about these things, but still more needs to be known.

There are groups which could be well served by educational television other than schools, universities and like institutions. The education of adults highly motivated to learn presents a unique opportunity for television, an opportunity not yet grasped in Australia. A service here may break new ground for some while retraining others. Offerings are possible in areas of social development, crafts, and other cultural activities. The proportion of our population likely to pursue interests outside their work is large and increasing, and any discussions regarding patterns of control, policy, or facilities for educational television should consider their needs.

The educational unit in the Australian scene is the State, and an educational television service organised to serve a whole State would be likely to prove the most effective. Further, it must be remembered that control is frequently closely related to financial considerations. As Australia cannot boast of the existence of charitable foundations such as we find in America, the major cost of producing and transmitting an educational television service will fall to the Commonwealth Government.

Currently, the major outlet for educational programs is the Australian Broadcasting Commission. Some commercial stations have televised educational programs. In general, though, they would neither be sufficiently interested nor qualified to be responsible for a comprehensive service. The Advisory Committee on Educational Television Services, 1964 (the Weeden Committee) clearly set out the potential role of the Australian Broadcasting Commission in relation to the operation of an educational television service.

The Commission's charter is broad, "to broadcast or televise . . . adequate and comprehensive programmes and to take in the interests of the community all such measures as . . . are conducive to the full development of suitable broadcasting

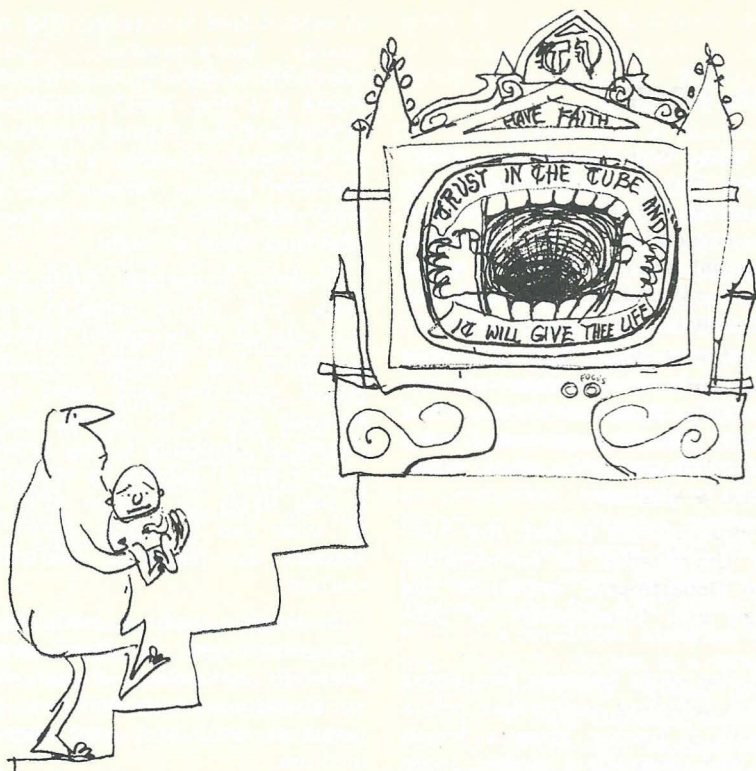
and television programmes". Educational programs therefore form only a small part of the task. The Commission can and does cater for the minority audiences which will be attracted to the educational programs, yet decisions regarding priorities have to be made when educational needs clash with popular and highly rated programs of general appeal.

A glance at program schedules will show that generally the Commission decides against allocating peak viewing times to programs designed for a limited, though worthy, audience. What opportunities are offered to the professional man to keep abreast of his subject, say in the early morning, or at lunchtimes, or in the early evening? Much needed inservice training for teachers might well be offered at these times or immediately school closes for the day.

This line of reasoning quickly leads to the proposal for the establishment of a separate authority whose total responsibility will be the control and operation of an educational television service. Assuming that this authority is given its own operating channel, the Australian Broadcasting Commission re-enters the contest for control. The Commission might demonstrate a need for a second frequency channel, into which it could expand its services. Costs might be reduced by using their facilities. The Weeden Committee notes these points, but argues that, "because of its broad charter . . . We think it unlikely, and unreasonable to expect, that if two frequency channels were available for its programmes the Commission would be able to confine the use of either, in peak viewing times, to purely educational programmes." On financial considerations the Committee considers economies would be made in establishing a separate service rather than requiring the Australian Broadcasting Commission to expand its activities in educational television.

The issue is now a little clearer, and a resultant proposal, very similar to that recommended by the Weeden Committee, would be for the controlling authority to be independent of any existing broadcasting organisation. A parallel controlling authority, at the national level, has been set up in the United Kingdom, and its members include highly qualified and notable persons with initial experience as educators followed by experience in broadcasting. It is worth noting here the concept of the educator being of primary importance, with technical expertise being available and applied at all points, but certainly not dictating to the educator. Persons with significant experience in education and broadcasting are rare in Australia, but there may be merit in using persons thoroughly trained in one aspect understudied by a person trained in another aspect.





—Bruce Petty

The Australian authority would determine broad policy, allocate licences, control the spread of services, and have powers of supervision and evaluation of educational telecasts. Operational policy and basic program planning would best be left to a State committee. At this level curricula and the needs of the various groups are best understood. The main impetus for the origin of program material would come from the universities, other tertiary institutions such as the Institute of Colleges and the Council for Adult Education, the Education Department and teachers' colleges, and other civic groups. Representation of these organisations on the State committee would be desirable. Control, and consequently responsibility for the total evaluation of the State-wide service in terms of policy, rests with this committee.

Education programs should be jointly conceived at the State level by academically experienced persons and producers. Policy determined by a committee structure is desirable, but the construction of programs by a committee is often disastrous, leading to bland and uninspired programs with ill-defined aims. For this reason, while the technical expert, the academic expert and the general administrator team together in program production, clear definition of areas of responsibility should be made.

A start along these lines was proposed by the Senate Committee of Inquiry, 1963, the Vincent

Report. This stated that "in no circumstances should all channels be allotted without making provision for a special channel for educational instruction". The Weeden Committee went beyond this and presented a document setting out clear proposals for the development, operation and financing of an educational television service.

It is at this point, some five years later, that the matter rests. The Parliament of the day failed to act upon these recommendations. Perhaps they were not convinced of the need for such a service. Perhaps the solutions offered were not the ones they wanted.

Whatever the reason, the sad fact remains. We, as a people, have received these reports and allowed them to be pigeon-holed. Positive action is urgent on all fronts. Community groups which stand to gain from educational television should be clamoring for a service to satisfy their needs. The potential purveyors of educational programs should be constantly creating material and insisting on suitable outlets for their offerings. The researcher must continue to seek for more satisfactory evidence concerning the role of television in the total process of learning—how can television itself, or television in combination with other experiences, make the learning of a given subject most efficient?

The Weeden Committee has considered the issues and given us a sound plan of action—isn't it time we got on with it?



## IAN MOORE

In Australia, as in other countries of the world, political approval for the use of television in education was stimulated by the belief that it would permit more economical use of teachers. This view of educational television rested, as do several others, on a misunderstanding of the capacities of the so-called 'luminous blackboard'.

This is not to deny the obvious. Television does allow **multiple simultaneous viewings of one teacher's lesson** in widely separated schools. But a teacher's performance must change considerably to befit television presentation. In what sense, then, does one televise a lesson?

In 1963, after an experimental period, the Australian Broadcasting Commission in co-operation with State Education Departments, undertook the large-scale production and transmission of programs for schools.

A distinction has to be made between two styles of program. The label 'televised instruction' refers to the situation where a teacher gives a lesson aided by chalkboard and appropriate models, more or less as he would in a classroom, but directing his remarks to a camera. The label 'instructional television' suggests a more conscious use of the peculiar qualities of television in an attempt to carry out the instruction more effectively.

Despite the energies exerted throughout the sixties, television has not been generally accepted in the schools of all States. In Victoria, however, almost all secondary schools and more than half the primary schools have at least one television set each. Many have three or four sets.

A significant factor in this success has been the high degree of co-operation between the Victorian Educational Department and the Australian Broadcasting Commission.

Under the A.B.C.'s Supervisor of Education in Victoria there are three producers with clerical assistants, whose work on radio broadcasts has been long esteemed by schools. There are also five producers with script assistants together with twelve teachers released from schools working to provide television broadcasts for schools. The degree of experience and skill accumulating in this unit probably makes its contribution the most significant development in Australia in educational television.

Today televised instruction has no place. Instructional television still has a place but its future survival is the topic of current debate. Certainly educational ends cannot justify the propagation

of second-rate television. The presentation of poor quality, badly-produced, ill-directed films and television benefits neither television nor education. There is a firm trend, stimulated by the demands of teachers and pupils, towards a fuller, richer use of television, towards a diet that includes documentary, fantasy, drama and adventure, towards programs which are more in keeping with the best television seen at night.

Another important distinction must be made here. The above remarks refer specifically to open-circuit or broadcast television. Closed-circuit television has different capacities, markedly different resources and must be considered as a separate entity. In its use, too, there is a serious danger of obtaining a final product of such inferior quality that it defeats its educational purpose. This is less likely to happen after some investigation of what can be fairly asked of it, taking into account the resources available in a particular context.

In teacher training establishments, for instance, the advantages of closed-circuit television are generally recognised—though its success here is, as elsewhere, dependent on the availability of technical skill and staff experienced with the medium.

Open circuit television, through the facilities of a transmitting channel, has the power to reach a widely ranging audience. It also has the power, perhaps the obligation, to bring to its audience resources otherwise not readily available. Apart from the A.B.C. no organisation in Australia can be considered to have seriously entered this field.

Yet already, in Victoria for example, all available day transmission time is taken up on ABV2. To extend further its educational service will require the use of other transmitting channels. In fact teachers are currently arguing that their diverse needs cannot be adequately met by school broadcasts from only one channel. Differences in school time-tables will always exist because of local variations. No single transmission time-table can fit all of the State's three thousand schools.

Are commercial channels prepared to transmit educational programs produced by an Education Department/A.B.C. co-operative unit? In any case would the A.B.C. go this far in its co-operation with schools? Tentative exploration of this possibility has so far achieved little response.

A separate channel devoted exclusively to education in its broadest sense may be the most satisfactory development. This would provide an opportunity to throw off another unwarranted shackle—the assumption that education is for children only.



## SWAG

Some generous foundation, even the Council for the Arts or the Commonwealth Literary Fund, may care to think this one over. The National Endowment for the Arts in the U.S.A. now finances an annual project, called "The American Literary Anthology", which prints the best work that has appeared in the nation's literary magazines for the year. It is a project designed to give wider distribution and permanent form to the more important new material that appears in these magazines—some of which are quite ephemeral—and also to spread some money around among writers. \$1,000 goes to the author of every story or essay printed, \$500 to each poet, and \$500 or \$250 to the magazines which published the selections in the first place. Some such scheme here would be an enormous encouragement on the creative frontiers of Australian life.

\*

Details of the \$4,000 Adelaide Advertiser awards (non-fiction and fiction) from GPO Box 392A, Adelaide. New Theatre Australia has a \$100 three-act play competition, closing date 30th July, 1969. Details from New Theatre, St. Peter's Lane, East Sydney, 2010.

\*

The extract from A. D. Hope's "A Commination" which appears on page 10 is reprinted by permission.

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For some extraordinary reason, on the title page of our last issue I credited Irene Summy with a story written by Kay Brown. Kay Brown's name appeared on the story itself, but even so a public confession of stupidity is called for.

\*

In the infuriating way these things happen, we received a copy of Lord (Ted) Willis' report on film and television training and production in Australia after this issue had gone to press. We hope to summarise this hard-hitting and extremely interesting report (made to the Australian National Advisory Committee for U.N.E.S.C.O.) in our next issue.

\*

AMONG OUR CONTRIBUTORS: Pat Flower is a well-known Sydney writer, particularly of detective stories. She has written a number of plays for TV. Tony Morphet, author of "Dynasty", has recently resigned from the Australian Broadcasting Commission in order to devote himself full-time to writing. He lives in Sydney. John McLaren is a lecturer at the Secondary Teachers' College in Melbourne, and author of "Our Troubled Schools".

Brian Robinson is in charge of the film/TV course at Swinburne Technical College (Melbourne). David Baker lives at Warrandyte, Victoria, and has probably directed more local film series for TV than anyone else in Australia. Kit Denton was "Janus", the first TV critic for the Australian newspaper. Robert Thorpe is a young Englishman who recently worked on making documentaries for the ABC, but has now returned to the BBC. Ralph Blunt is the pseudonym of a well-known Melbourne advertising man who for many years has lent his specialist skills to liberal causes. Merle James, a former actress, is now a Melbourne mother and housewife. J. F. C. Harrison is a professor of history at the University of Wisconsin. John Iremonger is 24, and studying for an M.A. at the Australian National University while he works as production manager of the ANU Press. Ian Moore is a Melbourne mathematics teacher who appears in numerous ABC educational films. Ann Gillison is a young Melbourne journalist, and Ken Taylor works for ABC Talks in Melbourne. Vida Horn is a municipal librarian in a Melbourne suburb. Hugh D. Batten is a lecturer in education at Monash University. Frank Kellaway, a poet and novelist of long standing, teaches at Preston Institute of Technology, Melbourne. Hume Dow is a senior lecturer in English at the University of Melbourne, and editor of a previous Trollope book. Dennis Douglas teaches English at Monash University.

S. MURRAY-SMITH

### FLOATING FUND

On the instructions of the Commonwealth Literary Fund, the editors of the Australian literary magazines receiving assistance from the Fund recently had a visit from representatives of a distinguished firm of accountants, not so much to audit our books as to get a general picture of our operations. I think it's fair to say that (no doubt hot from inspecting the books of BHP) they were staggered that the magazines do so much with so little. The reason Overland, at least, does this is because our flow of voluntary donations has never dried up. Thanks to readers for \$219 since last issue.

PPL \$100; JRL IP \$10; BI \$8; DM \$5; PM \$4; DP GE JM JH LB DD GP DB HF \$3; OH AB GF JL BS RC SB JW LC BN-S MM JW HS DH \$2; EJ \$1.50; JC BB AE JS NMCD JL CR CP JN HN JR AM JH RF SB JK RM AD JB MF DD Anon RGT \$1; RB LL SW WMCD ES JW 50c.



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## POEM FROM A PIG PEN

Corkscrew cock and cave to match.  
There's got to be a better way.

Watching you lying there saying  
no reminds me of the asian girl  
who crab-crawled over the edge  
of my bed to find the black man  
of her dreams who was bigger than  
most because their women always  
are. And the lizard who was sent  
in disgrace to a damp corner where  
the hand is faster than the eye  
that spits its message to anyone  
who has the inclination to listen.

Watching you lying there saying  
no reminds me of the first time  
I heard a Noddy joke and cried  
because I couldn't understand  
why Big Ears died of suffocation  
in every tale. I remember the  
bottles and candles, broomsticks  
and handles, plastic, elastic and  
the dirty games played in hairy  
drains and daisy chains.

Watching you lying there saying  
no reminds me of the parties that  
stoned us, green leaves in a dead  
park, of a joint for each finger  
and the bitter taste of how it  
used to be when we were up there.  
When 1944 to soixante neuf was the  
only way to hold a conversation.

It reminds me of moving fast in  
warm snow and saying the last rites  
over the wet dogs at the tram stop  
who passed through each other with  
out paying their fare.

It reminds me of you being somewhere  
near the end of my arm when we felt  
jam rolls and dill dolls, sensitive  
necks and wet checks, and the funny  
frowns on the rubber clowns who rode  
lifts that never went up because  
they knew what it was like to go down.

It reminds me of you whispering to the  
period that hasn't come, an ear to  
your cave and hearing nothing but a  
sea that remembers how it used to be  
between you and me.

Corkscrew cock and cave to match.  
There's got to be a better way.

R. J. DEEBLE

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## HAMPTON: THE BEACH

clouds like scuff marks  
in the sand  
or clods of dirt  
flung up by hoofs  
voices thrown through the air  
to land  
suspended  
in my ears and for a time  
the quiet tears of childhood  
mingle with the sea gulls'  
screams  
mingled with horizon's fears  
the squat haze  
curtains passing ships  
and clouds that slip their narrow selves  
between the lips  
of land and air  
suspend like words  
but never reach my ear

SHELTON LEA



---

## SATORI AND OTHER STORIES

The cooler mystic  
you carry  
works in terms of pain.  
Sheep skin, sitar and logic  
continue to amuse  
and remain  
at the level of the tourist—  
bigeyes and boredom.

The gift  
you bought  
amuses, at its level,  
and continues to break  
bones in the mind—  
returning  
it seems  
beauty is usually  
a serious overstatement—  
the noise to be cut at random  
and given to the appropriate department.

DAVID RANKIN

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## POWEM TO THE WISDOM OF POWER

austr alian alien  
specimen of foreign matter  
hermit because no landing permit  
here i sit up some dead frenchman/s tree  
looking across the sea  
everybody round here has closed their ears  
for the day  
in cauliflower power calais  
& so i look at sea well  
i/m as free as a cat with 9 more lives can be  
fresh from soil where its illegal to be me  
or so sez the homo secretary:

'sorry sir  
we dont serve three year tea  
to refugees just  
wait here please'

. . . . b but officer  
unlock my cock  
untie my hands  
i question yr mark  
to pass yr port  
to dig white cliffs  
to mend my west end ways  
must i swim?  
must i wear woolworth wools &  
peroxide my pubick hairs  
before you will let me in?  
O england england  
land where i cannot sing-land  
turn me on  
not around.  
& leave me foolscap customs be . . .  
You cn rape mi papers &  
search me for fleas,  
but let me go free where i please  
Nude night i knock on yr door  
but its really the bureaucrat  
that has lost the key

DAEVID ALLEN

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## TONY MORPHETT a dull night for the tv

It was a dull night for the TV. You just had to look at the paper to see that. You could tell just by looking it was going to be a dull night. With the mute despair of a man checking figures which have added him into debt, he looked at the TV column again. No, it was going to be a dull night.

The railway station, the short walk, the key in the door, and then kissing his wife, and helping her get the children down, and then on the TV it was news time.

The man who did the news. You had to hand it to him. The way he knew it so well he just looked straight at you and said it. You had to hand it to him.

Routine patrol. That's what it was going to be. He hefted the camera again after their short pause, and dropped back into the relaxed stride which had taken them from base camp to this nameless part of tiger country. Routine patrol. Good for everything but film.

"Tea's ready, is it?" He turned in his chair. The news titles faded up out of black. Tuesdays were always a dull night for the TV. "Tea ready?" "In a minute."

He must not frown. But she knew he liked to have things cut up before the program started. That way he didn't miss anything. Missed a joke on that show last night while he was cutting up a chop. It had been a nice chop. Mondays weren't as dull as Tuesdays.

"Here you are dear."

"Thanks." Say that for her. She cooked a nice chop.

Odd bloody war this was. Didn't know why the bastards didn't give up. God knows they'd been hit hard enough. But now, in this northern part, it was still going on. Had enough of jungles to last him a lifetime.

The patrol leader waved them to a halt. He checked his camera. Hated the noise it made in the jungle quiet. In action it was all right, but in the quiet, it sounded like a sewing machine, like a woodpecker, like a carbine.

He shifted the carbine on his other shoulder. Tough old war it was getting. Even the chaplains carrying them now.

They moved again.

The young man on the news was talking about the budget. Taxes up all the time. He didn't know where it all went. "I don't know . . ."

"Yes dear?"

"Where it all goes."

"Do you like your chop dear?"

"It's a nice chop."

"Yes he does have nice chops."

"I don't know . . ."

He was getting the feeling. Had never believed other men when they said they got it. Until the first time he got it himself. Some said they could smell them, these men in the forest, these men they were hunting. He could feel them. Seven times out of ten, he was right.

Why they didn't give up. Their government, their own people in the south, even they were against them. Why they didn't give up. Everything was against them. And they were holding off a major power with small arms and booby traps.

When he'd come to the jungle, he'd come as a cameraman, a reporter, not really on anyone's side, merely looking for the story that made good film. Different now. Different now that men who were nicknames, and voices, and grins, men he'd drunk and laughed with, different now these men were dead.

The war was different.

The young man on TV was talking about the war. Sometimes they had good film about the war. Not like the real war films though. The news film about the war wasn't as clear and sometimes you couldn't tell who was winning.

The young man was talking about the war.

"In an action fought in this area three days ago, one of our cameramen . . ."

It erupted. Flashes, and the hammering, mind-stopping yammer of the guns. The patrol spread, and went to ground, he with them, not calm, but fear lost as his consciousness webbed in the disciplines of his camera. He was filming now, he'd buttoned on almost as he had hit the ground, he was seeing the action through the viewfinder, and he saw it was good. The sort of footage that made the walking and the fear and the forest worthwhile.

They were pinned by the enemy fire, and he saw the patrol leader rise long enough to throw



a grenade. The noise, he swung the camera through the arc of muzzle flashes, and the grenade's target and the red and grey blossom of it, and he knew the footage was good. A figure. One of them. Wounded. Maybe by the grenade. And the figure, seeming taller in the smoke, it was standing, throwing a grenade, and he heard the carbine, and the figure doubled, it was a puppet with the strings cut, it dropped out of frame.

And the grenade, and he was thrown sideways, and he heard the scream of what had been a friend in the patrol.

"A bloke at work told me they fake it all at exercises."

"Still, it looks very real dear."

"Looks very real. I'll give them that."

"Cup of tea dear?"

"I'd like a cup of tea."

"Looks very real. Did you see that one?"

"Ahh. I had my eyes in the sugar. What'd he do?"

"He fell over."

"Amazing what they can get up, isn't it?"

The camera was still working. But he let it swing, and lifted the carbine. The comfortable shaking. Crawl forward. Shaking. Camera up. The leader waving them forward. Try for a shot on the move. Tied in with the other footage, it'd be a winner.

And the axe blow in the chest, and the sound of his buttoned-on camera in his ears like a sewing machine, like a woodpecker, like a carbine, and the flashes which were the flashes of their guns, which were the flashes of the leaves, which were the flashes of the sunlight through the forest top.

"Funny bit of film that was. How it looked up at the sky . . ."

". . . the patrol fought their way back, bringing with them our cameraman's last story. We have shown it in full, just as he shot it . . ."

"Got another cup in that pot dear?"

"Terrible thing that . . ."

"What?"

"I mean that young man. The cameraman."

"Yeah, well I mean he's paid for it, isn't he?"

"But that whole war . . ."

"No concern of ours, dear."

"Meanwhile the fighting in Northern Australia is still going on. The rebels have suffered heavy casualties, and the pacification campaign is proceeding well in Zones D, F, and H. However, loyalist military leaders in Newcastle hold out no hopes of early victory. In a press statement today, General . . ."

"But it's . . . It just keeps going on and on."

"Well put it this way. I'd rather fight them down there than up here."

"I suppose you're right dear."

"Course I'm right." He smiled at her, at her smile lines, at her folded lids, at her brown face. And thought for a moment of the distant war being fought against those fanatics. Who didn't know when they were beaten. Whom he would never understand.

His brown hands pushed back his plate. He'd say this for her, she cooked a nice chop.

"Be another cup of tea in that pot dear?" And picked up the TV guide. Dull nights, Tuesdays.

LET'S WALK A SKY TOGETHER STOP  
AND HAVE SILENT WORDS STOP  
SOMETIME SOON STOP

LOVE SSTTOP

SWEENEY REED



# musings on reality

ROBERT THORPE

To be true the documentary  
film may have to be  
larger than life

It is extremely difficult and probably irrelevant to define a documentary. The dictionary defines it as "furnishing evidence on a factual subject", but such recent examples, nominated as documentaries, as "Cathy Come Home", "The War Game", and "Muggeridge in America" don't seem to fall within this definition. And how does one define Visconti's "La Terra Trema"? It was shot completely on location in a village in Sicily. The characters were the actual inhabitants of the village. The action was the everyday life of the village, but the film was scripted from beginning to end. It seems to me immaterial whether this is a documentary or a feature film. What is important is the tremendous emotional impact it has on an audience.

Presumably the object of the documentary is to examine and illuminate the state and environment of man, but isn't this the object of every art form? And a documentary is as much a personal statement as any other work of art. It is virtually impossible to be objective, in the true sense of the word, when using film. To begin with, the director selects to shoot only certain scenes, sometimes even creating or re-creating those scenes. This can certainly lead to problems of objectivity and morality. Then he selects only certain shots from the 'rushes' and edits them in a certain way. But it is in the editing process that we really lose true objectivity. As soon as you cut two shots together, you endow them with a further meaning—the fact that you show them consecutively. Consider, for instance, a shot of a herd of cattle milling around in a corral followed immediately by a shot in a fashion boutique as young girls browse amongst the displays. It would need a very clever commentary to prevent it being libellous. Possibly the only way of making a really objective film would be to cut together all the rushes, keeping in all the clapper boards and the parts

that drag. Objective, maybe, but illogical, bewildering and hence failing to communicate. And if it doesn't communicate, it wasn't worth making, as art is first and foremost communication.

Possibly we recognise a film as a documentary because of its 'reality' or its simulation of 'reality'.

Think of all the westerns where the poor, underdog Indians bite the dust at an incredible rate. There's no impression of death. Somehow we know they will get up when the director calls "Cut". But watching a grainy, scratched print of a World War I battlefield, we know the bodies will not rise again.

A recent example of this was John Dixon's coverage of the Israeli-Arab war. As he was speaking to camera a bomb was dropped, and both he and the cameraman flinched. It was even more telling as the Israelis themselves didn't turn a hair. In the same film, Dixon was again commenting to camera when there was a shot. "A sniper," said Dixon, and the camera panned and zoomed, very erratically, into a close-up of a body. It had happened at that moment. A shot had been fired, a family bereaved. We accepted the erratic zoom. In fact, had the zoom been cut out—more artistic filmically—the effect would have been lost as the body could have been shot any old day.

The feature film can rarely achieve a 'real' death. In fact, if it does, as in the last shot of "Ashes and Diamonds", we immediately dub it a masterpiece.

The best example of reality is probably in cinema verite. This cinematic style has its problems and can frequently become pretentious, but when used carefully on subjects which lend themselves to the style, it can be very exciting.

"The Chair" was a cinema verite film made by Philip Leacock which dealt with the arrest of a man, his trial and his ultimate walk to the electric



chair. It was fascinating, simply because it was real. There is one particular shot: a static shot which runs for over a minute. The counsellor for the defence is pacing up and down his office. He goes to the door and asks his secretary to get him a hamburger and some coffee. He continues to pace up and down. He suddenly has an idea, takes a book from the shelves, flips through it, reads and realises that his idea won't stand up in court. It was a tense and dramatic scene. Why? Because it was real: this was no actor who, after the take, would assume another personality and another environment.

How would Hollywood have tackled this scene? Probably on the lines of:—

C.U. counsellor.

Cut to L.S. He paces up and down.

Cut to C.U. feet as he turns. Pan with him.

Cut to C.U. ashtray, he stubs cigarette. Pull back as he goes to door.

Cut to reverse angle M.C.U. Counsellor asks his secretary for hamburger and coffee.

And so on . . .

Simply because the shot in Leacock's film was long, unremitting in fact and also, in a sense, unimaginative, with the boring parts proudly displayed, it was real.

This dramatic use of a static shot has been recognised by some film makers, but for some reason is rarely employed—possibly most directors are too concerned with technique rather than meaning. The best use of it, in my experience, is by Hitchcock.

In his earlier films, such as "Strangers on a Train", he created drama by brisk intercutting—the oldest method in the book. He intercut the villain groping for his keys in a drain with the hero playing tennis. As the pace of cutting speeded up, the drama was created. But in "The Birds" the tension is created by maintaining one long wide shot. There are two houses: one bottom left of frame and one in top right of frame. We know there is a body in the latter. A truck starts from bottom left and meanders over to the other house. The door opens, the driver alights, though we can't see him. Nothing happens on screen for say, 15 seconds; then the truck starts up and roars back to the other house. But even here, though tension was created, it only worked because we had the fore-knowledge of the body.

One of the main techniques in documentaries is the use of interviews. They are obviously real and there are many occasions when they are interesting simply because the people are real. A good example was a recent interview on Four Corners with a Sydney prostitute. Nothing she said came

as world-shattering news to us, but the fact that she was a prostitute giving first-hand details made the interview fascinating.

Similarly, the way interviewees will grope for words rather than have them come pat as in most theatre, Brando excepted, can be used effectively. In "An Ordered Life", shown on Project 67, a nun was interviewed. She was asked if she had any regrets about entering the order. She replied that she had some, as, for instance, when she saw her nephews and nieces. She regretted she had never experienced motherhood. Then the interviewer asked whether she had found peace. "Oh yes," she said, paused and repeated, "yes". And her smile was held in frozen frame. This brief interview had real poignancy and humanity, which I doubt could ever be achieved by an actress.

But though there is certainly a place for 'talking head' documentaries, for so-called objective examinations of racial problems, drugs, prostitution, the documentaries which have made an impact recently are the 'fringe' documentaries, and they have all been very personal statements.

There was "Muggeridge in America", where Jack Gold made a nicely bitchy comment about Muggeridge making a bitchy comment about America. It was a personal view of a personal view, and this was its main fascination.

There was "The War Game", which was Peter Watkins' hypothetical report on the effect on people in Kent of the dropping of a nuclear bomb on London. Perhaps even more successful was his "Culloden", a bitter tirade against war—its futility, its bloodiness and its pitiful aftermath.

My personal taste is for Ken Russell's documentaries. The first I saw was "Elgar". Russell uses actors to show Elgar during various periods of his life. The film was scripted, though based on fact, and heavily peppered with excerpts from Elgar's diary and hearty chunks of Elgar's music. But what emerges is Russell's personal feelings about Elgar, the period in which he lived, the environment in which he lived—those magnificent scenes in the Malverns—and his own feeling for Elgar's music. As usual with Russell it was full of pretensions (he loves mists in the woods, slow motion shots of balloons and aching majestic but meaningless shots), but it put flesh and blood around the bones of the words and music. Perhaps it created a false Elgar, but it certainly created a person. Exactly the same happened in "Isadora". Frequently it seemed confused, often it was fairly naive (as on the station platform and the dance along the railway line), but it was a powerful film. Perhaps the vision he created of Isadora was untrue in many aspects, but she was a woman:



of love, of fire, of stupidity and of intelligence. She existed. Compare this film with Lou Hazam's film about Michelangelo. This film was thoroughly researched, no expense was spared in its production, but what was the outcome? A dreary, superficial examination of Michelangelo's work, covered exhaustingly with commentary and music which gave little indication of the kind of man the artist was. It had no reality.

Admittedly, in these productions costs are high. Gold shot around 47,000 ft. in America with Muggeridge (there should be a shot there somewhere!). Watkins was displeased with the first cut of "The War Game". He took a complete new print and

started from the beginning again. Russell also makes no compromises. He wanted a shot for the Elgar film of a cornfield beneath fairly heavy clouds. The crew sat in a pub for three days until Russell was satisfied with the cloud formation.

Despite this, I see these films as the future for documentaries and I would claim that by scripting "Cathy Come Home" more impact was achieved than by interviewing a young couple who had suffered in a similar way. In fact, many documentaries are becoming films of 'reality' rather than a celluloid record of statements and actions. It's a pity all the examples are British.

## KIT DENTON *the critic in tv*

I never really knew whether my column should most properly have been addressed to the people who watched television in this country or to the people who made it or to the people who administered it. It's a vexed and vexing question, and the nub of it is the need to define the critic's role in this field.

On the simplest analysis, perhaps it's true to say that the critic should be some sort of arbiter of public taste, writing with knowledge to offer opinion on the value of what's screened, but this is so often a question of hindsight, of comment on the transient, that I question its value.

It's not as important as other aspects of the critic's duty. There is a need for him to write, on occasion, specifically for the administrators, for him to try to interpret artistic and public needs to the men who control and invest because, with the best will in the world, these men must look on the medium as a means of improving upon investment or of further exercising control.

Such an atmosphere of thought precludes full appreciation of the arts and crafts and sciences involved, just as it so often seems to preclude a proper appreciation of the human values concerned—the people at the practical levels who make the thing work. And this is the third group to which the critic is surely responsible—the liquorice allsorts of talent sandwiched between the hun-

dreds-and-thousands of viewers and the crystallised pear-drops of the executives.

All too often, the public and the performer are willing to accept the critic as a man who only finds fault, who delights in the acid art of the take-down, whose tiny and occasional bubble of honey floats in a vat of vitriol. All too often the would-be critic is sufficiently influenced by this general attitude to fall into its pattern. Lord Byron wrote:

As soon seek roses in December—ice in June;  
Hope constancy in wind, or corn in chaff;  
Believe a woman or an epitaph,  
Or any other thing that's false, before  
You trust in critics.

This has long enough been part of the philosophy which sourly insists that the critic is fit for no other task, that he's either unblooded in the arena of his choice or has failed in it and so turns to reviling other, better men . . . and I don't doubt that it's as true, in part, as any other generalisation. As I see it, it's necessary to have a good grounding, and TV is as diverse and demanding a field as you could imagine. It's not to be expected that the critic should be an expert in the hundreds of areas which go to make up the total area of television. But it's surely essential for him to have worked in the medium in a capacity which has enabled him to see it in action,



professionally, from the inside, and for him to have a solid knowledge of its requirements, its capabilities and limitations, its peculiar language and its temperament.

Obviously, any one, any viewer, is a critic of TV for himself, but the professional critic has a much wider responsibility than the personal one and must have a commensurately wide base from which to climb.

Numbers of people are continually expressing ideas through television to a large and largely uncritical audience, and there is both a need and an obligation for the critic to try to translate some of those ideas . . . and this works in both directions. It's often necessary to explain to the viewer why a particular program wasn't satisfactory from the professional angle, it's often just as necessary to explain to the industry why it was unsatisfactory from the public angle. This imposes a deep responsibility on the conscientious critic, a responsibility which isn't lightened by the knowledge that he's likely to be vilified by either side—or both.

The TV critic must be able to make it plain to both sides that he's not writing with his left foot and his brain in pickle. He has to know the medium from personal and practical experience. And he has to assume that his judgment is right, for otherwise all his own private standards would be valueless. These are the standards he must present to other people, and he must convince them that they are valid standards.

Even if he does all this properly, does it serve any purpose? He's being paid to look at TV dispassionately, if that's really possible, and to write about people who are being paid to make TV programs. It's certain that many of these people read what he has to say, and there's enough proof of the fact that some performers and managements take notice of some of those things. To that degree, he does serve his purpose.

But what's more important is his responsibility to direct his writing to you, the viewer, and that's not easy. It doesn't just mean telling you a show was good or bad—surely to God you can use your own judgment about that!—but giving explicit reasons for saying it was good or bad. It means trying to explain to you some of the factors governing the making of the show within the context of the industry as a whole. It means substantiating criticism—or shutting up. If even a part of that can be done honestly, the TV critic certainly justifies his existence.

But he cannot really be dispassionate about it. It would be stupid to pretend that even the best critic in the world is without prejudices, or that these are never expressed. Personal prejudice, in this field, is not only present—properly assessed, it is extremely valuable. Without it, much of the critical faculty is lost, for its presence argues, at least, an initial point of view—right or wrong—from which critical departures may be made.

The single major lack, unfortunately, appears to be the 'masterpieces' about which most critics would love to narrate.

RALPH BLUNT

## panic among the advertisers

Reading the advertising press at the present time one gets the impression that advertisers have the jitters. The Federal Government's restrictive trade practices legislation, existing censorship of pharmaceutical advertising, new threats to control or even ban cigarette advertising, the constant sniping by the morals vigilantes, and the biting sneers of the intellectuals—these are getting under the skin of even the roughest and the toughest of the wheeler-dealers.

It is understandable that criticism of advertising should grow more intense with the growth of television.

It has been so easy in the past to avoid advertisements for products in which you had no interest, no intent to buy.

If you were in the market for a new car you searched out every advertisement you could find to build up some comparative data before taking that final, disastrous step of putting your foot inside the car dealer's showroom.

But with television you become a 'captured audience'. The salesman invades your privacy. He shouts, bellows, or implores, while you are relaxing. He brain-washes while you are in a state of near somnolence induced by third-rate



programs with completely predictable plots designed not to involve you in the slightest mental exercise.

You suddenly become aware of advertising. Horribly aware.

Latest figures show that 97.3 per cent. of TV homes (i.e. 80 per cent. of all homes) are tuned to a commercial station for an average of 30 hours 11 minutes every week.

Advertising represents 13.6 per cent. of all commercial television, so almost every Australian is subjected to over a half hour of concentrated product propaganda every night of the week: a devastating statistic.

But it also indicates how shallow is the 'grass-roots' objection to television advertising. A simple switch to the national station provides better programs free from advertising. But surveys show a constant audience of over three million for commercial television every night between 6 and 10 p.m.

Should such a power to influence be controlled, disciplined, censored? It depends on your point of view.

Advertising through mass media is indispensable to the laissez-faire capitalist system, motivated by profit only, dependent on mass production, mass selling. Criticism of advertising is a basic criticism of this profit-motivated system. So step warily.

But, I can hear some cry, "We're only protesting about untruthful advertising".

That's rubbish. Advertising, because it is public, is probably more honest than any other method of selling. Certainly more than the unrecorded sales pitch of the door-to-door salesman who jams his foot in your suburban door-way. And he's the logical alternative to advertising.

The advertising profession provides a living for more talented people than probably any other enterprise — including architecture, journalism, theatre, and the feature film industry. It might be a waste of talent, but it does provide a living.

Already these people are under pressure from dreary businessmen, the morals vigilantes, and clients who fear offending Mr. Rylah's teenage daughter. This pressure has reduced much television advertising to an unwanted mediocrity; laden it with fake gentility and middle-class dullness.

Advertising cannot sell a bad product, or at least a product which is demonstrably inferior to its competitor. Experience in the United States shows that of one hundred new products launched through supermarkets, eighty failed to survive—despite heavy advertising.

But, having defended advertising as an integral part of our economic system, I must now admit that I consider it the most dangerous and frightening power in our society. Its danger lies not in the honesty or dishonesty of individual commercials; not in its overwhelming dullness, its occasional lapse into exceedingly bad taste, or even its massive contribution to the great Australian mediocrity. Its danger lies in the combined power of all advertising as propaganda.

From morning till night, seven days a week, year after year, we are pounded with the philosophy of business: "Judge the value of life by the number of your possessions".

No-one can escape the drive to own material things. All other human endeavor sinks into insignificance. We are willing to send young men to die to protect our treasured possessions, or otherwise we chain them to a mill-stone to earn the money to purchase an excess of useless trash, when they should be free to experiment with life.

Advertising places outside the mores of society the young person who chooses to live the life of a poet, a musician, a painter. It alienates the sensitive, it seduces the high-school drop-out, it lures the educators away from the humanities to concentrate on money-making subjects. But it provides an affluent mass market for the products it promotes.

## The Writer in Australia 1856-1964

Edited with commentaries by  
JOHN BARNES

This book is a collection of original documents — essays, reviews, memoirs and letters — concerned with the problem of the writer in Australia. It is divided chronologically into four sections, each section being linked with a commentary by the editor. The literary documents, whose dates range from 1856 to 1964, include letters of Joseph Furphy, A. G. Stephens, and Louis Esson, and, inter alia, articles by Frederick Sinnett, Henry Lawson, Vance and Nettie Palmer, and Judith Wright.

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## MERLE JAMES *bending young minds*

TV in Australia is under criticism from many quarters. At forums, lectures and public meetings on this topic one fact has impressed me—the insularity of the points of view of those concerned. The writer seeks a market for his work, the actor and musicians are looking for constancy of employment, the producer wants an outlet for his creative abilities, the advertiser wants to sell more goods, the station management is concerned to the exclusion of all other considerations with making money for its shareholders.

Who, I want to know, is interested in this magic box as a social influence of unparalleled importance?

Who is looking after my interests, as a viewer; who is interested in my reactions, what official body is protecting my children, enriching my experience, widening my horizons? Yet is not the viewer the target of all this billion dollar industry, the indispensable component at the end of the production line?

The fact is, I matter—numerically—if I am one of the majority, one of the multiples of the rating survey units that indicate, unerringly one fears, that most people watch the worst programs. The accumulative effects on the community are not calculated; the well-being and interests of the individual are ignored.

“Today”, wrote Jose Ortega y Gasset, the Spanish philosopher, observing social conditions quite remote from, and long before the advent of TV, “we are witnessing the triumph of hyperdemocracy in which the mass acts directly, imposing its aspirations and desires by means of material pressure. The mass crushes beneath it everything that is excellent, individual, qualified and select, and anybody who is not like everybody runs the risk of being eliminated.”

What could be more descriptive of the rating systems of TV program selection? Two groups in

the community are particularly poorly catered for: the culturally literate, which ranges from the intelligent teen-ager to the mature intellectual, and the children. Ah! The children’s programs—what outrage is committed here! Originally, I studied the children’s programs from a quasi-professional and highly maternal interest and was struck by the lack of any merit, any literary truth or visual artistry—but that was some time ago. Things have progressed. Now each channel attempts to outdo the next by heaping horror upon monster and violence upon absurdity, in a never-ending attempt to catch the most children in the rating net.

The effects of TV cannot be compared with those of theatre or cinema or literature or anything that has gone before. Because of the high percentage of population affected, the hours of exposure, the ousting of other occupations and sources of information and the intimate and dramatic nature of its impact, TV must be regarded not as another entertainment medium but as the most potent, vital, subtle and far-reaching social influence and teaching instrument ever known. And yet in this country, it is regarded, used and accepted as a mere vending machine.

To examine some of the social consequences of the type of TV we enjoy or endure at the moment, let us look more closely at the case of the children—for three reasons. Firstly, those most strongly affected by TV viewing will be the emotionally immature and partially educated, without strong opinions of their own and having only a small field of reference—i.e. all children, along with a good percentage of adults. Secondly, TV is only eleven years old in this country, and to assess effects we must look at those who are watching TV during their formative years. Thirdly we must study TV children’s programs, for here we are nurturing our future audiences. What they see



and learn to enjoy now they will expect and demand as adults.

To comprehend the impact and possible reaction of children to TV, one must have some knowledge of the stages of growth, emotional and intellectual, through which a child passes. What can be unknown and terrifying at one stage may be understood and tolerated at another, what can be symbolically threatening in the early stages loses its significance later; individual reactions vary—but it is indisputable that young children exposed to unsuitable material suffer through unnatural anxieties and tension, undermined security, confusion of reality and fantasy, and that their play and dreams and serious actions are adversely influenced.

Continuation of exposure has a curious reaction. In older children, self-protective devices seem to go into action, a greater tolerance of horror seems to develop, induced insensitivity results. That this callousness and immunity to sympathetic reaction is carried over into real life situations is the likely outcome. Recently at a screening to school children of road safety films designed to shock with scenes of death and injury caused by drunken driving, these films failed to have much impact on the children, for, as they explained afterwards, they had seen too much similar horror on TV for it to impress them. Imitative play is an immediate and observable reaction to TV viewing. Every school playground demonstrates the current screenings from the "Three Stooges" afflictions to "Combat"—where teachers reported that migrant children were forced into the roles of the enemy in the cause of dramatic reality.

Then there have been the tragic re-enactments of children in makeshift superman capes who have jumped from roofs in the belief they could fly, and the fatalities of imitated hangings. Imitated crimes are not unusual and so we have the unlikely occurrence of the Bank Employees Union entering the field on behalf of less violent crime on television—as they say, this type of drama acts as a blueprint and a stimulus for potential bank robbers and criminals.

But perhaps the most significant effect for the community will be the long term results, the subtle acquisition by large numbers of people of certain attitudes to life and living derived not from reality but from recurring themes in TV drama viewed over many years and painlessly acquired, drip by drip.

Recurrent themes indoctrinated by TV include: suspicion of fellow men, lack of trust; revenge as a justifiable motive; equating brute strength with manhood; the inferior and secondary role of women; the threat of anything strange or different; the instability of marriage in particular and

society as a whole, adult life being seen as full of conflict; war as an inevitable part of life; the power of the man with the gun; the right of the strong (brutal) man to dominate the weak; the end justifying the means; materialism: the pleasure motive and the profit motive being paramount; the invincibility of the goodie; the 'enemy' complex; the black and white of bad and good.

Good home and community influences, fulfilling personal experiences and wide education, will counteract these impressions for those fortunate enough to encounter them. What of the others? Surely the purpose of drama—all art, all education—is to interpret life, to assist in the understanding of ourselves, our surroundings, our relationships with one another and to contribute to our control of our environment? Most TV drama today gives us precisely the opposite: a perverted and distorted view of the world, lopsided with those crude literary devices, criminals, spies and violence, with no reference to ourselves or our environment, and offering quite the most undesirable solutions to problems. We are making it increasingly difficult for a child to achieve the transition our culture requires from the primitive infant to the self-controlled adult when daily we provide unwanted stimulation to latent tendencies by putting before him grown 'heroes' getting what they want by aggressive and violent actions.

One also notices the awful passivity that develops with continual TV watching. The lack of desire to do anything else, the dependency, the formed habit, and one wonders if the constant intake of this visual drug results also in loss or depletion, as happens with other drugs, of one of man's priceless possessions—his ability to recognise his position in relation to his environment and to act accordingly. Do fact and fiction overlap, does recognition blur between fantasy and reality? Are correct decisions more difficult to make? Is useful action harder to motivate?

There seems no doubt that school children overburdened with visual images have difficulty in absorbing school work, and that day-dreaming (conscious as well as dreams (unconscious) are colored by television experience.

Talking with interested groups over the last two years, it is clear that there is a large section of the community dissatisfied with TV and wanting improvements. Asking mothers of children of various ages if they felt TV had benefited them or burdened them with additional problems, they expressed overwhelmingly the opinion that TV had added to their difficulties in rearing a family, in adhering to principles; it had contributed to family disagreements over program supervision, to



ANN GILLISON  
KEN TAYLOR

two  
thousand  
weeks

Two young Melbourne critics  
contribute to the controversy over  
the new Australian feature film

ANN GILLISON

"When," said the girl in front, leaning to her companion and blocking the screen, "do you think they'll get to Puffing Billy?" The sort of comment individuals in an audience enjoy to make with the intention of being overheard. Fair enough in its way. Typical, too, of the identification hunt a Melbourne audience must participate in—willing it or no—seeing "2000 Weeks".

At the time we were watching hero and heroine, married man and mistress, going through a tortuous appraisal in the unlikely setting of the Melbourne cemetery. Blind stone angels stared down. The actors seemed equally lacking in emotion. One wondered irreverently whether there would, indeed, be a pretty flashback showing them blithe and carefree on that charming little steam train that meanders through the Dandenong hills.

Really Melbourne looked jolly good you thought. Pity that the excellent camera work, so well directed and so professionally edited, inevitably evoked those damned television commercials where young love runs through mists and dappled shafts of sunlight to sell cigarettes or, less harmfully, plain old fashioned eau de cologne. It's just that the telly boys have done it so well, so often.

To consider "2000 Weeks"—the first all-Australian financed and produced feature movie for so long—is, of course, not just a matter of discarding the recognisable sites and identities as distractions but to see it as a film without the qualifications involved in the apologetic label, Australian.

And it's a sad fact that without making the old excuses "2000 Weeks" simply does not rate well enough; it packs no punch, takes little hold on the viewers' sympathy or emotions and its script for the most part, when not veering on the banal or the pretentious, simply does not marry with the

camera. Lines are delivered with a recitative quality when we need to be gripped visually.

Tim Burstall and Patrick Ryan's script—now on sale as a Sun Book paperback—takes a 30-year-old journalist, with ambitions to write seriously, and sees him through a period of crisis—the death of his unsympathetic father, the loss of his mistress as she sails overseas, the unhappiness of his wife, the confrontation with an old friend, now the successful cynical expatriate, on a brief trip home, and something of a professional crisis in his work for a daily newspaper.

And in doing so the ramifications of what director Tim Burstall calls "the Aus thing" are considered: provincialism, isolation, the meagreness of Australian cultural life . . . but a series of stolid pronouncements on these themes combined with slow and often corny dialogue doesn't make for an experience in the cinema.

Mark McManus and Jeanie Drynan fail to convince us that they are involved in a passionate love affair. If it weren't for reference to the "book of the film" I would hardly have remembered that the hero and his cronies were being seen as believers in "the worth of the intellectual and artistic life . . . free-thinkers in religion, radicals in politics" who try to be "honest in our personal and sexual relationships". It's just not enough to tell it through the voice-over method.

It is difficult to believe that the old knock-our-own-product habit has any life left to it: the feeling in Melbourne where Eltham-Senior Films made the feature was one of a positive wish for its success, and it was more than disappointing to come away from the film's premiere saying "Well, it was very good technically wasn't it?" and remembering as an afterthought that the music by Don Burrows was excellent.

There are good things about "2000 Weeks" and two of them for me were Robin Copping's photo-



graphy and the excellent screen quality of Eileen Chapman as the wife, in a part that didn't give her much chance to shine. David Turnbull, as the old friend returning in style to the backwater he is so glad to have escaped, provided some sorely needed pace and was lucky in a much more convincingly written role than the rest, who seemed to be muddling around in a rather undergraduate fashion for their thirty year age group. But perhaps that's the way Tim Burstall sees Melbourne's intellectuals.

Whichever it is, in his first fully-fledged feature film the director has concentrated on a number of themes that one can assume have been bees in his bonnet for some time. He has waited a long while to make this film—possibly why it has a dated quality—and surely what we now say is fair go, let's wait and see what he can do next and hope that financially he is to be given this chance.

If, as the film's pre-publicity constantly emphasised, its success or failure marks the real beginning or further delay of a healthy local film industry—one can't expect this from the quickie co-productions—the picture looks as if it might fade to black.

For "2000 Weeks" has received a thoroughly over-serious treatment. It has been discussed and analysed with as much weight and criticism as the latest from Polanski, Bunuel or Bergman. Flippantly one wonders whether it might not have done rather better being dubbed in Swedish and given English sub-titles.

Burstall's direction, full of potential, has hardly been seen in the light of a first-up and if the damning faint praise it has gained—and even those who like it keep apologising for doing so—prevents him from a second chance, then shame on a gambling country.

The local investors have yet to realise the potential of a film industry gamble and, considering the commercial promotion "2000 Weeks" had for its Melbourne debut they are certainly not going to sniff it out yet.

The critics did not like the film but we have seen it proved again and again that this need make barely an iota of difference at the box office.

A small number of people sought out "2000 Weeks" in its first. The "hold-over figure" was not reached. The feature was taken off on the eleventh day.

It seems a pity that the film's producers see the need to blame the panning by the critics for the commercial failure of the Melbourne run. Much more at the heart of the matter was surely the worse than useless promotion the distributor saw fit to give the film. One hopes it is to fare better in other States.

Perhaps the real solution of the distribution problem—and, incidentally, the film's makers with some courage went ahead and subsequently faced that thorny one—would have been to give it a first release on television.

That wouldn't recoup the \$130,000 said to have been the budget, in a hurry, but as things stand it would have at least secured an audience.

The weeks of the title, by the way, add up to the statistical life expectancy the hero has at the time of the film.

## KEN TAYLOR

Tim Burstall and Patrick Ryan's precise observation of the *douleurs* of provincial life—the film, "2000 Weeks"—was received with savage misunderstanding by Melbourne critics, and lasted days instead of weeks in the plaster statuary of the city's Forum Theatre.

Colin Bennett, of the Melbourne Age, complained that one couldn't imagine the film's journalist hero writing anything worth printing, and some idea of the film's difficulties with audiences here was immediately apparent. The agony of provincial life isn't really the pace or the banality—two qualities the film asks us to think about—but the knowledge that in a province life and art reflect values and styles developed elsewhere. In spite of intense nationalism the way up in Australia is still the way out, for provincial thought is confident that worthwhile goals exist only out there in The Overseas.

Will Gardner—the film's journalist hero—knows something of this shallow quality of his milieu but his response, dredged from a complex of muzzy formulae, is no more than a vague commitment to the novel he hopes one day to write. He too is a product of provincial life. If pressed, he would probably agree with Colin Bennett's estimate of his ability. Who knows whether he'd be happier as leader writer on the Brisbane Daily Boomer or columnist on the London Observer? He doesn't. Scale and definitive experience are always imports in the provinces.

The test situation that will provide the answer lies ahead of him—clearly, to his despair, outside Australia, which is long on slow attrition but desperately short on the test and nurture of star talent in the minor arts.

A quasi-prospect is held out to him—he's asked to consider a television series; but this is taken from him on the word of his old friend from



rabbiting days who has made it in Brand X television in England, and has returned to tell the locals how to do it.

Will's life meanders on, and it is one of the film's many achievements that his self-absorption is seen to be prolonged by the tentative, shallow and unconfident life about him. Meanwhile—back at the bar getting beers for the ladies—are a gallery of alienated souls settling in for the long haul—whole lifetimes of suburban stoicism ahead of them. Nothing could be more banal.

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waste of time and personal irritation and dissatisfaction—the poor standard of programs being responsible. After watching unsuitable TV, children were rougher and more aggressive in their play, restless and more difficult to control.

It also became apparent that the average age of the viewer is much younger than suspected and that many children spend more time in watching television than in any other single occupation with the exception of sleep.

While there is much need for parent education, total parental responsibility is unrealistic and impossible. The well-being of children and the protection of the most vulnerable sections of our community from harmful influences must be the concern of all well-intentioned adults.

While an increase in Australian content is most desirable, it will not contribute greatly to the betterment unless there is an overall raising of standards.

Actually all that is required is an observance of standards. The Broadcasting Control Board's book of standards is quite excellent, having commonsense and foresight, and keeping the well-being of the viewing public in mind. Unfortunately the recommendations are flouted every day by all channels, and until such time as official supervision can be fortified with legal action of an appropriate kind, will probably continue to be.

We have to recognise this medium as a potent social influence and to exert pressure so that action be taken to ensure the Standards are observed, that those working within the industry be impressed with their personal responsibility to the public (especially writers originating scripts, program departments and those in a position to in-

I once met an Indian girl who turned down an invitation to the film "Shakespeare Wallah" because she'd once seen in Singapore a performance by the small group of players whose deteriorating fortunes in post-Independence India formed its subject. Perhaps our critics too are mistaking the microcosm for the macrocosm. Maybe "2000 Weeks" is banal but so is the life it reflects. Maybe as a film it has more going for it than we seem prepared to notice in Melbourne. Maybe, like my Indian friend, we are missing the whole point.

fluence station policy), that the A.B.C. be encouraged to adhere to the highest standards in all spheres of telecasting, that it provide entertainment and information of the widest scope, and that it act as a focal point toward which to educate public taste, presenting all that is most worthwhile and stimulating in both classical and experimental fields for all age groups at appropriate times. It should abandon all competition with commercial stations.

Film and TV appreciation and criticism should become a subject in all schools and children should no longer be exploited by commercial interests. There should be one and a half hours advertising—free time from 4.30 p.m. (If some of the commercial channels close down, so much the better.) This time should be divided into three sections right across the dials: 4.30-5.00 devoted to programs designed for the pre-school child and up to the age of seven; 5.00 p.m. to 5.30, special material for the 7 to 11 age group; 5.30-6.00 p.m.: children's programs for the 11 year plus age group.

All children's programs should be pre-selected and approved by a special panel of competent people comprising of teachers, social workers, psychologists, psychiatrists, parents and specialists in the performing arts. Finally, the Vincent report should be revised and implemented.

TV has almost unlimited possibilities for entertainment and enjoyment. It could be the greatest educator of all time, the entree to and window on the arts and sciences of the world, the key to international understanding, a source of satisfaction and delight for every man.

This is at present merely a wish and a hope.



## SEEING A WARSHIP

Len Fox (Sydney) writes:

In Overland 38 Max Piggott recalled a scene on the Melbourne wharves when his policeman Dad "very much alone amid a mob at the pier entrance" marched the leader of the mob off the pier. Max Piggott adds: "If memory serves me right they burned Musso's effgy there that night not far from an Italian cruiser that was in port."

This last note makes it fairly clear that the incident was not during the Italian war on Abyssinia as the writer suggests; this was an incident in 1938 that I remember well.

The incident is worth recalling—both as an early Australian struggle against fascism, and as one of the few incidents in history where a warship was afraid of unarmed people!

On 16 February 1938 the news flashed round Melbourne that an Italian visitor to the Italian warship Raimondo Montecuccoli, berthed at Port Melbourne for the sesquicentenary celebrations, had been savagely assaulted on the ship.

He reported to Port Melbourne police that he had been held by two sailors while another sailor hit him several times with a piece of wood under orders from an officer who had cried: "Hit him! Hit him!"

The visitor, a man named Ottario Frigo-Orlando who had lived in Australia for twelve years, and who now had bandages round his head and plaster on his lip, said he had been taken to the ship's hospital and held there, while officers indicated to him he had been mistaken for a man who had allegedly insulted them at the Carlton Club on the previous Monday evening. It appeared that Mr. Frigo-Orlando had not been at the Club, and that all that had happened there had been that Italian anti-fascists had sold anti-fascist papers.

The police and other authorities refused to take any action over the assault on the ground that they had no jurisdiction over a foreign ship.

At the time I was Victorian State secretary of the Movement Against War and Fascism, and can remember organising meetings during the day at factories, and in the evening we called a protest meeting at Port Melbourne as near to the warship as we could get. Veteran socialist Percy Laidler was in the chair, I remember, and there was a big crowd there.

Press estimates were that four thousand attended; speakers included trade union leaders, an Italian anti-fascist, and an eye-witness to the assault. An effigy of Mussolini was burned.

A resolution was carried condemning the commander of the cruiser, and also condemning the

then Attorney-General (R. G. Menzies) for "not having taken action against this crime". The resolution called on Australians to "unite and crush fascism wherever it appears".

The police were there in great numbers; they closed the iron gate to the pier and stationed strong police detachments on either side of the gate to prevent the crowd getting any nearer the cruiser.

And we learned afterwards that the captain of the cruiser had had men ready with hoses to repel possible invaders!

I've always been a fairly meek sort of bloke, and when I tell people that I once organised a crowd of unarmed civilians that frightened an armed cruiser, they look at me with eyes that say: "You're a very poor liar!"

And it's true, I guess, that I recall the incident through colored glasses. My story is certainly different from Max Piggott's recollection of the lone policeman bravely arresting the leader of the mob.

It will have to be left to History (or Myth? Or are they the one?) to decide whether on that far-off day I was the brave civilian who scared a warship, or whether I was a villainous mob leader dragged to prison by a courageous policeman. If they gave me a truth drug I'd probably say I'm growing so confoundedly old that I really can't remember!

## MORE CENSORSHIP?

John J. Alderson (Havelock, Vic.) writes:

In the May 1968 issue of *Western Historian*, in a report on one of the historical societies, occurs the sentence: "'Anonymous History' was withdrawn from the State Library in April last and it is hoped to report success in withdrawing it from the National Library, Canberra".

This seems to suggest that the State Library of Victoria bows to the will of groups of people who want books suppressed, and who, not content with that, seek to have the National Library also suppress a book they object to. Surely we have enough censors without individual groups successfully suppressing a book? Suppression by the National Library would also mean that the book would not be featured in that library's bibliography and would thus be virtually reduced to non-existence.



# BOOKS

## THE PROBLEM OF UTOPIA

JOHN F. C. HARRISON

Gavin Souter, "A Peculiar People: the Australians in Paraguay" (Angus & Robertson, \$6.95).

The history of community socialism has still to be written. Thanks largely to Marx and Engels' disparagement of their communitarian contemporaries as 'utopians', subsequent writers have been content to smile indulgently at efforts to establish socialist communities, regarding them as curious aberrations from the main pattern of political and state socialism. A utopian socialist has come to mean an impractical visionary, a quaint and Quixotic figure whose heart is in the right place but whose grip on the realities of life in a capitalist-dominated world is none too strong. Socialist orthodoxy is a matter of labor parties, trade unions, and economic theories—only occasionally do we hear echoes of William Morris and the quality of life to be lived under socialism.

This, however, is to sell the tradition of the socialist movement short. When the word socialism was first used in the late 1820s and 1830s it meant Owenism, that is, a system of living in communities or "villages of co-operation". It is difficult nowadays to dissociate ourselves from the overwhelming dominance of the later (i.e. post 1880s) version of socialism, but some such effort is necessary if we are to maintain a correct sense of the tradition.

The extent and variety of community experiments is very much greater than is commonly realised. From medieval times to the present, in Britain, Europe, the United States, South America and Australia the record of communitarianism is complete. References to the Owenites, Fourierists, Icarians, and the utopian romances of the later nineteenth century are included in most standard accounts of the history of socialism. Yet these are only the top of the iceberg, nine-tenths of which lies submerged. Who nowadays has heard of the Jesuit communities in Paraguay which in the mid-eighteenth century contained more than 200,000 people, or of the 130 communities which flourished in America before the Civil War, or even of the 22,000 Australians who settled in communities across the continent between 1894 and 1900?

It is in this context that the Australian experiment in community building in Paraguay in the 1890s has to be considered, though Gavin Souter has not tackled the matter in quite this way. What he has given us is a vivid and detailed account of the men, women and children who followed William Lane to Paraguay in 1893-95 and who established the two colonies of New Australia and Cosme. Following the great Queensland shearers' strike in 1891, some stalwarts of the labor movement despaired of building the socialist commonwealth in Old Australia and decided to start afresh in South America. They found a leader in William Lane, twenty-nine year old editor of the Brisbane Worker, who had arrived in Queensland via Amer-

ica in 1885 and who was an admirer of Edward Bellamy. An exploring party of three was sent to Paraguay to locate a suitable site for settlement, money was raised by subscriptions and loans, and a sailing ship, the Royal Tar, was purchased for £1,350. The first batch of 220 colonists sailed from Sydney in July 1893, and a second shipload of 199 left Adelaide in December of the same year. Subsequent emigrants from Australia, New Zealand and Britain raised the total number to 600-650, though the maximum number of settlers in the two colonies at any one time was not more than about 330. After the eight weeks sea voyage came the adventures of pioneering in a strange new land: houses to be built, bush to be cleared, relations with Spanish and Guarani-speaking neighbors to be established. And almost immediately the colonists fell to quarrelling among themselves.

Mr. Souter gives a fascinating account of daily life in the settlements. He has tracked down the personal details necessary to build dozens of short biographies and has examined closely the constitutional and political changes within the communities. Fortunately for the historian the colonists published a journal, and from this and from surviving letters to friends in Australia it has been possible to reconstruct the main narrative of the experiment. In 1965 Mr. Souter was able to round out his researches with a trip to Paraguay, where he located some of the original settlers and their descendants. One of the most interesting parts of the book is the collection of excellent photographs of these pioneers and their children.

The usual evaluation of community experiments has been in terms of success and failure. New Australia and Cosme abandoned their communal basis and relapsed into private ownership after a few years, and so the general verdict has been that they failed. This, however, is not really adequate for analysing the nature of the experiment. Too often the assumption has been made that a particular group of communitarians was unique, or at least "a peculiar people" in the Cromwellian sense. Actually the Australians in Paraguay were anything but unique. Their whole story runs true to type, and their aspirations and experiences can be paralleled many times over in other communities. It is in fact possible to construct a typology of communitarian experiments and to identify constant themes, problems and types of solution. Vague talk about utopia and subjective verdicts of failure are irrelevant to the real task of analysis. But fortunately Mr. Souter has provided us with ample material from which to start.

Take, for instance, the role of leadership in the community. Lane's position was apparently authoritarian, but what was the basis of this? His leadership was perhaps partly charismatic, but when he developed religious and mystical strains these were repudiated by many of the members. Or again, what was to be the basis of social control and discipline within the community? If the despotism of a leader or allegiance to a religious code were unacceptable, how were unity and harmony to be preserved? This was a crucial problem in



all communities, and failure to solve it almost always resulted in a break-up or hiving off of dissident groups as at New Australia. Failure to maintain an effective ideology is a characteristic of many nineteenth century communities, and here the Australians were typical. Their vague identification of socialism with mateship did not provide them with an adequate theoretical base for tackling social problems. For the physical problems of pioneering they were much better equipped than many communities; for they had not made the common mistake of recruiting city slickers for work in the bush.

Many aspects of New Australia and Cosme strike a recognisable note to anyone familiar, say, with Owen's attempt to build a community at New Harmony, Indiana, in 1825-28. The great debate about community of property, the pastime of constitution-making, the reliance upon a dwindling capital fund, the intense introspection and self-consciousness of the leadership, had all been present earlier—and were to recur in later communitarian ventures. At the individual level communities seem to have served a number of purposes. They provided a solution to problems of personal deficiency or social maladjustment, and had an obvious appeal to those who sought security or escape from the world. The intellectual's desire to reform mankind is also observable in many leading colonists: all communities tended to have a high proportion of vegetarians or teetotalers or other faddists.

On these and similar questions "A Peculiar People" has much to contribute. Indeed, it is only in relation to these general issues of communitarianism that the significance of the Australians in Paraguay can be assessed. Other interpretations all too easily reduce the whole episode to the level of the trivial and curious. The problem we are left with is not a particular utopian community but the social function of Utopia.

## TEN YEARS OF TV

JOHN IREMONGER

Mungo MacCallum (ed.): "Ten Years of Television"  
(Sun Books, \$1.25).

If the reader expects an 'in memoriam' treatment of Australia's first decade of TV, he'll be disappointed. This survey is not a history of how Jungle Jim's plastic indoor jungle was superseded, or of the day-to-day vicissitudes of an infant industry. Rather, the passing of the first ten years has been taken as merely an occasion around which to string a collection of seven essays covering various areas of interest, from the economics of TV to its possibilities in education.

Behind each of the contributions are the thoroughly-expected perennial issues—the relationship between the A.B.C. and the commercial stations, the question of Australian content, and so on.

The reader can be thankful that he has been saved the history. Imagine a series of dreary resurrections of individual programs and interminable debates long since gone to well-deserved oblivion.

The reader doesn't wholly escape. Two of the articles are little more than feeble attempts to deal with exhausted non-issues. Elizabeth Rid-dell's piece on "Entertainment" herds all the old

folklore generalisations and apologies about the quality of the mass programs onto the stage, puts them through their paces, then shepherds them backstage one by one, from where they appear periodically to provide unconvincing evidence for some confusing comment.

The same tendency to deal with strawmen, this time in the shape of those gloomy forecasts about what TV would do to the kiddies, characterises quite a chunk of Jean Battersby's article on 'Teenagers'. Most of the remainder consists of a survey whose unsurprising results could have been disposed of in a couple of brief paragraphs, and whose conclusions are rendered suspect by the fact that while it was designed to show the impact of TV on a group of teenies, no group was provided against which to contrast the results. Probably the most valuable point about this essay is that it points out that after the gloomy forecasts came very little research. As for the contributor's views on the teenagers, they amount to a belief that this age-group contains TV's most critical viewers. My opinion is that the most teenagers can say about their experience with the vacuum box is "Look, we have come through!"

In contrast to these two contributions, the most impressive essay has a great deal to say, and says it very lucidly. This is Ken Davidson's "Profit and Loss", an account of the political and economic decisions which are, as he carefully documents, largely responsible for the present state of the medium. It is economic decisions, and not attitudes to Australian talent, which determine the amount of overseas material. And it is political decisions which determine how and how much the channel owners can set the standards. The extent and result of the collusion of economic and political interests is most dramatically revealed in the fate of the Australian Broadcasting Control Board, which "has been completely emasculated and its major function has become the distribution of political patronage in the form of television licences. Where the Board has overstepped this function the Government has simply ignored its recommendations". The Watchdog of the People is a hoax.

The practical details of this state of affairs is well examined in Mungo MacCallum's article on "Drama". In giving varying degrees of weight to the factors involved, this article reveals, among other things, why it is that TV drama here is still only 5 per cent. locally produced—and the results of this.

A concern with the practical also informs two other pieces, Kit Denton's "Public Affairs" and MacCallum's "The Arts". They both show the results of a decade of work with the media, and consist of a literate introduction to the craft.

Finally, Betty Archdale's "Education"—a bit thin this, with slight redemption through an interest (largely uninformed) with the potential of TV for work in schools.

All of the stuff in this book has been said many times before and some of it said better elsewhere. But the better pieces represent a compact, readable survey while even among the dross there is, thanks no doubt to judicious editing, very little of the repetition one expects from collections of this kind. A lot of rubbish has been written about Australian TV by all sorts of people. Thankfully, this book adds little more.



## JAPAN REDISCOVERED

A. A. PHILLIPS

Hal Porter: "The Actors" (Angus & Robertson, \$5.25).

In the last section of "The Paper-chase", Hal Porter briefly described the Japan he had discovered in 1950—an enchanting Japan. He was then convinced that its people had discovered the secret of achieving a state of spiritual peace. Some day he intended to return to learn that art.

In 1967 he made his journey of rediscovery, armed with a publisher's contract for a book on Japan and a Commonwealth Government contract to lecture on Australian literature in Japanese universities. (One would like to have attended those lectures. An audience of avidly literal-minded and dutifully absorbent Japanese students facing the expansively individualistic Hal Porter must have been quite a confrontation.)

If one has read "The Paper-chase" one approaches this book with intrigued attention, for the prospect suggested in the earlier volume of Hal Porter approaching a Nipponese Nirvana was a little imagination-boggling—and a little disturbing. What would Nirvana do to that coruscatory prose, those prejudices which were often so engagingly absurd and no less often so intuitively penetrating?

One need not have worried. What we get in this book is a richly splenetic record of Porter's disillusionment. Paradiso has become Inferno, with illustrations by Hieronimo Bosch. (That last metaphor is well wide of the literal truth. The book's actual pictures are Porter's own drawings, strictly realistic in technique, meticulous in detail, controlled with a high competence, and always interpretively suggestive.)

The main cause of Porter's disillusionment was the deterioration of Japanese life since his earlier visit. For the second time in a hundred years, Japan had suffered westernisation on an American model. Despite the earlier experience, its people lacked the antibodies which slow down the effects of that disease on ourselves. They succumb as haplessly as the South Sea islanders did to the measles germ.

Porter, however, does not stop at a picture of the awful effects of the Japanese binge on Americanism. He now finds nothing of worth in the indigenous traditions of the people. They are the world's worst snobs, they have a huge national conceit, they are callous, even their vaunted culture is no more than a meaningless set of imposed marionette-gestures designed to serve the favorite Japanese vice-evasion of any recognition of truth.

Porter's extremism of view ultimately renders him unconvincing. One cannot believe that any people are so consistently nasty as Porter maintains. The opinion that human beings are nasty has a good deal of evidence to support it and may be reasonably asserted; but no-one with any experience of life can believe that human beings are consistent about anything, even about being nasty.

That is not to say that the book is valueless. It would be sheer impertinence for me to judge the measure of truth in this book—virtually all I know about the Japanese is what some slight

acquaintance with their arts suggests to me. There are qualities in those arts which convincingly contradict Porter's insistence on their superficiality. But my limited experience also suggests that he is often declaring truths. At the lowest, he provides us with a useful corrective to such interpreters as Fosco Maraini, who is betrayed into uncritical sentimentalisms by his determination to find mystical affirmations in his Japanese encounters.

Yet I feel that Maraini tells us more of value than Porter does. That is partly because Maraini had the scholarly equipment, the opportunities and the will to understand which Porter lacked (and does not claim). The Italian's stronger advantage, however, lies in the truth that sympathy is always more illuminating than antipathy.

Porter's extremism, of course, does not make his book any the less interesting. Unfortunately he not only hated his re-discovery of Japan. He was also bored by it—and he had contracted to write a book. He faces that obligation most manfully. He has done plenty of homework, and skilfully serves up snippets of his acquired knowledge for our entertainment and instruction. His choice and use of illustrative "senryu" are particularly effective. His microscopic eye works as effectively as ever, and he can still make a catalog of detail significant. But his boredom will out. The relish of phrase works here only intermittently, although there are still enough savorable specimens to stock half-a-dozen books by writers of a lesser verbal vitality. Hard as Porter works to give his reader a fair go, it somehow becomes clear that this is a book which he had to write, not one which he wished to write.

On one important issue, however, Porter is at once convincing, horrifying and valuable. The diseases of modern civilisation on the American model, from which the Japanese currently suffer, also infect us. If the Japanese succumb more swiftly and completely than we do, that makes them the better demonstration of the pathology. Reading this book is like seeing our own reflection in a fun fair mirror, with the added grotesque horror that this mirror tells the essential truth about us.

Perhaps one's tendency to re-act against the extremism of the book is largely due to an uneasy feeling that it is really saying for us, "Hail Caesar! Those about to die here salute their death-mask."

As Porter emphasises, the Japanese are very good at masks.

## TROLLOPE'S VAST MONSTER

HUME DOW

Anthony Trollope: "Australia", edited by P. D. Edwards and R. B. Joyce (University of Queensland Press, \$15).

In 1871-72 Anthony Trollope spent a year in Australia, visiting every colony, working with extraordinary energy to sample every side of Australian life and to commit his sharp observations and his considered judgments to paper. The result was a vast monster of a book, "Australia and New Zealand", published in London in



February 1873 and serially in the Melbourne Australasian starting in the same month.

Trollope's book was well received and soon reprinted in both countries—and with good reason, for it was, and remains, the most comprehensive and in many respects the most interesting account of this country written by any nineteenth century visitor. And yet it has remained out-of-print for almost a century, a collector's item. Now, at long last, the Australian part (four-fifths of the original volume but still 792 pages) has been republished in a truly sumptuous edition by the University of Queensland Press. Fine as the printing and design are, however, it is more important that the edition is a work of admirable scholarship. The editors, P. D. Edwards and R. B. Joyce (of Sydney and Queensland Universities), whose disciplines are English and History, have combined to give the book a full scholarly apparatus of biographical, historical, and literary reference all too rare in Australian publications.

The result is a text which provides a source-book for the study both of Australian colonial society of the early 1870s and of the political and social attitudes of Trollope himself. Footnotes compare the first edition used here with Trollope's manuscript (in the National Library, Canberra) and with the subsequent early editions. The significant variations, together with details of the writing of the MS, make it possible to trace the changes in Trollope's attitudes during his Australian year and the year or two afterwards. So we find Trollope toning down disagreeable references to Queensland shearers and to Melbourne's hot north-erlies after touchy reactions from local enthusiasts. Similar comparisons can be made with the articles Trollope wrote for the London Daily Telegraph while he was in this country.

The conclusions one might reach from such comparisons are, to a small degree, suggested in both the notes and the editors' introduction, but there is a Ballarat to be mined here for the assiduous student. One of the reasons why Trollope's "Australia" has waited so long for republication is the obvious boredom for the general reader in plowing through his repetitious comments from one colony to another on such issues as the structure of the parliament, the land laws, the cost-of-living, etc. But for the student of Trollope it is now possible to examine more closely how his mind changed, and for the social or political historian to examine the divergent circumstances and attitudes revealed by the various colonies to an acute observer during the one year.

Almost the only disappointment about this volume is the brevity of the introduction by Edwards and Joyce—a mere 28 pages. They are so obviously steeped in every known circumstance of Trollope's week-to-week life in Australia, and in what more recent historians have discovered about the early 1870s, that it seems a pity that we have so little of their own observations. What they do say is both provocative and historically constructive. They emphasise Trollope's "passion for politics"—no surprise to any reader of the 'parliamentary novels'—and suggest that this "accounts for much of the interest the book retains for the modern

reader"; the emphasis is just, even if some would feel, as I do, that the quiet revelation of small details of the social mores of the time is of wider interest. They are also excellent in their careful treatment of the reactions of contemporary colonials to Trollope's mild strictures: one sentence dealing with an eccentric reply to Trollope by one, Thomas Chuck, seems to me to be dead on: "the mixture of parochial pride and imperial patriotism, the delight in showing up the Englishman's ignorance coupled with the scarcely concealed gratitude for his interest, are not untypical of Australian reactions to the book".

I would not accept the editors' assessments in all matters. They seem to me to be unduly harsh in writing of Trollope's views of the 'squatter vs. free-selector' question in terms of "disagreement between his heart and his head" and "despite his class prejudices". Trollope's obvious personal sympathy with the squatters he visited and stayed with seems to me to be no more to be expected than his sound, common-sense conclusion that Australia in the 1870s needed to encourage free-selectors to settle on the land; the conflict was inherent in the social situation—it does not need to be conceived as a conflict within Trollope's heart or head. If I may quote from my introduction to my own publication of a selection of passages from Trollope's book, we should recognise "the extraordinary balance and objectivity of his account of the issue". Perhaps I am being hypercritical, but I do feel that the references to Trollope's "prejudices" come a little too easily. To attribute Trollope's obviously hostile reaction to the evangelicals, for example, to an attitude bequeathed by his mother, may obscure the possibility that his attitude was based on his own perfectly sane and careful assessment. I might quarrel also with what I would regard as a lack of emphasis on the degree to which Trollope was deliberately writing for the Englishman who might emigrate to Australia.

But the disagreements I am suggesting are merely evidence of the provocative clarity with which the editors state their views of the position from which Trollope was writing. More power to them! I would not want to suggest that they do not appreciate Trollope's qualities. They stress the value of the book "for the social—as well as the political and economic historian", and they recognise that "it shows much of the keenness of observation and the breadth of human sympathy that distinguish Trollope's novels", even if "it is generally far too dry and factual to engage the reader's imagination in the way a novel can". It is indeed extraordinary how much of Trollope's human sympathy does emerge from time to time in this book. No matter how much one is forced to remember that Trollope was a man of his time and a man of his class, with all the 'anti-democratic bias' this implied, it is striking how often this crusty, touchy 'advanced conservative liberal' old bastard responded favorably to the frankness, openness, initiative, and inherent courtesy of the gold-miner or the servant or the urban man-in-the-street. It is this favorable response that is surprising—and not his horrifying attitude to the fate of the Aborigines.

My obvious enthusiasm for the publication of this volume should not prevent me from express-



ing minor quibbles: the book is too well done not to demand the highest standards of it. One can understand, for example, that the exigencies of binding mean that the excellent illustrations do not appear next to the passages they illustrate, but that is no reason why the "List of Illustrations" in the front should not give the numbers of the pages opposite which they do appear. The index is helpfully analytical, but it should be made clear that it is selective (minor references are omitted)—and there are minor inaccuracies, though misprints in the book seem to be remarkably few. Trollope's son, who had a small station near Grenfell, N.S.W., is called "Frederic"; he may well have been, but Sadlier's excellent book on Trollope gives him as "Frederick" and no comment is made. Incidentally, Frederic is 18 when he emigrates to Australia on page 18, but only 17 on page 762. A little more important than these minutiae is the question of the title of the book, "Australia": this edition omits the one-fifth of the original ("—and New Zealand"), which seems to me to be fairly left to New Zealand scholars to get on with. (They had better hurry if they want to beat Jim Davidson's scholarly edition of Trollope's "South Africa".) But the fact that New Zealand is omitted in this volume seems to demand more comment than a mere statement in a parenthesis on page 17. And one other worry: it is strange to find no acknowledgment of the role of Mr. Gwyn James, who was originally responsible for the fact that Trollope's MS is in our National Library and who pioneered the study of Trollope's movements during his visit.

However, the very fact that most of these quibbles—say, all but two—are so minor is enough indication of the quality of the work the editors have done. This is a very welcome volume, very well handled by both editors and publishers. It is unthinkable that any reputable Australian library should be without it; it deserves a place in a great many private libraries as well.

## RECENT PAPERBACKS

JOHN McLAREN

Morris Lurie: "Rappaport" (Sun Books, 90c).

Harry Marks: "The Heart Is Where The Hurt Is" (Sun Books, 95c).

Paul Carroll: "It's a Loco Life" (Horwitz, 55c).

Jewishness has not been an important element in Australian writing. We have had writers who have happened to be Jewish, and we have had writers, like Judah Waten, who have written about the experience of Jewish communities in Australia, or, like Herz Bergner, who have written mainly for the Jewish community. There have also been writers like Patrick White who have become fascinated by Jewish mysticism and have attempted to use it to resolve their fictional problems. But the characteristic stance of our writers has remained Irish—bibulous, garrulous and rebellious. This has led to an emphasis on somewhat sentimental nationalism, working class solidarity, and the moral evaluation of a man and his career.

Meanwhile, in post-war American fiction, the Jew has emerged as an epitome of modern man. This Jew is not the inhabitant of the ghetto nor

a member of a strong community, but he is still the inheritor of a supra-national tradition which prevents him from identifying strongly with any particular society. He moves in an urban milieu in which his concerns have to do with the quality of personal life. Although he may achieve material success, the drive for power is not his dominating motive. His primary characteristics are his alienation, an alienation which he accepts as a part of human existence, and his complete secularity. He neither looks for a divine justification for his life nor makes a divinity of life itself.

Such a figure appears in Australian literature in Morris Lurie's "Rappaport", which has now been issued as a paperback. This is a gay novel of Melbourne life, an "ultimate chutzpah", which nevertheless has an underlying seriousness. Its quality arises largely from the author's unpretentious concentration on the task in hand, the depiction of one day in the life of his hero, Joey Rappaport, a man who would be an anti-hero except for a cheek which enables him to subject circumstance to his own dreams. Despite appearances, he is neither brash nor arrogant, for he is conscious all the time of his failure in the daily rat-race. We are not allowed to know whether or not his antique shop is a financial success, although we suspect that he will manage to keep it perpetually tottering on the right side of disaster. We do know, however, that Rappaport feels himself trapped, that he has not overcome to his own satisfaction his family's disapproval of his way of life, that he envies those people who are able to travel about the world, dominate waiters, make a million bucks. Yet when he reasserts himself in his day-dreams of fantastic success he is not merely escaping like Walter Mitty, but exercising the real self who is perpetually ready to emerge from his public shell.

The irony of the book comes from the fact that Rappie's closest friend, Friedlander, who is his image of success, is in fact only a mirror image of himself. At the end of the book it is Rappaport, notorious failure in the romantic stakes, who retires to the arms of Sally, and Friedlander who has only the memory of a lost, or broken, love to comfort him. Yet Rappaport has achieved no resolution of his problems, for his feelings towards Sally are neither love nor passion, but something much more complex in between, and we are sure that the affair is destined to be as hectic and unsatisfactory as his affairs with his parents, with the brass bed, with glossy magazines, or with the sideboard of unparalleled ugliness.

The success of the book is largely due to the accuracy with which it portrays the world of the young businessman who is too old to be a teenager and too young to be important. It is the world of jazz, record shops, cinemas, compulsive consumption, smart restaurants and expensive flats, linked together by the ubiquitous automobile. It is on the fringe but not of the worlds of big business proper on the one side and the arts on the other. Its denizens live their brittle, frenetic lives on the surface, but they are capable of moments of deep feeling. Their potential tragedy is that nothing has happened to them which can move them deeply and permanently. Their achievement is to have learnt to live with this failure. Their mode of life is embodied in the detached, witty style of the novel.



Harry Marks' book is a more traditional account of the Jewish experience of persecution, upheaval and re-settling. His characters are not young sophisticates who are making their way, but their parents who are still torn between the hatreds and defences of the old world and the opportunities of the new. His main character, Liesl, was born in Germany in 1929, whereas Lurie's characters were born in Australia around 1940. These dates tell their own story. Liesl's father was dragged away from before her eyes by the Nazis, her mother and brother disappeared while she was out of the house for a short while, and she herself was smuggled out of Germany in time to reach Australia shortly before the start of the war. Her experiences in Germany remain locked inside her as something she can never speak about, and so in turn she finds difficulty in settling into her aunt's family, even after she has overcome her initial distrust and despite the love and warmth which is poured out for her. Yet finally she is the one who breaks through the ancient barriers by falling in love with a German.

The book is dedicated to "Pip, who believes in the goodness of people," and this perhaps indicates its weakness as well as its strength. People in it tend to be that little bit too easily good, and the Australians in particular have rather too much of the easy-going tolerance of Culotta's mob. The very real anti-semitism of the 1930s rarely appears, and then is played down. Yet the book has its real horrors, and the solutions are not simple. There is no easy kicking of the Nazi corpse. Finally, however, it is neither the political nor the social problems, but the figure of Aunt Sophie—big, contradictory, wise, sentimental, vengeful, forgiving, narrow and tolerant in turns—who dominates the book. She helps the reader to believe, if only for a moment, that everyone in fact is good.

Readers of *Overland* will remember some of Paul Carroll's railway stories, which are now collected in a Horwitz edition. They range from slight sketches to well-wrought stories which convey the reality and the humor of all aspects of railway life, at least in the days of steam.

## MINI-MAGS AND THE POETRY EXPLOSION

DENNIS DOUGLAS

A conservative estimate of the number of people actively engaged in writing poetry for publication in Australia would put the figure at something approaching one hundred and fifty.

Over the years the number of outlets for their work has increased steadily, the landmarks in this development being the appearance of the *Poetry Magazine* nearly ten years ago and the increased tendency for the leading Australian dailies to publish poetry in their Saturday issue since the *Australian* began doing so about four years ago.

A new trend in this area that has mushroomed recently is the mini-magazine, which ranges from conscientious attempts to produce something close to the well-established periodicals, like *Transit* and *Crosscurrents*, to publications resembling overseas underground papers, like *Free Poetry* and *Our Glass*, which consist of two or three sheets of coloured foolscap roneoed both sides and held together by staples. The common emphasis in all of these productions is on youth and experiment, and most of them are interested in publishing the kind of poetry that they feel the literary establishment regard unsympathetically. The theory that you can't trust anybody over thirty may now have spread from the field of politics to that of literature.

Mok, the earliest of the mini-mags, began in March 1968, when two students (now ex-) from Flinders University, Richard Tipping and Robert Tillet, designed an octavo-format magazine duplicated and bound with a light paper cover featuring a lino-cut by a student from the South Australian School of Art, Betty Ross.

Mok does not take itself particularly seriously. It is variously described in the first three issues as "a magazine of contemporary dissolution and intemperance", "a magazine of contemporary esoterica and pretension", and "a magazine of contemporary coffeebutts and garlic". Its experimental prose is largely overt parody influenced by late Beckett and Joyce.

Its major innovation has been to publish drama as well as experimental poetry and prose. The second issue included "The Party", a play by Malcolm Purcell, which has since been produced at Weston Teachers' College. The third issue included a "nihilistic farce" by Martin Fabinyi, a ritual play by Neil Giles, and two examples of "the theatre of total involvement" by Tillet together with a short essay acknowledging the influence of expressionism, the drama of the absurd, and Artaud's *Theatre of Cruelty*.

Richard Tipping is quite open about his views on what poetry ought to be. He is interested in making it meaningful to a wider audience, he feels that it should analyse the complexities of contemporary life, and he dislikes sardonic witticisms, ironic lastline twists, and verbal prettiness. He is now more than ever convinced of the necessity of magazines like Mok to cater for new styles and experimental forms. Mok's original contributions came from Adelaide. It is now receiving a lot of work from Sydney and Melbourne.

*Crosscurrents*, which began in Melbourne in May 1968, is intended as an outlet for experimental verse. The editor, Michael Dugan, was struck by the monotonous sameness of the offerings in the established poetry magazines and the difficulty of getting anything accepted that broke away from the styles of what he calls "the academic poetasters".

His first issue represented the work of eight poets, most of them personal friends. By the time the third issue came out he had received poems from more than two hundred writers covering every State except Western Australia and including some from overseas. He hopes to print in his magazine a cross-section of the poetry being



written in Australia today. About half of the manuscripts he receives are from teenagers, towards whom he feels a special responsibility. He tries to encourage young poets and occasionally uses poems which he feels show a good deal of promise rather than actual achievement, but he has never published poems he dislikes, and he has refused poems that he otherwise would have printed that came from people he felt were well enough established not to need Crosscurrents. Among the fairly well known poets who have appeared in Crosscurrents are Barry Breen, Leon Slade, Wilma Hedley and Mariano Coreno, as well as some of the best known of the "poetry underground", Kris Hemensley, Charles Buckmaster, Terence Gillmore, Bill Beard, Andrew Jach, Rob Tillett and Frances Yule.

Sydney's participation in the new movement came later, when John Tranter, a young poet who works in the printing section of the A.B.C. in Sydney, founded *Transit*, a magazine which he hoped would bridge the gap between the prestige journals such as *Meanjin* and *Southerly* and the roneoed broadsheets. His first issue, which appeared in September 1968, included poems by Bruce Beaver, Nigel Roberts, Geoffrey Eggleston, Terence Gillmore and Brian Gorman.

Tranter is the most conservative of the mini-mag editors. He is anxious to publish forward-looking writing but he sees dangers in the identification of poetry with an anti-establishment protest movement. His first issue was a sellout, and he feels reasonably confident about *Transit's* future.

The spearhead of the roneoed broadsheets was *Our Glass*, edited by Kris Hemensley, a young English poet who came to Australia two years ago, and began organising poetry readings at La Mama, a meeting ground for writers and dramatists in Carlton, this year. The rationale of the undertaking was avowedly yippie. Hemensley sees the editor of a poetry magazine which encourages new talent as someone who is "creating a free area around himself", and bypassing the "controlled media". He is in close touch with the English avantgarde and highly suspicious of academic criticism. *Our Glass* appeared for the first time in May 1968, and has come out regularly since. A list of the poets Hemensley has published and regards as significant figures would include Ken Taylor, John Romerill, Bill Beard, Charles Buckmaster, Mal Morgan, Geoffrey Eggleston, Elaine Rushbrook, Andrew Jach, Michael Dugan and Ian Robertson. Paul Smith and Kal Fenton are also frequent contributors to *Our Glass*. It is the most politically committed of the new magazines.

About the middle of this year Charles Buckmaster was a matriculation student in a country school in Victoria, who had run into difficulties with the education system because of his habit of wearing long hair. Faced with the threat of suspension, Buckmaster got a job in Melbourne, a flat in Carlton, and started a poetry magazine, *The Great Auk*, which came out for the first time in September. It appears more frequently than *Our Glass* and has acquired a small group of contributors who have not appeared anywhere else and show definite promise. Its layout is breezily informal.

*Free Poetry* is edited from Sydney by Nigel Roberts and has discovered in Martyn Sanderson,

Johnny Goodall and John Heuzenroeder three avantgardists of considerable talent. The immediate link between the Sydney new poets and the Melbourne school is Terence Gillmore, who moves between Sydney and Melbourne, and *Free Poetry* has also captured work by Richard Tipping in Adelaide, Charles Buckmaster, John Tranter and Bruce Beaver, a fairly well-established poet who appears to have thrown his weight behind the new movement.

*Free Poetry*, which is not charged for, has opened up the possibility of an underground distribution chain between the States, in that it is posted in batches to individual poets in Melbourne who pass copies around. The motive for this is economic necessity rather than fear of suppression. None of the mini-mags have encountered the kind of reaction from the authorities that gives the underground papers in America their intransigently anti-authoritarian note.

At the same time that *Free Poetry* appeared, in October, another Sydney publication, *Free Grass*, ran one issue. It contained an intriguing list of contributors, and a number of serious and interesting poems, as well as a group of poems by "Dedalus" rubbishing the mini-mags. No editorial address was given. Rumour has it that the editor was Mark Pallas, who has since left Australia, and there is some controversy over whether the whole thing was a send-up or not.

A slightly different kind of publication which has attracted the attention of the avantgardists is the *Broadsheet*, a poster-magazine, which has come out regularly since October 1967. The instigator of the *Broadsheet* was Udo Selbach, a well known Melbourne artist, and its running is normally entrusted to a small committee made up of a rather older group of people than the mini-mag editors. It includes both texts and graphic work. Each issue focusses on a particular social question or a particular aspect of Australian life. Five issues have appeared so far, one on Vietnam, one on flower power, one on the Australian summer, and one on the Pope's stand on birth control. Although there are good reasons for not listing the *Broadsheet* with the mini-mags, there are strong affinities between the two, notably in the technical up-to-dateness of the *Broadsheet's* verse and its willingness to stress the element of communication in poetry, and the writer's responsibility to his society.

#### DETAILS OF MINI-MAGS

- Lucifer**—Stephen Skinner. Box 64, Lindfield, N.S.W., 2070. (Only ran to one issue, March 1968, believed defunct.)  
**Crosscurrents**—Michael Dugan. Box 100, Heidelberg West, Vic., 3081. \$1.20 per year.  
**The Great Auk**—Charles Buckmaster, Gruyere Rd., Gruyere, Vic., 3770.  
**Free Poetry**—N. Roberts, J. Goodall, T. Gillmore. Flat 3, 14 Clifton St., East Balmain, N.S.W., 2041. Free.  
**Free Grass**—no editorial address. Free. (Only ran to one issue, last October, believed a hoax.)  
**Mok**—R. Tipping and R. Tillett. Box 1454L, G.P.O., Adelaide, S.A., 5001. \$2.00 per year.  
**Our Glass**—Kris Hemensley. 21 Queensberry St., Carlton, Vic., 3053. No price given.  
**The Broadsheet**—editorial committee. 205 Lennox St., Richmond, Vic., 3121. 45c.  
**Transit**—John Tranter. 112 Lawson St., Paddington, N.S.W., 2021. 30c.  
**Cat**—Andrew Jach. P.O. Box 59, Beaconsfield, Vic., 3807. 30c.

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