westerly

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STORIES, POEMS, REVIEWS, ARTICLES

FILM in AUSTRALIA

Veronica Brady

Tim Burstall

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westerly

a quarterly review

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Cover and Introductory Drawing by Jill Ruse, Art Department, Perth Technical College


DIRE

ROY LITTLE

Film in Australia

"And what did you think of Homesdale? *Does it represent any kind of an advance on Peter Weir's earlier film,* Three to Go: Michael?"

"Homesdale? Michael? *Who's Peter Weir?"*

"You mean to say you haven't seen Homesdale? *It was a great success at last year's Sydney Film Festival; Channel 7 in Melbourne bought it, and it's been shown in lots of other places. Peter Weir won the Grand Prix at the Australian Film Awards for* Homesdale *just as he did the year before with* Three to Go: Michael, *and the Grand Prix has been awarded only three times in the 13-year history of the Film Awards!"*

"Listen, son, I've never heard of Homesdale, *let alone seen it. An Australian classic I suppose. Now tell me, did you see* The Devils? *Fantastic. And you must see* The French Connection. *That's what I call a movie!"*

* * *

Taking almost any initiative in raising the spectre of the late and rarely lamented Australian entertainment film industry, or seeking appraisals of films recently produced by Australians in Australia, seems to win a conditioned reflex in the best traditions of Pavlov—a stifled yawn, a glassy stare or at most a raised eyebrow accompanied by the non-committal, "You don't say". And who can be blamed for casting a jaundiced eye on anyone so naive as to speak enthusiastically about the future of Australian film-making.

Yes, perhaps we should be reminded that Lumière Frères had the Melbourne Cup filmed in 1896 within a year of the first public exhibition of films anywhere. Certainly it is fascinating to recall the enterprise of Booth and Perry of the Salvation Army which culminated in the making of *Soldiers of the Cross* at the turn of the century and to note that the first multi-reel feature was made in Australia in 1906 and not in France or America. It does seem extraordinary that approximately 250 Australian feature-length entertainment films were produced in the days of the silent cinema. Those films made by Ken Hall in the 'thirties were well worth watching when the ABC showed them in the series, "Click Go the Years". But what achievements can be cited after the coming of the "talkies" and the take-over of distribution and exhibition by British and American enterprise? Fewer than twenty-five per cent of the number of feature films made in the silent period were produced in the forty years that followed, and not too many of that meagre lot were memorable.

However it must be noted that despite the uncertainties in selling entertainment to the public, a fair proportion of those earlier films were successful. A consider-

able film industry has persisted to this day but largely outside the very thin stream of feature film production. The broad range of films being made today includes: films for television (although in Australia this tends to be limited to news material and advertising commercials); information and propaganda films made for business, industry and government; personal films whether they be the so-called "underground" films of people like Albie Thoms and Aggie Read for example, or social essays of the sort Bruce Petty in Sydney and Barrie Oldfield in Perth dedicate themselves to, or dramatic story films like Phillip Adams' *Jack and Jill: A Postscript*. For some time now more films have been produced in Australia than books published in any given year. And despite the tiny number of Australian films reaching the silver screens of our cinemas, a remarkable number of others have made their mark internationally, for example at major film festivals.

Many of us might be forgiven for regarding the Commonwealth Government's interest in the film industry with some skepticism. Few will know of the Royal Commission in 1927-28 appointed by the Commonwealth Government in response to pressures from Empire loyalists concerned about domination of Australian cinemas by American films, and from women's groups seeking increased film censorship, and also from indigenous film-makers battling exhibitors in seeking a quota system to protect Australian film production. But many more might recall the Vincent Report of 1963 in which a Senate Select Committee made recommendations on the encouragement of the production in Australia of films and programmes suitable for television. Max Harris in *Overland* observed: "... in the seemingly vast and hopeless complex of television vulgarity and intellectual subnormalcy and indigenous creative impoverishment, the Vincent Report is the one and only progressive document we have to turn to, the one and only departure point for positive action in any number of different areas". Neither the Royal Commission's findings nor the Vincent Report was debated in the Commonwealth Parliament and the issues were soon forgotten except by the frustrated few most intimately affected. The lack of Government interest in fostering and protecting an indigenous film industry seemed all the more remarkable in view of the Australian penchant for using tariffs and subsidies to nurse most other Australian industries.

Even John Gorton's announcement in November 1969 of the Commonwealth Government's three-pronged stimulus in support of film-making was viewed with some skepticism. The handling of this programme subsequently by Mr Howson and Mr McMahon tended to give support to the gloomiest expectations of the Government. However, the basic programme has been initiated and we already have some evidence of its value. One might even hope now that the current Senate inquiry into television broadcasting will result in action of the kind hoped for as a result of the Vincent Report.

What has been done recently to help the Australian film industry? First, the Government has acted to help create a larger pool of trained film and television personnel by agreeing to establish a National Film and Television School at a cost of $2.7 million. To be based in North Sydney next to Macquarie University and modelled to some extent along the lines of a College of Advanced Education, the School's purpose is not only to provide a "nursery" for creative people to learn specific skills in film and television production, but also to raise standards. Associated studies at the School are likely to be in visual arts, journalism and mass communications and not necessarily in the field of the performing arts. The prevailing view appears to be that the planning for the School should take account of the belief that "film and television are instruments of enlightenment aiding in cultural development". An experimental training scheme is to be developed employing facilities at the ABC and the Commonwealth Film Unit in Sydney while the School is under construction.

In the hiatus between the announcement in 1969 of the Government's intention to establish the School and the announcement last April of the decision to proceed, the Interim Council appointed to plan the School became engaged in other kinds of productive activities. Originally the Australian Council for the Arts had been vested with the responsibility for advising on grants for travel study, research projects and development work in support of film and television ventures. Now the Interim Council of the School has the primary responsibility of advising the Minister, and consequently it seeks out means of assisting "projects which stimulate high standards of production and a general appreciation and understanding of excellence in film and television". Grants have been made for a wide range of activities: festivals for example (the Festival of Perth, among others, received $1,000 in 1970 to promote Australian films, and Perth's first International Film Festival to be held in August anticipates receiving similar assistance); film workshops (for example, the West Australian Institute of Technology received $500 in 1971 to conduct a film-making course during the May school holidays); to assist in study overseas (the only W.A. recipient, Mr Joe O'Sullivan of the Perth Institute of Film and Television, received a grant late last year to enable him to study film production centres and film schools in America and Britain). Substantial grants have been made for screen education projects in Victoria and for script development by professional film-makers in Sydney. Grants have been made on more than one occasion to keep work under way (for example, in support of publications like *Cantrill's Filmnotes* and *Lumiere*); and grants have permitted organizations like the National Film Theatre to expand their activities (the National Film Theatre received $7,500 in 1971 and $10,000 in 1972 for temporary importations and showings of several lots of foreign films from archives overseas; a condition of the current grant to the National Film Theatre is that a Branch be established in Western Australia).

The second largest budget commitment by the Government in support of the film industry was the granting of $1 million in a capital fund for the Australian Film Development Corporation which commenced full-time operations in March 1971. The fund is used to assist commercially viable films and television programmes. Producers seeking financial assistance must have substantial equity secured for their projects before money is advanced. Loans are expected to be returned with a profit to the Corporation to enable it to assist others subsequently. Quality in production is looked for, but success at the box office is more important than success at festivals. The Corporation apparently does not require producers to have concluded distribution arrangements before advancing funds, but it seems to recognize the importance of improving distribution possibilities. It would be interesting to know more about this phase of the Corporation's activities.

In its first full year, the Corporation investigated 206 projects, 19 of which have received assistance. A number of examples of the Corporation's investments follows. The Corporation put $65,000 into a 13-part television series based on Arthur Upfield's famous detective character, Bonaparte. The feature film, *Country Town*, which is based on the popular television series, *Bellbird*, won a loan of $15,000. W.A.'s Film Centre Pty Ltd received a loan of $2,500 for David Moore's hour-long documentary on Margaret Court, *A Smashing Lady*. *Stork*, a successful feature comedy was assisted by a bank guarantee, and if needed, funds for publicity. $100,000 has been put into *The Education of Stanley Evans*, a family entertainment film starring Harry Secombe. A quarter of a million dollars has been invested by the Corporation in Barry Humphries' *Adventures of Barry Mackenzie*. Substantial sums have been advanced to other television series, to pilot programmes, to documentaries and to animated film productions. Altogether the Film Development Corporation had invested $750,000 in its first year. The Corporation is also attempting to stimulate interest in high standards by instituting substantial cash awards:

$5,000 for the best Australian feature film this year and $5,000 for the best Australian television programmes to 30th June 1972.

The third injection of public funds (but chronologically the first of the three prongs applied to stimulate indigenous production) led to the creation of the Experimental Film and Television Fund which is administered by the Australian Film Institute. The Fund was established in mid-1970 with an initial grant of $100,000, but subsequently this was topped up to a total of $290,000. The fund aims "to foster cinema and television originality in form, content or technique among professional film-makers, and to discover new creative talents". There has been an extraordinary number of requests for assistance totalling almost $1\frac{1}{2}$ million. 164 projects have been approved—approximately one in every three applications. Grants have ranged from $47 for a mini-Western up to $10,000 for *Dalmas*, a feature about a policeman. In virtually every case, grants have attracted substantial contributions in capital, services and materials from others.

Initially there were misgivings in some quarters which anticipated a flood of pornographic and anti-Establishment productions, but that sort of deluge has not yet appeared. What has been produced to date is a remarkable manifestation of the talents of a lot of young Australian film-makers. I have seen thirty-three of the Fund-assisted films representing only one-fifth of all the projects approved but a substantial proportion of the films completed to date. Most of these, including intriguing four-minute experiments like *To Nefrititi* and feature-length dramatic films like the admirable *A City's Child*, I have seen several times with groups in Sydney, Melbourne and Perth. One I have seen with sixteen groups of vastly different tastes, ages and experience of cinema. At all these screenings, only one film seemed an outright failure; the films were viewed universally with keen interest.

As far as it has gone then, the Government might view with some satisfaction its efforts to stimulate Australian film-making. The Experimental Film and Television Fund and the Australian Film Development Corporation have spawned some new film-makers of great promise. Some talented people usually confined to the tight little dimensions of industrial films, government information films or television commercials have been given the mind-bending possibility of making a personal film so much part of their being in some instances that they can almost taste it. The community at large has been given some indication that we have film-makers with the humour, skill and imagination to interest us in what they have to say.

The last eighteen months have seen a bumper crop of feature-length films, in part because of the work of the Film Development Corporation and the Experimental Film Fund. Depending upon where one lived, or travelled, it was possible to see John McCallum's *Nickel Queen*, Warwick Freeman's *Demonstrator*, Kenneth Cook's *Stockade*, Brian Kavanagh's *A City's Child*, Peter Maxwell's *Country Town*, Albert Falzon's *Morning of the Earth*, Dusan Marek's *And the World Was Made Flesh*, Cambridge's *Sunbury*, Tim Burstall's *Stork*, Keith Salvat's *Private Collection*, Jim Sharman's *Shirley Thompson vs. the Aliens*, and others including hour-long features like Phil Noyce's *Good Afternoon* and Nigel Buesst's admirable *Bonjour Balwyn* to name only a few. (*Wake in Fright* and *Walkabout* were made with substantial Australian participation but are not strictly indigenous productions.) The production record is all the more remarkable in view of reports like that carried in Australia's *Film Weekly* that in America "out of every ten films started by independent film-makers, four collapsed during production, three were still with the labs for failure to meet processing costs, and one ran out of money in the post-production phase. Of the two remaining, one was forced into a distribution deal which brought nothing to the film's maker, and one actually made it onto the market on a broad scale".

But how does one see these new Australian films? If you live in a capital city, you might catch one at a cinema, but move quickly. It is incredibly rare for an Australian feature to be held for more than a two-week run. In the case of *Country Town*, you might have had a better chance of seeing the film because one of the actors dedicated himself to seeking distribution and exhibition arrangements to win optimum exposure; the usual commercial channels for exploiting British and American films were not available. *Stork* has been taken up now by one of the established distributing companies for national release but only after the film-makers had established the film's undoubted commercial prospects by arranging its first run in an independent cinema in a Melbourne suburb. The extraordinary fact is that most feature-length Australian films must be released directly by the film-makers who are obliged to seek out independent cinemas, halls or clubs in which to show their films and then they must publicise them.

The chances of our seeing most of the short films, for example the majority of those made with the assistance of the Experimental Film and Television Fund, have been at least as doubtful. Some film societies, many of the university film groups and some film festivals include a token number of Australian films in their programmes, but to date the opportunities of reaching audiences have been so limited that film-makers have been obliged to form Film-makers Co-operatives in Sydney and in Melbourne to effect distribution and to arrange public screenings. The Australian Film Institute will be helping to improve accessibility to Australian films through its administration of the Vincent Library which is building a collection of award-winning Australian films and all films assisted by the Experimental Film Fund.

Michael Thornhill, film critic for *The Australian* and an independent film-maker, five years ago wrote an authoritative description of the condition of the Australian film industry for the final issue in 1967 of *Current Affairs Bulletin*. He concluded: "The 'lucky country' . . .in its fashion has so far failed to take a positive position both as regards indigenous production and the conditions at present governing distribution and exhibition. While this is the case indigenous Australian film-making will remain a discussion point, not a reality." In the article he succinctly put the case for government aid to the ailing film industry; he also traced the history of American and British domination of the Australian film scene following the take-over of the very profitable Australian distribution and exhibition companies. Despite the changes that have occurred over the years, and despite the current goodwill of many of the Australian managers of these companies towards Australian film-makers, the decisions as to what Australian audiences are to see remain in the hands of the parent companies overseas. Unfortunately for Australian film-makers, it is far easier and far more profitable for distributors and exhibitors in Australia to push films for which sales campaigns and promotional material have already been prepared. The market in Australia, as in Canada and elsewhere, is a relatively easy patch to harvest because most foreign films (British and American films notably) have already been pre-sold to the public here as a consequence of their reported success elsewhere. To raise a campaign for an Australian feature of a good standard requires an original approach at substantial cost. Such a film has to be sold to audiences which have to discover for themselves whether the film has merit. Who can question the wisdom of the Companies' decision taken in London or in New York to have their subsidiaries in this country not take up Australian films, especially when there are no incentives to consider other factors in winning profits?

The question of winning optimum distribution and exhibition is complex. Some see the answer in the imposition of quotas under which exhibitors are compelled to show Australian films; for example, a quota of 5% might guarantee the release of possibly six or seven Australian features each year. However, legislation of this

kind is often meaningless in practice. The quota of 2½% in New South Wales is said to be unenforceable because of a shortage of Australian films! Is it not possible that quota films might be scheduled for showing in periods of the year during which cinemas are traditionally poorly attended? If canny exhibitors were to schedule Australian films and then promote them inadequately, strict imposition of quotas would be difficult to sustain. Poor attendance would certainly be cited as evidence of a lack of public interest in Australian films, and the threat of imminent ruin at the box office would seem to be a powerful argument to put an end to the quota soon after it was imposed.

What is required? Notice must be given by both federal and state governments that the indigenous film industry is to enjoy reasonable opportunities for growth. The formal imposition of a quota is not essential. It is well known that governments have authority to legislate in areas of taxation, importation and foreign exchange. If a satisfactory improvement in distribution and exhibition policies is not effected voluntarily, then governments can make it clear that quotas represent only one of the alternatives to be used, if necessary. Higher admission charges on foreign films can be imposed through taxation to make it possible to establish Australian production subsidies (like the Eady plan in Britain) and to enable cash awards to be made to Australian films of merit as in the case of several European countries. Import quotas can be established to limit the percentage of the market available to any one country's films. Controls on foreign exchange can require parent companies to invest a portion of Australian earnings in this country's film production. These and other courses of action give governments the possibility of creating improved conditions for the distribution and exhibition of Australian films. What is required is the determination to support Australian film-making unequivocally.

The problems confronting creative people in Australian film-making are no less serious for creative people in the television industry. The major issue again is the adequacy of controls over the distributor-exhibitor chain: namely, the television stations. We require protection against the excessive use of cheap foreign programmes at the end of their runs elsewhere. Such material is sold cheaply because the basic costs and the major profits have already been earned in the producers' home markets. If conditions favouring indigenous television production prevail, the benefits will be shared by the film industry for both industries draw on a relatively small pool of talent for writers, directors, actors, etc. We need vitality in both television and film enterprises.

It is often said that the general public gets what it wants, or even more cynically, it gets what it deserves. It is staggering to contemplate the thousands of hours of American spy dramas, crime series and inane situation comedies that crowd our television screens, not to speak of the endless line of American and British movies re-released several times up to thirty years after their first go at making a profit in cinemas. Periodically there are explosions of indignation in the press and in reports of psychological studies, American Presidential Commissions and British sociological surveys: the complaint is violence in films and television. Is it possible, however, that violence is really only interest in a highly kinetic form? The greater injury may be inflicted by the miles and miles of banal footage churned out to occupy our leisure hours in front of the screen. Few seemed to be concerned about the crippling effects on the young—and even the middle-aged—of material that is formula-ridden, trite and opiated.

Should one take seriously the view that Australians are not interested in seeing Australian drama on television or in the cinemas? By their choice of programmes, the purveyors of mass entertainment appear to assume that Australian audiences are interested only in seeing sports shows, quizzes and the odd variety show on television but on both television and in the cinemas it is assumed we are mainly

interested in adventure and comedy set in alien situations and played out by foreign performers. However, the enormous success of *Homicide*, consistently the most highly-rated of any programme series on Australian television, gives lie to this assumption. The popularity of some public affairs programmes, *This Day Tonight* for example, is an indication of the considerable appetite for information programmes of an Australian character. The remarkable attraction *Nickel Queen* held for unprecedented audiences in the West at least gives evidence of the enthusiasm for seeing entertainment films with a strong local character.

I have seen as many Australian films as most people in the West during the past five years—hundreds of films including many industrial and government information films, some amateur films in competition, feature films, a few films of the New Cinema and many documentaries and essay films. It has been marvellous to introduce some of these films to adult groups and students. Their response to the best of them has enhanced my appreciation of the films' merits. These experiences have strengthened my conviction that interesting Australian films can be enjoyed by audiences everywhere, but when such films are adequately presented, the most receptive audience is Australian.

It would be naive to argue that all Australian films are of a high standard, or to offer the "public health" viewpoint that seeing Australian productions "is good for you". Some are cliched, incredibly verbose, technically inadequate and plain dull, but that does not obscure the fact that many are outstanding—even exciting.

Most want to see themselves portrayed as a people in their own cities and towns. Seeing themselves in popular drama, whether it be crime melodrama or broad comedy, permits Australians to discover themselves similar to the way that they are re-discovering themselves in painting, literature, history, and to some extent, in theatre.

The climate is changing. Years of conditioning of Australian audiences by the values and standards of foreign producers have inhibited the growth of a lively responsiveness to indigenous creative talents. As skills in presenting Australian films improve—hopefully in step with advances in the quantity and quality of film production—and as the special publics become better informed about film, the gap between film-maker and audience should narrow. Film-makers need a responsive audience as much as dramatists do. They need discussion about their work and they need informed, articulate criticism where possible. More and more it is believed that film-making holds optimum possibilities for entertainment and for conveying a point of view in a way not unlike that of the novel, theatre or music. Film, whether exhibited in cinemas, on television or in church halls, is powerfully attractive because of its potential to reach vast audiences. Is it not reasonable to assume that some of the most creative, engaging people in this country might choose film as their medium because of its vitality and visual impact?

Even the most grim-faced, pessimistic observers of the film scene might look on the current changing trends with some interest. All too often one hears the cry: "The Government should do something about it!" As it happens, the Government has taken a few steps, important ones, and film-makers have quickly taken up the opportunities afforded. The results to date have been heartening. Having ventured thus far, it is essential that the Commonwealth and the State Governments make the next logical moves to obtain the maximum return for the community from the investment of public funds in the film industry. New incentives in distribution and exhibition must be introduced. It must be made clear that the Australian film industry is to enjoy the right to reach Australian audiences in reasonable competition with foreign talent.

TIM BURSTALL

The Hot Centre of the World

A Screenplay

Based on a story of John H. Powers

Cast: George, Denis } Two Derelicts
Peter — A Would-be Suicide

STILLS

GEORGE ... ... as played by George Whaley (opposite p. 16)
PETER ... ... as played by Peter Cummins (opposite p. 17)
DENIS ... ... as played by Denis Miller (opposite p. 24)

This film was shot as part of a media workshop run by the Producers and Directors Guild in 1971. At this workshop, six short stories were produced as plays, television dramas, and films, the idea being to give writers some concept of the differences between the three media. HOT CENTRE subsequently won First Prize (The Alan Stout Award for the most creative entry of 1971) in the Australian Film Awards. It has the distinction of being Australia's first "R" certificate film.

FADE IN:

SEQUENCE 1.

1. CLOSE SHOT—MAN'S EYES—PIER—NIGHT.

Camera pulls out to reveal man's whole face. He is an old derelict called George, peering avidly at something.

2. LOVERS IN PARKED CAR FROM GEORGE'S EYELINE.

Shot through window of car. They are making love in the backseat of the car. The girl has her blouse undone, the man is panting.

3. BUMPER BAR OF CAR ROCKING RHYTHMICALLY.

A hand on the bumper bar. Camera tilts up arm to head of a second derelict, Denis, who is also peering hungrily into the car.

4. LOVERS FROM DENIS' EYELINE.

Shot through another window. Their love making getting more urgent.

5. CLOSE SHOT—GIRL IN CAR.

Her eyes closed as man kisses her on neck.

6. CLOSE SHOT—MAN IN CAR.

His lips moving over girl's cheek.

7. RESUME GIRL.

Wider shot taken over man's shoulder. She opens her eyes taking his head in her hands. Then quite suddenly she sees something over his shoulder and screams.

8. GEORGE'S STARING FACE AT WINDOW FROM GIRL'S EYELINE.

He pulls away into the darkness.

9. RESUME LOVERS.

Girl very shaken, pushes man away and hastily tries to cover herself up. Man stares angrily round into darkness trying to see who's there.

10. GEORGE & DENIS.

They shuffle away from car and start running off down pier towards the sea.

TITLES: Main titles and credit titles are superimposed across this shot.

DISSOLVE TO:

SEQUENCE 2.

11. SEA WATER WASHING AGAINST PILES.

Camera tilts up to George & Denis who are sitting huddled on platform below pier. The decking of the pier is a few feet above their heads. Someone can be heard pacing up and down on it.

George: (Looking up) Listen!

12. CLOSE SHOT—WOODEN DECKING OF PIER FROM GEORGE'S EYELINE.

The sound of footsteps pacing up and down the decking.

13. RESUME GEORGE & DENIS.

Denis: He can't make up his mind whether to or not.

George: (Shaking his head) My old man used to pace up and down like that. Prostate trouble.

14. CLOSE SHOT—MAN'S FEET ON DECKING.

They come to the edge of the decking, there is a momentary pause, the feet then jump in to the sea. As they jump, the camera swings with them, picking up the man's whole body flying through the air and splashing into the sea.

15. CLOSE SHOT—GEORGE.

Reacting to the splash.

16. CLOSE SHOT—DENIS.

Reacting to the splash. He gets to his feet and peers into the darkness. Camera pulls out to include George who joins him.

Denis: Can you see anything?

17. FLAT EXPANSE OF WATER FROM THEIR EYELINE.

George's voice: Not a bubble.

18. WIDE SHOT—GEORGE AND DENIS.

Camera on pier decking looking down staircase onto platform below. George and Denis scramble up staircase to spot where man jumped from. Denis looks round. Camera moves in tighter, favouring Denis.

Denis: Hasn't even bothered to take his coat off.

George: Why should he?

Denis: They prefer it. A lot of them do. I think I would myself. Cuts down on the drag.

19. CHANGE ANGLE.

Favouring George, who gives Denis a sharp, knowing look.

George: (Nodding slyly) Ahaa!

Denis: Eh?

George: I'm onto you.

Denis: What are you getting at?

George: You wanted to rat his pockets!

Denis: I did *not*!

George: (Disbelievingly) Gaaarrn!

He turns his back on Denis, walking off up the pier.

Denis: I'll bloody clobber you! .....

He breaks off suddenly noticing something out in the water.

20. FLAT EXPANSE OF WATER FROM THEIR EYELINE.

The man in the water surfaces, then sinks under the water again.

21. CLOSE SHOT—DENIS.

Denis: Not another one! I'll be properly crapped off if this one turns it in too.

22. GEORGE.

Seating himself down on a bollard and producing a bottle of port from one of his pockets. He uncorks it and takes a swig.

George: I bet he will.

Denis' voice: What'll you bet?

George: (Corking bottle) This!

23. DENIS.

Denis: It's empty.

24. CLOSER SHOT—GEORGE.

Examining level in bottle.

George: There's two good swigs left in it. If he stays under it's yours .....

25. CLOSER SHOT—DENIS.

A cagey expression. He isn't sure if he wants to bet.

George's voice: If he comes up I get your packet of smokes.

Man in Water's voice: Help!

Denis swings round.

26. MAN IN WATER FROM THEIR EYELINE.

He has surfaced again.

Man: (In strangled voice) Help!

27. RESUME GEORGE.

George: (Triumphantly) He's up! Come on, hand over those smokes.

28. RESUME DENIS.

Denis: (Shouting out defensively) There was no bet, you shit! I never said I'd .....

29. RESUME MAN IN WATER FROM THEIR EYELINE.

Man: Help!

30. RESUME GEORGE.

George: You're a rotten welcher! You're a low-down stinking old welcher! I'm warning you, I'll brand you all over St Kilda for this.

31. RESUME DENIS.

Denis: How could I welch—I never agreed to the bet.

32. RESUME MAN IN WATER FROM THEIR EYELINE.

Man: Help!

33. RESUME DENIS.

He turns to the water and screams at Man.

Denis: Shut up!

34. CLOSER SHOT—MAN IN WATER.

Camera (in boat) follows man as he flails about, slowly working his way towards ladder on pier.

George's voice: Over here. Over here to the ladder. Bloody welcher.

The man flails his way through the water, gurgling, sinking, calling out.

Man: (Helplessly) Help me!

George's voice: You can swim, can't you? So swim over to the side.

Denis' voice: He's so shit-scared, he can't hear.

George's voice: Over here, you stupid bastard!

The man whose name is Peter, reaches the ladder of the pier and with an enormous effort, pulls himself up rung by rung. Halfway up he stops, looking up at the two men above.

35. GEORGE AND DENIS FROM PETER'S EYELINE.

Looking down at him. They make no effort to help him up the last rungs of the ladder.

36. CLOSE SHOT—PETER.

Wet, bedraggled, utterly exhausted. As he climbs the last rungs, the camera pulls out to include George and Denis. On the last rung, Peter totters, then collapses face-down on the pier.

37. CLOSE SHOT—PETER.

Face down on the pier, his eyes closed.

38. GEORGE AND DENIS.

Looking down indifferently. Denis, who is vaguely curious to see if Peter is dead, squats down, camera panning down with him. He lifts one of Peter's eyelids with his thumb. Peter blinks.

Peter: (mumbling to himself) I couldn't stay down. Just couldn't.

Denis: We're not press reporters, so save your breath.

Peter: It was horrible.

An expression of distaste crosses Denis' face. He gets to his feet, camera panning up with him.

Denis: (to George) We've got another one.

George: I don't think I can stomach it. Let's go.

He exits from shot, moving off up the pier, followed by Denis.

39. PETER.

He raises his head.

Peter: But you don't understand .....

40. GEORGE AND DENIS' BACKS FROM PETER'S EYELINE.

They stop and turn to listen to what he has to say, though their expression is skeptical.

Peter's voice: I didn't fall in! It wasn't an accident.
I dived .....

41. RESUME PETER.

Peter: I wanted to kill myself!

42. RESUME GEORGE AND DENIS.

Denis: (To George) This really is a creep.

George: Let's go.

They turn and leave.

43. RESUME PETER.

Camera slowly zooms into his bewildered face as he watches them leave.

Peter: (to himself) You bastards!

DISSOLVE TO:

SEQUENCE 3.

44. CLOSE SHOT—GLOWING COKE IN BRAZIER.

Camera pulls out to reveal George and Denis warming their hands over a brazier beside a shed on another part of the pier. Peter comes up out of the darkness behind them to get near the fire. They look round at him indifferently and continue warming their hands.

George: (to Denis) He stayed down a fair while .....

Denis nods.

George: Longer than most of the .... characters ..... who try this sort of thing.

45. CLOSER SHOT—PETER.

Peter: Do many people try?

Camera pans to Denis.

Denis: (interrupting) Try and don't succeed....

He turns to George. Camera pans to George.

Denis' voice: ... Although there was that bloke six months ago.

George: (remembering) With the bricks!

46. CLOSE SHOT PETER.

Listening.

Denis' voice: Yeah.

George's voice: He loaded bricks into his pockets to make sure he'd stay down.

A series of overexposed 4-frame cuts of a man loading bricks into his pockets on pier.

47. BRICKS ON PIER. HAND PICKS ONE UP.

48. MAN'S FIXED EXPRESSION.

49. BRICKS GOING INTO POCKET.

50. SEA FROM MAN'S EYELINE.

51. MAN'S EYES.

52. HAND GRIPPING BRICK.

53. MAN JUMPING.

54. MAN HITTING SEA.

55. RESUME CLOSE SHOT—PETER.

Listening.

George's voice: He must have known he'd lose his nerve like you if he didn't make sure.

56. CLOSE SHOT—DENIS.

Denis: And we had a rape—remember the little blonde?.....

57. RESUME CLOSE SHOT—PETER.

Listening, his eyes dilating.

Denis' voice: ....Right here, not more than ten yards away.

Another series of overexposed 4-frame cuts of a girl being raped on pier.

58. MAN'S BRUTAL FACE DESCENDING.

59. SCARED FACE OF GIRL.

60. MAN'S HAND TEARING GIRL'S BLOUSE.

61. GIRL'S HAND PUSHING MAN'S CHIN AWAY.

62. MAN'S HUNGRY EXPRESSION.

63. GIRL SCREAMING.

64. GIRL'S FISTS PUNCHING MAN'S CHEST.

65. MAN'S HAND COMING DOWN ON GIRL'S SCREAMING MOUTH.

66. RESUME CLOSE SHOT—PETER.

Listening—he swallows.

George's voice: She squealed like a little sucking pig .....

67. CLOSE SHOT—GEORGE.

George: (with undisguised relish) Bloody disgusting it was.

He looks into fire.

68. CLOSE SHOT—BRAZIER.

Sparks fly up.

69. WHOLE SCENE—GEORGE, DENIS & PETER.

Peter: You know what you are—you're perverts. Voyeurs.

An ugly threatening look crosses George's and Denis' faces.

George: (Moving towards Peter) That doesn't sound so good.

Denis closes on him from the other side and the camera moves in tighter.

Denis: Still it's better than being a washed-up lump of shit like you.

Peter's lip trembles.

70. CHANGE ANGLE—WHOLE SCENE.

Peter swings a wild impotent punch at Denis which misses completely. There is a momentary scuffle, then George and Denis fall on Peter.

71. CLOSER SHOT—GEORGE AND DENIS.

George and Denis lunging at Peter.

72. CLOSE SHOT—PETER.

Struggling.

73. CHANGE ANGLE.

Shot taken over brazier of the three men fighting. Peter pulls backwards, knocking over brazier.

74. CLOSE SHOT—BRAZIER.

Burning coke being upset on pier.

75. CLOSE SHOT—GEORGE.

He punches Peter.

76. CLOSE SHOT—DENIS.

He has hold of Peter's arm which he is twisting as hard as he can.

77. CLOSE SHOT—PETER.

His face screwed up in pain. He staggers, falling backwards.

78. WHOLE SCENE.

As he collapses on the pier, George jumps on top of him, pinning him to the decking. The fight has gone out of him. Denis, chuckling with enjoyment pulls his hair, then twists one of his ears.

79. CLOSER SHOT—PETER.

Peter: (grimacing in pain) Please kill me .... please ..... I can't do it myself.

80. CLOSE SHOT—GEORGE.

An expression of distaste. Camera pans to Denis, who is also disgusted by this last remark. He gets up, letting go of Peter. The camera tilts up with him and widens to include George who also has got to his feet.

Denis: (looking down at Peter) You disgust me.

George: What say we piss on him.

Denis: He's not worth it.

George: Just for the fun of it.

81. PETER FROM THEIR EYELINE.

Peter: Do you like doing this? Do you like watching people suffer?

82. RESUME GEORGE & DENIS.

George: We don't care one way or the other. We once had a murder down here .....

83. CLOSE SHOT—PETER FROM THEIR EYELINE.

Listening.

George's voice: .... Nothing very spectacular, just a strangling. But it had its interest.

Another series of overexposed 4-frame cuts of a man being strangled.

84. ROPE BEING TWINED ROUND MAN'S NECK.

85. FIERCE FACE OF MURDERER.

86. MURDERER'S HANDS TIGHTENING ROPE.

87. VICTIM STRUGGLING.

88. MURDERER'S FIERCE FACE.

89. VICTIM GOING LIMP.

90. ROPE ON NECK.

91. DEAD VICTIM.

92. RESUME CLOSE SHOT—PETER.

Listening.

Denis' voice: Everything has its interest. Have you ever been right underneath two people while they're having it off eh? .....

Another series of overexposed 4-frame cuts of a man and woman making love.

93. MAN'S HAND ON WOMAN'S THIGH.

94. LIPS KISSING.

95. LIMBS MOVING.

96. WOMAN'S SIGHING FACE.

97. MAN'S FACE.

98. WOMAN'S BREASTS.

99. FACES KISSING.

100. WOMAN'S HANDS CLASPING MAN'S BACK.

101. RESUME CLOSE SHOT—PETER.

Denis' voice: Have you? When they think there's nobody for miles about .....

102. GEORGE & DENIS.

Denis: They really let go.

George: They coo and they moan. You've got to hear it to know what it's like.

Denis: The old joystick comes up hard as a hammer. Fantastic!

103. WIDER SHOT—PETER.

He gets to his feet and starts backing away from them.

Peter: You're both depraved, filthy old lechers! The pair of you ought to be horsewhipped!

104. RESUME GEORGE & DENIS.

Denis: (scornfully) Go jump off another pier.

George: And stay down next time.

They turn away and start cleaning up the knocked-over brazier. George sets it back up. Denis starts kicking the coke back into a pile with his boots.

105. PETER.

He looks at them a moment and then sets off along the pier.

106. CLOSE SHOT—PETER.

Camera panning or tracking with him. At the corner of the shed, he comes to a stop. Noticing something.

107. LONG SHOT—LOVERS IN DISTANCE FROM PETER'S EYELINE.

108. RESUME CLOSE SHOT—PETER.

He bites his lip, then turns back.

Peter: (Calling out to the other two) There's someone coming!

109. GEORGE & DENIS.

They look up.

Peter's voice: I'll tell them there are a couple of pervs waiting to spy on them, so you'll be out of luck tonight.

George and Denis shuffle forward to the cover of the shed, where Peter is standing, and peer into the darkness.

110. LONG SHOT—LOVERS APPROACHING.

Closer this time.

111. RESUME GEORGE, DENIS & PETER AT CORNER OF SHED.

They have all dropped their voices to a whisper.

Peter: I'm going to warn them.

George: (looking) Quiet! Sh!

Peter: Nobody's got the right to spy on other people.

112. LOVERS APPROACHING.

The girl is laughing a rather teasing, provocative laugh.

113. RESUME GEORGE, DENIS & PETER.

George pushes Peter down into a crouching position.

George: Crap! Everybody spies—all the time. Everybody reads papers and gossips and pries into secrets.

Denis: Sh!

114. LOVERS.

They have stopped and begin to kiss.

115. CLOSE SHOT—LOVERS.

Kissing passionately.

116. RESUME GEORGE, DENIS & PETER.

Denis is grinning as he watches. George leans forward intently. Peter keeps his head down, refusing to look.

Peter: (Under his breath) I'm not going to watch.

The camera slowly zooms towards Peter. He clenches his fists. He sweats. The veins in his forehead stand out. The girl's breathing has become heavy and she is sighing. The temptation to look up is overpowering. Slowly Peter raises his head. His expression is full of expectation and excitement. The camera continues to zoom into his face, focussing at last on his eyes.

FREEZE FRAME

SLOW FADE OUT.

ARTHUR CANTRILL

Towards a New Australian Cinema

We returned to Australia in mid-1969 to a Creative Arts Fellowship at ANU, and were immediately dismayed at the prevailing film climate here: the retarded film sensibility exhibited by public and critics—the censorship situation—the lack of activity, of curiosity and awareness. We intended to return to London as soon as the fellowship ended. In the three years since we arrived the situation has improved rather dramatically and more and more young people are turning naturally to film as a means of expression; not with any idea of making the 'big time' and conforming to commercial values, but using film as a tool to explore the universe around them: an extension of their nervous system. Film is rapidly becoming the folk art of our time. Artists here and overseas are finding it the only appropriate medium to reflect the turmoil of a society in which 'change is the only constant', and to explore aspects of universal life energies and rhythms of which we are becoming aware. An art form involving the projection of 24 pulses of light energy per second onto the retina helps to free us from what Plato called the prison of our sight.

We welcomed the fellowship as a chance to push into these realms of the film experience. Earlier, in London, and before that in Australia, we had made some tentative film experiments between producing television documentaries. But the discovery of a large body of New American Cinema at the 1967-68 Knokke-le-Zoute Experimental Film Festival spurred us on to give all our time to research into these areas. Films such as Gregory Markopoulos' *Illiac Passion* and Michael Snow's *Wavelength* seemed to be realising the full potential of film as a fine art—not concerned superficially with the human situation, as most commercial cinema so incestuously is, but dealing in depth with more universal concepts. Just as the invention of still photography had freed the painter from his function of recorder to become a researcher into the philosophy of the visual experience, so we realised that it was the coming of television as an entertainment/news medium which was similarly freeing the creative film maker.

So in Canberra we became intensely involved in this film exploration (earning us the title of 'the Burke and Wills of the Australian film scene' from Phillip Adams!). The evolution of our film syntax over this period is recorded in the main work of the fellowship, *Harry Hooton*, the 83-minute film which was made over the 18 months, and is a film-making diary in so far as it reflects our changing attitudes to Hooton's definition of art: 'the communication of emotion to matter'. We also made several films in which we explored the film frame as the basic unit

Still on opposite page, *Moving Statics*, by Arthur and Corinne Cantrill.

of screen time, manipulating these 1/24th-of-a-second bursts of light energy—finding ways to involve the retina in after-images and retinal superimposition. Sometimes, as in *Bouddi*, we used this film-energy to evoke sensations of life-energy in the natural environment. We agreed with Paul Sharits, who said that in the new cinema, "light is energy rather than a tool for the representation of non-filmic objects; light, as energy, is released to create its own objects, shapes and textures. Given the fact of retinal inertia and the flickering shutter mechanism of film projection, one may generate virtual forms, create actual motion (rather than illustrate it), build actual colour-space (rather than picture it), and be involved in actual time (immediate presence)". We wanted to exploit the basic properties of the medium, much as a painter or sculptor may make use of the textures of his material, and not suppress them to show a realistic recording of life. (It was Rudolf Arnheim in the 1930's who maintained that it was the very inefficiency of film as a recording medium which qualified it as a potential art form, and that the virtues of film as art derive from an exploitation of limitations of the medium. For him, film as an art had died in the 1940's with the glossy 'perceptual imperialism' of the viable film industry.)

At ANU we began research into the nature of the film screen, and to create a more spatially interesting experience, replaced the white plane with dome or cone shaped and multi-level surfaces, including layers of gauze; and changed the nature of the screen during projection by painting on it, cutting it and even burning it. We continued this *expanded cinema* work in Melbourne in 1971, and the National Gallery of Victoria arranged a 3-week exhibition early in the year. The art critics were enthusiastic, but the film critics ignored it, as it was rather out of their field.

Film criticism in this country deals exclusively with one area: narrative film, and neglects the new cinema. This is mainly because Australia has had no communication with new work in Amerca and Europe (apart from a few films by Brakhage, Nelson, etc., which we advised the National Library to acquire) and only now an indigenous school of new cinema is developing. There is a body of writing available on overseas work (Gene Youngblood's *Expanded Cinema*, published by Dutton Paperbacks, is probably the most influential) but to counter the imbalance in local film writing, we began publishing our own review of Australian and overseas New Cinema: *Cantrills' Filmnotes*. It includes news of recent independently produced films, interviews with filmers, articles on film education, techniques, laboratory services etc. The ninth issue is about to emerge, with financial assistance from the government through the Interim Council for the National Film School. There is no shortage of material to fill the issues, thanks mainly to the government film making grants there has been an explosion of exciting new Australian work. Cocteau said that film would not be an art form until its materials for production became as inexpensive as pencil and paper. With production grants, and the discovery of the possibilities of super-8 millimetre film, we are closer to this ideal situation.

But attitudes don't change overnight, and distribution of the new cinema remains a problem. Film co-operatives have been formed to distribute films, and are successful to a certain extent, although the films most often rented are those based on the old industry values, i.e. superficially entertaining. For two years now we've been living entirely by directly renting our films, giving lecture-screenings and film workshops at schools, colleges and universities and at our own studio. In this way we are slowly helping to build up an audience for New Cinema. A recent series of film-making workshops which we organised with a subsidy from the Interim Council was particularly rewarding. The group of 12 participants amazed us with their immediate acceptance of new attitudes; their work was uninhibited by past values and they each produced films which showed a high

degree of personal expression. We believe that it is important to involve more people in the practical as well as the passive side of film experience—this is the only way to develop a collective film consciousness. For too long the film experience in Australia hasn't even been on the screen, but on the printed page, in reviews of films which were never likely to be brought to this country because of minority appeal or censorship problems.

Even mass-appeal Australian films are not easy to distribute. It would be easy to lay the blame against the government, against the collusion of foreign interests controlling the media (particularly cinema), against the State laws of registration and licensing of places for film exhibition, against our disastrous television programming, against the reactionary film society movement, against the mediocre journalists masquerading as film critics. But the problem lies deeper than that: Australian cultural life is shallow, and even the university student society is a microcosm of the outside world, in this respect. In approaching universities with our films the first lesson we learnt was to avoid the film societies: with few exceptions they are quite reactionary, as much manipulated by foreign interests as the cinemas in town. To get our work shown we have to go through the student Union: the Activities Officer or the Cultural Affairs Officer. This is fine, except there are fewer possibilities for film screenings this way.

Many of us want a radical new society. New film makers are trying to interpret radical change in new film forms and new attitudes. But the mass of the student body is indifferent to new ideas and experience. This lack of enquiry, of curiosity and desire for change is the real barrier to New Cinema and its distribution in Australia. The situation is different on many American campuses, as the study of film as an important 20th century means of communication at almost every university has ensured a more developed film sensibility.

New Cinema filmers are usually not interested in showing their work through the existing distribution channels because of the unsuitability of the scale and atmosphere of the commercial screenings environments. The picture palaces were created to show the escapist wares of the film industry. The new films need a relaxed, informal atmosphere, conducive to private meditation and this is often achieved at Film Co-op screenings. Television has great potential for spreading information on new film making, and the present exclusion of Australian films from programmes is cultural censorship. A regular weekly programme, even late at night, would reach thousands, and help to create an interest in the New Cinema movement generally, just as similar programmes in countries such as Germany have done.

Our own work continues to spring from a concern with the film making and projection experience: the interaction between projected image, screen, camera, projector, light, filters and ourselves. *Island Fuse* and *People Mix* are both made by re-filming black and white images in colour on a rear-projection screen—colouring the material with filters—re-animating movement, superimposing images and enlarging details of the original film frame; all this abstracting and transcending the documentary reality of the original film, evoking sensations of energies and forces which exist, but are not appreciated by our unaided vision. In *People Mix* we have used these techniques to suggest the spirit of the alternative culture and its confrontation with conventional society.

We have come to accept that film is basically an art of light energy, but as soon as one becomes involved with video tape instead of film the degree of energy at our disposal is immediately multiplied—one is no longer manipulating merely 24 frames of light per second, but the scintillating light spot which caresses the phosphor textures of the cathode screen hundreds of times *within* each 1/24th of a second. In *Video Selfportrait* we began to explore this new area and the visual syntax which is peculiar to the video medium, including forms spiralling into

infinity using feedback techniques etc. This is a 'videographic' film, i.e. video images are used for their graphic contribution to film: they were filmed from a video monitor screen and coloured and superimposed within the movie camera—but pure videotapes, such as Michael Glasheen's *Teleologic Telecast From Spaceship Earth* (a film copy of which is available for projection) indicate some of the possibilities of research into colour video. It's something for the future, along with computer-designed film (the surface of which we touched in Canberra at the CSIRO Division of Computing Research). All of us working in film are pioneers: compared with the older forms of communication film and video are infants.

It's important for us all to get as wide a showing of our work as possible—for audience feedback is a part of the creative cycle: feeding energy back into the environment to nourish new work. The importance of the collaboration of the audience in New Cinema can't be overstated: the audience is obliged to create along with the film maker, as in poetry, extracting the meaning at whatever level of interpretation is natural for the individual. This is what Buckminster Fuller calls a negentropic system, i.e. one which is not closed, but open and influenced by feedback from other systems, and when that happens the Australian film consciousness will be in step with the second half of the twentieth century.

FILM FAN

Thou Commodity

Just as the material nature of film, its substance as an illusion of movement presented by projection of light through a succession of images borne on a celluloid strip determines its aesthetics, so, likewise, the same material nature determines its economics and governs the shape of the industry and trade that have developed around it.

Film-making is indeed an industry and selling films a trade.

Ivor Montagu: *Film World*

* * *

Film exists in the eyes of its beholders. Exists qualitatively by quantitative beholding. In order that any film exist, one form of film must exist in abundance. To argue, in Australia, for an elitist,—experimental,—art—underground—, cinema is to argue for a parasite without the existence of a host. By the very physical nature of film, any and all forms of cinema are parasites on the Friday night, Saturday afternoon, oral-anal-mother substitute pudge flick.

Any and all types of film have a common ground in a complex technology in the form of cameras, sound recording equipment, laboratories, and sound studios. The estimated cost of producing one second of film is $400,000.00. Good, bad, art, experimental, pudge,—$400,000.00. Two seconds for the price of one, plus 50c. These figures don't reflect the scale of production, i.e. numbers of actors, sets, locations, special effects etc., but rather are the cost of setting up the basic technical facilities which are necessary to shoot the one second of film, record sound with it, process the film and produce a copy of the original film that can be shown on a sound projector. There is this basic expenditure necessary to produce any one second of professional film, no matter what the subject is.

Who would spend the initial $400,000.00, and why? At present, only investors who stand to get their money back by high volume sales of pudge. A man who sells films for fun and profit is called a distributor. A finished film is (for all practical purposes) infinitely reproducible. It can be shown simultaneously to hundreds of people in hundreds of different places. For large profits. Profits that make it feasible to spend the initial $400,000.00, or to induce other investors to spend the money in the hope of sharing in the profits. Thus, the whole production and post-production technology (which includes the technologists) for films is brought into being by the trader in pudge flicks, the commercial distributor.

At present, Australia is on the point of committing itself to film production on at least three major fronts. The Federal Government has launched, at long last, the Macquarie University National Film and Television School. Mr Dunstan's government has established the South Australian Film Corporation and a Film Advisory Board. In Western Australia, the Perth Film and Television Institute has been given official, though tight-fisted, approval by Mr Tonkin. The great race is on. Are there any prizes for the competitors who complete the course, let alone for the winner?

Are there any distributors for Home-Grown Pudge?

For if there are not, then there is *not* the quantitative sufficiency of trade in films for any films to exist at all. Film as an industry must exist for there to be a host (in the form of supportive technology) that other forms of film can live on.

Distributors exist, of course, but for a number of reasons,—historical, economical and political,—not for Australian films, or not for Australian films at a sufficiently remunerative level that investors would be enticed into the original capital expenditure necessary to provide the facilities to produce films. The problem, in a schematized form, is as follows:

Films made outside Australia are first released outside Australia. The initial return on capital expenditure is calculated against that first release, normally in the country of origin of the film. Everything after the first release is gravy. Australia is on the gravy run for the United States, England, France, Sweden etc. What this has meant is that foreign films are released in Australia at a far lower profit margin than in the country of origin. (Distributors fix prices of films according to a calculation of possible returns. First run films, even within Australia, fetch a higher percentage of the box-office than the second run films.) This undervaluing of films seems to be a function of international release trading in films.

Two factors in the Australian situation conspire to accentuate the general policy of undervaluing: First, the distributor-owned theatre chains (that is, where the distributor controls the exhibitor) are owned by foreign investors. These investors happen, by the general consolidation rules of big business, to be film-makers as well as film distributors. Twentieth Century Fox, for example, owns the studios, makes the films, distributes them and owns the cinemas in which they are exhibited. It means that distributors have a vested interest in seeing only certain films exhibited (either ones they have made or ones for which they have bought the distribution rights) and, as far as possible, preventing other films from being exhibited. A suppressed premise controls the logic of this attitude: The size of the cake remains more or less static. People go to the cinema more out of habit, than for any other reason.

The distributor-owned, foreign-owned cinema chains exhibit non-Australian films which have made their main profits elsewhere. The percentage of cost represented by film rental in a cinema ticket at a distributor-owned theatre is relatively low by international standards. In an independent cinema (that is independent of the distributor) the percentage remains low. Films are available from distributors who don't own cinemas, and distributors who do but who rent films for second or third runs in a city where the film has had a first run in their own cinema. In either case the rental charge is low.

A second factor which contributes to the undervaluing of films is a miasma originating from Canberra. A free film policy has created considerable bad faith in respect of non-theatrical release of films. Several areas are affected,—documentaries, 16mm prints of feature films etc.,—but primarily Australian made films that were produced without cinema release distribution contracts.

Through the Commonwealth Film Library, and State Film libraries, a whole range of 16mm films are available without even paying the cost of freight. Quite naturally, a certain reluctance to pay for any film has developed among the people who use the free film scheme. When, for example, the Australian Film Institute offers films made by Australians under the Commonwealth Experimental Film Fund, at very low rental rates, film societies and individuals cry wolf. They can get free films from the government's right hand, why should they cross the left palm? The answer seems to be the old one of the failure of communication between the two palms.

In the area of cinema release film Commonwealth government policy on the taxation of foreign film has added a further dimension to the problem of undervaluing. The tax on film was originally conceived as a deterrent measure. Foreign

films, particularly American, would be taxed so that Australian film production would be encouraged. A little tax is a dangerous thing. Even a small tax on individual film creates a definite revenue for the government, when all films that are screened are added together. On the other hand, the small tax does not provide any reason for an exhibitor to prefer an expensive Australian film to a cheap second or third release foreign one.

At the risk of attributing a lack of symmetry to the governmental body in respect of arms (Why not? It has many heads), I think this third, receiving, hand of the Commonwealth government is in a peculiar position. Instead of discouraging foreign film, the film tax has created a definite interest in the Commonwealth Treasury that coincides with the interests of foreign-owned cinema release chains in Australia. The coincidence, coincidentally, is subversive of Australian film production. That this should be the case (the exact reverse of the aim of the tax) at a time when Commonwealth and State governments are launching incentive programmes for film production, is just an accentuation of the right hand, left hand disjunction.

Undervalued relative to what standard? Film in Australia is undervalued relative to international standards. Those standards are set by the cost of making a film relative to what sorts of returns can be expected. The minimum possible return (which is a function of number of cinemas, population, type of film and general viewing patterns at a given time) must exceed the total sum which is being invested in the film. The one factor not included in the list of variables which determine minimum possible return is the percentage of box office sales, which is the normal way of fixing the rental charge for a film. This percentage is on a sliding scale, depending on the cost of the film, the other variables taken as constant. In Australia, the problem is, quite simply, that the upper limit of the percentage which exhibitors will pay, calculated against the other factors, even at their most favourable, would not produce a figure high enough to justify making a feature film. Any feature film requires a certain minimum expenditure. Even "low-budget" films do not stand to make, on the average, sufficient return to cover the cost of production if released only in Australia.

A number of possible solutions exist for the present problems of Australian film production. The government could be encouraged to legislate against foreign ownership,—which is what any attempt to control cinema release will amount to. The problems attendant on foreign ownership legislation in any sphere would be the same with film distributors, complicated by the government in general (rather than individuals *in* the government) having an interest,—a tax interest, in not altering the *status quo* in regard to foreign films entering Australia.

A serious alternative exists in the form of producing films in Australia for release overseas. That is, films would be made here under distribution contract to one of the distribution giants in the U.S.A. or England. The main returns from the films would be made on the foreign market. Australia would still be on the gravy run, but the gravy would now be from the home-grown product.

Foreign release for films made in Australia is a definite possibility. The film industry is international. Producers are more than willing to shoot films on location anywhere in the world, particularly if economic conditions are favourable. 'Economic conditions' means dependability of weather, cost of accommodation and transport, cost and availability of extras and so on. Economic conditions in Australia are, on the whole, more favourable in Australia than they are in America and England. If adequate laboratory facilities were available, foreign producers would no doubt be willing to make films in Australia.

If I might be allowed, on a hypothetical basis only, an inconsistency of fundamental principles, this does not seem to me a 'good' solution. It has been tried before, starting with Ealing Studio's *Eureka Stockade* and *Bitter Springs*. In terms

of that hypothetical principle, what I want to say is that the films made by these co-production ventures were not Australian, even when they had Australian themes. But finally, no appeal to normative standards is necessary to give the lie to co-production and overseas release as a means of furthering the cause of Australian film making. When Ealing, Twentieth Century Fox, Warner Bros, Rank and Commonwealth International finished production on a given film and packed up to return to England or America, they took everything with them, including the few Australians on the crew or cast list who showed any promise. Co-production in the past has had a devastating effect on any tentative beginnings of local production. There is little reason to think that it could be a benevolent foster nurse in the future.

A third possible solution lies with film's greater competitor for mass audiences, —television. Television is, in fact, less of a competitor, than the acclaimed winner. The only reason why there could still be considered to be any competition hinges on a peculiarity of television production. As a distribution outlet, television has completely eclipsed the cinema, but as a production agent, television poses no real threat to film. Television production is, in fact, always partly film production —from the late movie to news footage. The large film studios in America that survived the advent of television have diversified their activities and produce a good deal of film-for-television drama.

Given the fact that television can and does use film, its distribution possibilities make it an effective substitute for high volume cinema release film production in providing the incentive for the establishment of the technological basis for film production. In other words, television rather than pudge is going to be host. Television stations require enormous quantities of new material. Each station broadcasts an average of 16 hours a day, day in and day out, with very little repetition compared with a cinema. If film accounts for even a small percentage of the total broadcast time of the television stations in a city there will be a sufficiently high turnover of film to justify the existence of the complex technical facilities that are necessary for any film production. Justify economically. The laboratories and sound studios are quite unconcerned about what sort of material is being produced, provided there is enough of it to yield a profit on their initial investment. Once the facilities exist for television film production, they can be used for film production of any sort. The only technical difference of much significance between film for television and other types of film is colour. Very shortly that difference won't exist either. However, television is alive and doing very well in Australia and not serving as a host.

Both the reason for the failure to foster the film industry, and a possible remedy for the failure lie in the fact that television is not one. It is a mixed bag. First, there was the ABC, conceived in the image of the BBC. Then there were the Independents, begotten beneath the star of profit but under the influence of the Broadcast Control Board. To each his own source of income. The ABC has licence revenues,[1] the Independents have advertising. The commercial stations are subject to the Broadcast Control Commission's 1969 Australian content regulations. The ABC is not, but its policy is to follow, or do better than the regulations. The regulations call for a total of over 50% of programmes 'of Australian origin'. In the prime time viewing period there must be a total of 18 hours in a given four week period. Since 1967, at least two hours of the eighteen must be devoted to drama.

A week's television viewing in Western Australia would convince anyone that these regulations were intended to bind with the lightest of bands. A programme

[1] Technically, the situation is rather more complicated as the licences are collected by the PMG, and in part spent by the PMG. For example, all of the apparatus for the transmission of programmes belongs to the PMG and is staffed by PMG technicians. In effect, however, the ABC is financed by revenue from the collection of license fees.

of American cartoons, introduced by studio inserts of a local clown is chalked up as Australian content—the whole half hour! The original section (114) of the Act which concerns itself with Australian content good-naturedly exhorts the television gentlemen "to endeavour as far as possible" to use Australians, film made in Australia and television programmes of Australian origin. The television gentlemen who sit on the Boards of Directors of Commercial stations have been far more impelled by their star of profit than by the wavering influence of the Broadcast Control Regulations.

The ABC, by contrast, does not have any money left to produce more programmes of Australian origin than it already does. That is not to say that the ABC provides any great incentive for Australian film production by buying programmes made outside its own studios. Rather, it produces a large proportion of its own programmes and buys the rest from America and England. The proportion that it buys from abroad, far from limiting Australian production, actually make it possible. With a limited budget, money saved on foreign programmes (and they are cheaper on the whole) is money freed for local production.

There is a factor which controls ABC spending on Australian production which separates it even more from the commercial stations: The ABC provides a service to minority groups in outlying areas of the country, where no commercial station would be bothered to go because the returns would not be high enough. The ABC is a public service organization, and as such obeys different rules than the commercial stations. Legislation which affects broadcasting as a whole can never really be 'fair'. The initial allocation of license fees to the ABC is neither democratic nor fair,[2]—as the chairman of the Boards of Directors of the commercial stations never tire of telling us.

Given that legislation isn't fair, perhaps it could at least be effective in fostering Australian programming in general and Australian films in particular. A hypothetical solution:

Instead of an Australian content proviso, there be a percentage of net income proviso. That is to say, a television station would be required to spend a percentage (2% let us say) of its gross income (net profits have a habit of disappearing in the face of such provisos) on local production. From the point of view of encouraging private enterprise television this proviso would provide a definite incentive. Fledgling stations would not be obliged to spend much (because they don't make much) until they were firmly established. They would have a fair go. Under the present regulations concerning Australian content any small station would be very hard pressed if it kept to the spirit rather than the letter of the law. Australian content, *bona fide*, is more expensive than American cartoons.

The hypothetical proviso stipulates *local* production. Within the Australian context it seems essential that television stations in Queensland, South Australia and Western Australia be discouraged from continually buying material from Melbourne and Sydney. It is true that at the moment there is not sufficient material produced in these three states to fill up the time slots demanded by the Australian content regulations. But the hypothetical proviso would not demand that the stations air any local content, just that they spend their money on it. In other words, local material would be produced (which negates the complaint) and television stations could use it. The possibility that commercial stations wouldn't air local material does not, in any practical sense, exist. They have paid for the production of programmes;—they will use them.

2 Nor is it a very sound method of collecting revenue, because the cost of collection is so high. The principle of charging only those who make use of broadcasting services (ABC or commercial) is out of date. Everyone does. Considerable savings would be obtained by direct taxation levy at an amount which is the average of a television and a radio license.

In Western Australia the situation which would result from a 2% proviso for local production would be roughly as follows: The ABC would be unaffected and Channel 9 would not show any substantial increase in production beyond its present level. Channel 7's 2%, on the other hand, would account for such a flood of available capital that neither Channel 7 itself nor the present film production firms in Perth could cope with the volume of work.

In fact, the facilities do not really exist for high volume work in film. But given the quantitative possibilities, the investment of the $400,000.00 would soon follow. Television would provide a guarantee for investors that they would get an equitable return on their investment. An Australian film industry would exist.

An artificial fire. Volume is not quality. Television is not feature film. All true, all short-sighted.

An artificial fire it would appear is necessary in any event. It is the foreign commodity or our commodity. The government has long accepted the principle that some incentives are necessary for it to be our commodity. There is no logical reply to the claim that volume is not quality. One can only say that volume must come first if anything is to come at all. There is no guarantee that quality will follow, the world being what it is,—but since it *can't* precede, then it should at least be given the chance to follow.

The idiot box is a far cry from pudge,—and even farther from good feature films. Although this is true in terms of the end product as seen by viewers, the production techniques, right up to the point of transmission as a television signal, are very similar for film-for-television drama. Even the field of film documentary for television is not unrelated to feature film production of a certain type. Television will continue to use film because of differences of the two media. It seems likely that television drama would be produced under the 2% proviso for the simple reason that it is the most expensive form of film production and hence a good way of spending the money ear-marked for local production.

The most telling objection to the hypothetical proviso as a means of stimulating film production is that it has no direct influence on the distribution and financing problems of feature films. By a cruel irony of terminology the machine in a television station that converts film from its film form to an electronic signal so that it can be transmitted—distributed—to all those viewers, is called a "chain". Feature films could not be produced in Australia as a direct result of increased television consumption of Australian film. The financing of feature film depends on an investor knowing that widespread distribution at reasonable rates will insure him a return on his expenditure. Television, in the commercial sphere, depends on sponsors,—advertisers usually,—to pay the bill for programmes. It introduces a third party into the financing who doesn't exist for feature films. In spite of the disagreeable practice of cinema exhibitors showing commercials before films, the revenue from that practice has no effect at all on the distributors or producers of the films.

Perhaps the limit of what could be hoped for from increased television consumption of film is that some films made for television would then get theatre release. The original television 'release' would cover costs; the theatre release at a lower profit margin would be gravy. This practice is not uncommon in other countries. As an indirect result, there would also be an increased exposure to ourselves as we see ourselves. This might, conceivably, lead to a change in the demand for Australian film in cinemas. Those foreign investors who control the cinemas wouldn't want to *pay* for Australian films, of course, but at least the wave of the hand, the final brush-off—"Besides, there aren't any"—would no longer be an excuse for preventing them being made. With only a certain amount of innocence, one can imagine them having to compromise with public taste and an Australian Film industry.

VERONICA BRADY

Why Can't Australians? . . .

Public Taste and the Film

Film-makers in Australia have problems, problems of finance, distribution and administration. But perhaps the main problem is with their audiences. Basically, I think, our audiences tend to be both ignorant and even afraid of film, of the experience it offers, and this is as true of the intellectuals who ought to set the tone and give the lead to public response as it is of the Mr and Mrs Everidges. Hence public censorship, on the assumption, presumably, that someone at least is making some evaluation of films in the community.

What are the reasons for this abdication of responsibility before an art form which is probably *the* popular form of our time?

I believe that many Australians have what is virtually a moral problem in this area; not merely are they afraid of film, they disapprove of it. Thus almost without exception, academics and the critical establishment tend to treat discussion of film as a kind of intellectual slumming. Taking the film seriously seems to them a kind of trahison des clercs, an act of complicity which supports a tendency which ought rather be condemned. To them film appears as part, indeed often as the cause, of the flood of second-rate thought and emotion which threatens to devalue the intellectual currency upon which our civilisation depends.

For my part, I believe that these suspicions are unfounded, and that they encourage that very decline of taste which we must deplore. There are mediocre and vicious films as there are mediocre and vicious books, pictures and music. But the critic's task is precisely to concern himself with the new medium and to establish standards, set the tone of taste and appreciation. For it is surely beyond dispute that the film today is an art form in its own right and that artists like Godard, Fellini, Anderson, Truffaut and so on have built up a tradition, contributing a vision of shaping power to the contemporary imagination. To ignore this vision seems the real trahison des clercs since it represents an abdication just in that area where values are still to be established and new imaginative forms devised, imaginative forms which will largely give shape, tone and direction to our culture in the future.

How account for the intellectuals' abdication?

Perhaps a certain snobbery—some might prefer to call it concern for value—is at work. Certainly, the film's origins are low. The first moving pictures in U.S.A. formed a kind of peep-show catering mainly for migrants who were shut out from the main culture by reasons of poverty and language, and even today the vulgar architecture of many "Picture Palaces" promises chocolate-box emotional thrills within, "a slice of cake, not a slice of life", as Hitchcock put it. Properly, intellectuals suspect a form which seems to evade rather than come to grips with the real

issues, whatever they may be, of our time. To repeat, however, not all films are second-rate, and in any case the emotional mediocrity and cheap dreams which they peddle are one of the central issues to be dealt with.

But the denigration of film also springs from reservations about the medium itself. Watching film, the argument goes, is intellectually enervating, a form of brain-washing as the spectator sits passive and inert letting the sights and sounds wash over him. In the long run the effect of this kind of experience will be the destruction of that mental energy and critical acuity which sustain independence of thought and the culture which derives from it.

Again, there may be a measure of truth in this argument. The film is undoubtedly closer to the visual arts than to literature. But an emphasis on sense experience at the expense of more abstract argument is not necessarily dangerous, not unless critics refuse their task of bringing intelligence to bear on the film and the experience it offers. Indeed it may be that the opposition between sense and intelligence which derives from a misunderstanding of the Cartesian "Cogito" is at the root of many of the problems of technological man and the film, offering to reunite body and mind in a more integral experience, may have a good deal to contribute to the discussion of these problems.

But here a third reason for the critical failure in the matter of film becomes important. And this reason is ignorance. People otherwise highly educated and trained to discuss and evaluate the other arts are often at a loss when it comes to dealing with films. Here, no doubt, their education must bear a large measure of blame, particularly the education given in the past which was oriented to the printed word to the exclusion of the visual image. Thus it has been my experience that often the more highly literate people are, the more inept they are in their responses to film. Unable to judge it on its own terms they try instead to impose on it categories proper to the novel or even to the stage. A film like *Petulia*, for instance, bothered them because it had no clear story-line as *Joe* did also because it failed to argue a case either for or against the opposing groups of people it presented. Trained in the discursive mode, many people are ill-at-ease with the more involving, intuitive experience of film, and it is significant, I think, that in schools teachers are finding that those most gifted in making and discussing films tend to come not from the more- but from the less-academically gifted. Verbal explicitness and argumentative power, literary skills, it seems, may inhibit rather than facilitate response to film.

There is nothing surprising in this, of course. The visual arts and music have their own kind of logic and rhetoric. What is surprising is that our schools have largely failed to train appreciation and understanding in this area. Art and music have been soft options, luxury subjects, not to be taken seriously in comparison with subjects like Maths and Sciences which constitute a means both to power and position. Job-oriented, our schools have looked to external goals, stressing success in exams and demanding social and emotional conformity. While it may be going too far to say that Australian education has stripped the individual of his "imagination, his creativity, his heritage, his dreams and his uniqueness",[1] it is fair to say that it has provided little opportunity for the solitude, silence and separateness within which personal sensitivity grows. Moreover, the imaginative and emotional parsimony of our schools has contributed to the suspicion of intimacy and of sense experience which is partly to blame for the lack of understanding for film which we have been discussing.

In effect, Ronald Conway seems to have made a valid point when he maintains that ours is a Super-ego culture, that Australians tend to huddle on the fringes of themselves as they huddle on the edge of the continent, shrinking from the spaces

[1] W. Reich on American schools.

within. Thus the suspicion of film may have something to do with our fear of the instinctual and the unconscious, the areas with which the film is specially concerned. Certainly, the anger and confusion of many Australians outraged by films which deal with sex and violence often suggests that their reaction is dictated by fear at least as much as by a genuine ethical concern—the return of the repressed is always a frightening experience.

What, then, can be done to develop a more mature and intelligent response to film?

Someone like Ronald Conway might argue that what first needs mending is the national psyche. But short of the large-scale and horrifying therapy seen in *The Clockwork Orange* that seems hardly possible, though it might indeed be a result of better films—whch might indeed create a kind of psychic healing, a salvation by ordeal, the ordeal of descent into and return from the unconscious.

More immediately practical, there is need to use the real concern evident among teachers, parents and professional people generally about the effects of film to engage them in study of film both as an art form and as a cultural influence. To assess this influence, Tertiary Institutions might well give a lead, establishing some kind of inter-disciplinary study in which the literary critic, the sociologist, the psychologist, the historian, even the theologian and moralist would work together to evaluate and establish some criteria in this area, criteria which are badly needed. For it is true, I believe, that the film, with its sensory-intuitive impact constitutes an important aspect of the Counter-Culture which bids fair to undermine the values of rationality, moderation, tolerance and sensitivity to persons which we regard as basic to the civilised life. Yet given that no amount of wishing will make either the film or the kind of experience it presents go away, then clearly it is necessary to develop a positive approach to the problem, above all to create intelligent audiences which will encourage makers of quality film and scrutinize their products.

Far from undermining it, film may in this case contribute powerfully to the health of our culture by increasing the range and intensity of the experience of our humanity. Moreover, it has a contribution to make to the current ontological crisis, that is to the questioning both of the nature of "reality" and of man's relationship to his environment. Paradoxical as it may seem, the film challenges the equation of what is "real" with what is evident to the senses, for although it relies heavily upon this visual sense, it tends to turn what is visually evident into something pointing beyond itself. Framed on the screen, set apart in the high definition and compression of the screen, its images move towards the epiphany Joyce aimed at. Thus film becomes the servant of Dionysius, that underground river of the psyche which travels "from the domain of sex through the deeps of memory and dream out into the possible montages of death".[2] So, too, it belongs in the tradition of art in the twentieth century which looks for truth and significance primarily in objects and finds form growing out of the data of experience not imposed on it by the will of the artist.

From one point of view this has anti-human implications as it tends to abolish the idea of the artist as the maker set over against his creation—though the auteur school of film criticism may represent a reaction against this view. From another point of view, however, it appears that the film is heavily personal since it tends to transform the given world into the subjective dimension. Take, for example, a film like *Medium Cool* which is based on the actual historical events of the Chicago Democratic Convention of 1968. Yet translated to the screen, history becomes a kind of nightmare—a transformation recognised, ironically enough, by our Australian censors who cut some of the sequences in which police beat up demonstrators, sequences which were filmed as they happened: Australians, apparently,

[2] N. Mailer.

must be protected from the nightmare of contemporary history. Similarly, the succession of films which followed *Easy Rider*, films like *Zabriskie Point*, *Woodstock*, *Getting Straight* and so on partly give expression to and partly create a communal fantasy, a myth of a generation on the move,

"Seeking their instinct or their poise or both"
as they speed
"... . with an uncertain violence
Under the dust thrown by baffled sense
Or the dull thunder of approximate words."[3]

No doubt there is much that threatens a return to barbarism in such fantasies. When words become "dull thunder" and meanings are merely approximate then the values of precision, poise and accuracy, central to the vision of man which derives from the Enlightenment are seriously in question. No doubt, too, the film itself contributes to this change in sensibility. The medium is in a very real sense the message and, like the poetry of this century which derives from the Romantic emphasis upon the object as symbol,[4] tends to present an experience of the world which is more or less free from intellectual or even affective considerations. Like the Counter Culture in general film is hotly existential in its approach. But it also tends to undermine the individual response, replacing it with a wider-ranging, more communal awareness, that of the camera which records alike animate and inanimate, human beings and rocks—as, say, in *Ryan's Daughter*—and breaks down the human image into a series of forms equal in value with city lights perhaps or the glossy lines of cars. Essentially the film favours the long, panoramic view, blurs distinctions of feeling and gesture. Action takes precedence over the actor and setting over the action, indeed becomes the action, the dynamic factor in the design, to the consequent devaluation of human choice. As a result, character in film no longer seems to function according to the logical cause and effect sequence which is basic to the traditional novel and, of course, to our common sense of things. In *Easy Rider*, for example, the protagonists are already embarked on their quest when the film begins, and it is a quest which appears as unmotivated as dream. Certainly, it is irrational and even—as the film in my opinion shows—futile. Captain America—significantly the name of a comic-strip hero—finances his protest against a corrupt society by the sale of drugs and makes the goal of his journey to fulfilment a New Orleans brothel. Finally he is blown up by energies as pointless as his own. Yet I think there is less concern for his destruction than for the action that has successfully resolved itself in this way.

Evidently, therefore, film has inhumane implications. Just as evidently, and for this reason, I believe it demands the attention of critics loyal to the traditional concern of English criticism with the larger human implications of art. It may be instead that we face today a change in the nature of sensibility as far reaching as that which followed the new scientific discoveries towards the end of the seventeenth century and engaged the energies of the members of the Royal Society and men like Dryden, Swift, Pope and so on, men who were concerned with the values of the past but prepared also to adapt them to the demands of the present. The fact is that the film is by now an integral part of our culture, probably the most influential of the arts, certainly the liveliest. What needs to be done is surely to develop an equally lively critical response to it, so that its inhumane tendencies may be recognised, contested and turned to more positively human forms.

This is possible, first of all, when film is seen as a form closer to the visual arts than to literature and response to it made in terms not of ideas and meanings but

[3] Thom Gunn, "On the Move".
[4] F. Kermode, *The Romantic Image*.

of the overall sense experience it offers. Then, if it is judged as a whole, as something which does not "mean but is", like a poem, the implications may be liberating and enriching, offering an experience to enhance, not devalue, human dignity by embracing the full range of human feeling, involving all the senses, the intelligence and even areas of the unconscious. In contrast, as McLuhan has suggested, the print-oriented culture of the last three or four hundred years may have closed off a range of psychic experience of rich human value by tending to separate mind from the body, subject from object, following the sequence and order proper to the printed page, line by line, paragraph by paragraph. Against the detachment and privacy this book culture demands, film makes for a more communal kind of experience, working towards a fusion of the audience with the images on the screen and a combination of feeling and intelligence. Its basic unit is not the sentence, the unit of meaning, but the image, an image, moreover, which tends to become a symbol, focussing a complex of experience in a moment of time.

Obviously the critics of twentieth century poetry have devised a critical method and vocabulary to deal with this kind of experience and it seems to me that there is work to be done on the rhetoric of film which should lead not merely to more fruitful criticism but also to much more perceptive and sensitive audiences, the kind who will support creative film-makers. As well, however, we need interdisciplinary studies to assess the cultural implications of this new medium. Norman Mailer, for instance, argues that the film has added a new level of awareness to the psyche whose contents now read, sex-memory-film-dream-death. Whether or not this is so, it is the case, I believe, that film generates a return to that "symbolic consciousness"[5] in which all things are seen as it were on the one plane, all equally charged with revelatory power. Here, too, dream takes on the force of logic, history turns into myth and the hierarchy of relationships between the different levels of being breaks down. Thus, in *The Last Picture Show* the simplest objects disclose depths of human significance, offering an epiphany in Joyce's sense. In more ironic tone, the brittle, bright world of films like *The Graduate* or *Sunday, Bloody Sunday* manifests the very fragmentation of meaning from which the characters are suffering.

What needs to be studied also is the effect of such transformation of the commonsense of place and time. As far as a sense of space is concerned, objects in film take on a new kind of life of their own. A tree or a house, for example, do not so much appear in relation to an order of meaning, to the category "tree" or "house", but as part of the design of the film as a whole where the tree or house may be charged with deep significance for the man who first saw another's fear, for instance, under a tree. Similarly, film-time is personal. It has little to do with the inexorable logic of clock-time but is flexible, like a man's power to dream, able to swing forwards or backwards, to expand or contract according to the demands of subjective experience. To this extent at least film speaks the language of persons and can help to humanise a world in which objects threaten to overwhelm men.

No doubt this subjectivity of the film can also encourage a retreat into self-indulgent fantasy, "the slice of cake as against the slice of life" Hitchcock spoke of. *Love Story*, for instance, works as a kind of social tranquilliser, telling soothing lies about the human condition and working off sentimental feelings which the facts will not really allow. Yet Romance has always served this function and it has always been the critic's task to keep this tendency in control in the culture. Moreover, the distrust of dream and fantasy is itself suspect. Pleasure is not necessarily evil, though the Puritan strain in our culture tends to make us guilty perhaps about our pleasures[6] and to suspect all the arts but most especially the

[5] E. Cassirer.
[6] R. Conway, *The Great Australian Stupor.*

film precisely because it offers an experience that is less mentally strenuous than literature. Arguably, however, by enlarging the scope and range of our dreams, film may have a profoundly moral effect, increasing a man's sense of his freedom by giving him a richer awareness of his possibilities. True, dreams may also be dangerous and destructive. Yet it is precisely the quality of the dreams which the film generates which should engage the critic's attention.

And that, of course, raises the question of morality. What is one to say to a medium which encourages that longing for "the poetic state, a transcendant experience of life ... through love, crime, drugs, war or insurrection".[7]

First of all, I would say that a film's effect has little to do with its subject Nearly everything depends upon the treatment of that subject. Yet many Australians persist in judging films by their subject, thus missing the possibility of positive contributions to the understanding of morally contentious issues. Thus to dismiss *The Virgin and the Gypsy* as a "dirty film" was to miss the point that in that film the encounter with the gypsy represented a meeting with an intensity of being that challenges and calls to a new kind of existence. Similarly, *Sunday, Bloody Sunday* was less concerned with homosexuality than with the emptiness of a world without positive values. Not the "what" but the "how", not the facts but their treatment, these are the issues in any kind of ethical evaluation. Yet these issues are seldom enough debated in Australia. Is it that we feel that Big Brother, the Commonwealth Censor, will guide our responses for us? In fact, I believe, all too often he falsifies them. Thus in *If* ... the cut the Censor made in the Café sequence completely spoilt the moral point the scene was making as it showed the couple working through from a violent physical passion to a more tender relationship. Instead of relying upon public Censorship which tends to become merely a defence of social and emotional habit we should work by means of education and discussion to make individuals more capable of forming their own judgements.

This means that the ethical question must be debated, and debated strenuously. For my part, the criterion I should like to see is neither the subject matter nor whether the experience is verifiable in terms of a crude realism but rather its falsifiability, it is whether it tends to devalue human beings by limiting their human possibilities or whether it opens up richer forms of life, richer in terms of the originality, authenticity, thoroughness and power of the experience it enacts. By this test, for example, *Ryan's Daughter*, Academy Awards and box office success notwithstanding, fails badly. David Lean's imagination has apparently deserted him and his camera attributes no more significance to people and their feelings than to the rocky shores and the seas beating on them.

In sum, then, the film puts in question our definition of man, suspended as it is between the two extremes of impersonality and solipsism. On the one hand, the camera may act impersonally, as a mere recording device and so fail to draw out the human implications of its subject. On the other hand, it may draw us into a private, even an obsessive, world of the film-maker's own—Hitchcock's, for example, or Ken Russell's in *The Devils* where he seems to be exploring not the interactions of people and the world but the contents of his own fantasies. Hence his characters belong neither to the 17th century nor, despite the gimmick of Grandier's problems with priestly celibacy, the 20th century but to some wish-fulfilment world which transforms human passions and problems and even their bodies into elements in a design as erotically decorative as a poster by Beardsley.

The positive side of these tendencies, however, is to be found in the range and expressiveness of film, an expressiveness which turns film audiences from mere spectators into participants and involves them as few other experiences do in our culture. Getting inside the picture as it were they are brought to live in terms

[7] A. Artaud.

of their own perceptions, an activity which reveals to them the individuals they really are and may lead them in turn to reject a naive realism as they become aware that they are in a sense creators of themselves and of the world to which they respond. In this way, film may be a means to restore human dignity, giving man once more a sense of being in control of himself and his world.

Moreover, this stress on the subjective has social consequences also. "The new thing" as Godard has remarked, "is not to speak about self as self, but to talk of the self's own social conditions of existence and the ideas that flow from it." Manifestly, he has always been aware in his work of the self as part of a larger whole—prostitution, for instance, represents in his films the state of man under capitalism as well as a relationship of personal exploitation. But films like *Easy Rider*, *Dr Strangelove* or the Australian *Wake in Fright*, highlight communal problems.

Suspended, then, between the two extremes, impersonality and solipsism, the film thus reflects the situation of man today. As such it has an exemplary power which demands the attention of all those concerned for the future of our culture. As it opens up new areas of experience and awareness it may also contribute to fashioning the future. Indeed it may represent that form which Shelley and the Romantics generally were seeking, a form which would make us "inhabitants of a world to which the familiar world is a chaos" by expressing before unapprehended relationships, re-establishing the lost links between language and direct perception of experience and thus restoring man's sense of unity with the rest of the universe. More importantly perhaps in a world in which the printed word and spoken word is becoming an instrument of manipulation, film may restore that proper morality which understands that a look, a tone of voice or a gesture may be of profound human significance.

To respond to this medium all that we need, I think, is to be people, to overcome our Australian fear of intimacy and intensity of feeling, even perhaps to lose a little of our intellectual equilibrium in order to gain that life Wordsworth described in "Tintern Abbey", the "life we half create and half perceive". A great deal is at stake, nothing less than the quality of our culture as a whole. Everything depends upon the kind of dream which the film activates whether it is to be the dream which leads to self-actualisation and self-understanding or whether it is to be the self-indulgent dream of alienated selves retreating still further into an artificial paradise. It depends upon public taste which kind of film prevails Who forms public taste is the question. Need "culture" and criticism always be a matter of embalming the dead?

ALBIE THOMS

Some Notes on being an Australian Filmer

'I have been in the pillory for years, but now, with the aid of film, I have managed to wriggle one arm free. With this good arm, I can catch and hurl back some of the garbage that has been thrown at me. And, by garbage, I mean the lies, the distortions, the hypocrisies that are the manipulators' weapons. In short, thru film, I have discovered power. The will to have power is good only when it is to power over things . . . steel, stone, paints, film. It is evil when it is directed to the control and manipulation of other men.'

Richard Preston, *Film Culture*, 29, 1963

* * *

There is an avant-garde art tradition in film, ignored by those promoting the commercial art of the Hollywood-orientated cinema. It is a tradition that parallels 20th century developments in other art forms, and its major works have been created by artists better known for their work in other art media. But it is essentially a tradition of pure cinema, descending from the Lumieres' initial experiments, developing film's unique capacity for creating art objects perceivable in time as light projections accompanied by sound. This cinema art operates in different areas to the novelistic and theatrical cinema which like other commercial arts offers refinements in style in the presentation of familiar imagery. Because the basis of its esthetic lies in the unique capacities of cinema, rather than in cinema's capacity to dramatise novels or reproduce plays, the avant-garde film offers an approach that enables film to be used for communication through research and exploration. For this reason it has often been labelled 'experimental', though in this aspect it is not different from any other developing 20th century art form. All the fine arts in the 20th century have been 'experimental', the commercial cinema, per se a commercial art form, has been relatively inflexible. But fine art films have often been disregarded for their 'experimental' nature, as if this implied some imperfection and are often considered, because of this, inferior to formalistically perfect commercial cinema. There has also been a tendency to call commercial films that are stylistically adventurous 'art films', leading to 'art houses' facilitating the marketing of these products. But the art films I am concerned with here have not been considered marketable products, even if the works by their creators in other media have been marketed extensively. For some reason, the people who market artworks have been reticent about marketing films, possibly because their showrooms (art galleries) are designed for the marketing of only three-dimensional works. Another consideration, that has possibly deterred gallery owners from marketing films, is that they are by nature multiples, leading to them

being collected in 'libraries' and loaned in the manner of books. In this regard, libraries and archives have been lax in their collecting of works, and restrictive in making them available to consumers. But recent developments in cinematheques and museums (that is, in other countries than Australia) have begun a re-appraisal of avant-garde film, leading to authoritative articles in art journals, and a growth in publication of books devoted to the subject. This attention of museums and academics to film reflects the gradual supplanting of film by the genuinely 20th century artform of video. It is only in film's decline that its potential as an art-form, presaged in the very first works of the Lumiere brothers, is being assessed. The result is an avant-garde film revival, pursued by young artists rediscovering the power of film to explore the phenomena of life. The significant researches of the Futurists, Dadaists, Surrealists, and the postwar Underground are being re-considered as the beginning of a tradition that, because of commercial cinema's powerful propaganda, has been sadly neglected.

* * *

Discovering an avant-garde tradition in Australia requires massive research. Film research, of any kind, has so much been neglected here, that any information is difficult to come by. It has only been in recent years that our very first film, *The Melbourne Cup* (1896) has been added to our National Film Archive. None of the early works of commercial cinema, including the world's first dramatic feature, *The Story of the Kelly Gang* (1906), have been preserved, but the quality of one of the earliest extant Australian films, Raymond Longford's *The Sentimental Bloke* (1919), suggests that Australians, cut off from mainstream developments in film in Europe and America, had made extensive investigations into the use of the medium.

The existence of some sort of 'experimental' film activity in this early period is evidenced in a reminiscence by Len Lye, a New Zealander now regarded as one of the greatest avant-garde film artists, whose film art was not recognised until he was given freedom to develop his research with the GPO Film Unit in London in the 30s and later in New York. In the American magazine *Film Culture* (29, 1963) Lye recalled:

> *'Sydney, Australia, was where I learned animation ... This was in 1921 ... I experimented with painting on film but I let it go because there was a lot of things I wanted to do. Mainly I just learned cartoon animation ...'*

Lye, of course, is now recognised as the pioneer of this genre of film-making, and it was he who introduced it to the Scotsman, Norman McLaren, who went on to become renowned for his work in this genre with the Canadian National Film Board.

Nothing more is known of any work in the non-commercial film field until the 50s. That is not to say there was no work done in those thirty years, though this is possible, as there was little independent film-making anywhere in the world in this period (the International Congress of Independent Film at La Sarraz in Switzerland in 1930 virtually marking an end of the first period of international avant-garde film activity, not revived until the 40s in America). But, given the lack of information about any film-making in Australia, it is possible that another Len Lye was working somewhere, his discoveries being ignored, as commercial film-makers fought to survive foreign take-overs of their means of production and distribution. This latter economic and cultural colonisation of Australia stifled most film-making activity and led directly to the formation of the Experimental Film group at Melbourne University by Gil Brealey, about 1952. He reminisced about this period:

'It was the shortage of dough that stifled film-making and besides, it was more fashionable to write poetry or act up with the Drama Club. Film was still a rather dubious art form. The film industry in Australia was dead without even the occasional documentary of note until Back of Beyond *in 1954. Any youngsters who wanted to make film were slightly mad or at best hopeless dreamers.'*

(Notes from the First Australian Film-makers' Festival, Sydney, 1971.)

Despite the title of this group, their work was avant-garde only in terms of the film vacuum in Australia. Then, as now, very few works of the international avant-garde tradition could be seen here. Despite the fact that the group processed and printed some of their films themselves, their cinema research was mainly an attempt to attain standards of film-making already achieved by commercial filmers.

Records of subsequent avant-garde film activity in Australia is somewhat more accessible, though much of what was called 'experimental' was merely the efforts of young filmers to train themselves in film craft. In the absence of an established industry, they used these self-financed film activities to gain access to the few available film producing organisations. After 1956 these were generally television companies or groups depending on television as a market. Surprisingly, because it was an undeveloped medium, and one entirely unfamiliar to Australians, many Australian filmers were able to finance fairly independent and personalised productions from television sales. This led to the growth of a body of Australian filmers, knowledgeable of film craft through their independent experience, being able to create works that were personalised in the manner of the traditional avant-garde, though unadventurous in terms of research into the unique qualities of film. Bruce Beresford's *The Hunters* (c1961) is a poetic expression of a personal response to kangaroo shooting. Dusan Marek's *Adam & Eve*, made in Adelaide about the same time, is an animated expression of the artist's attitudes to the nature of creativity. Arthur Cantrill's Australia flora series, made around Brisbane in 1963, uses film to explore natural phenomena, presaging Cantrill's later genuinely avant-garde work, exploring the nature of perception through the film medium and in environmental film exhibitions.

A casual discussion with David Perry in 1965 led to the formation of Ubu, Australia's first consciously avant-garde film-making group. I had already made *It Droppeth as the Gentle Rain* in 1963 with Bruce Beresford, and David had completed his own animated film *Swansong in Birdland* in 1964. We collaborated on the production of *The Spurt of Blood* (1965), made for my multi-media stage production *Theatre of Cruelty*, and after this, with John Clark and Aggy Read who had helped on that film, formed Ubu, which took its name from my first stage production, Alfred Jarry's *Ubu Roi* (1962). We had been excited by the making of *The Spurt of Blood*, a homage to the surrealist period of avant-garde film art, and decided we wanted to make more films of this nature. Then the common appellative for non-commercial film was 'experimental', that is, if you were fortunate enough not to have your work denigrated as 'amateur' (still a term of abuse, despite McLuhan's suggestion that only the amateur is open-minded enough to discover anything new). So Ubu was formed as a group for making 'experimental' films. But first we made *Blunderball*, a crude commercial burlesque film designed to bring in money to finance our personal film research. It succeeded and resulted in several films that harked back to the earliest adventures in the film medium. My own *Man and His World* (1966) reversed and stretched one second of time to fifty seconds, overlaying multiple image information in monochromes that changed every second. David Perry's *Divertimento* (1965-6) created an abstract montage out of randomly collected film material. His *Puncture* (1966) explored the persistence of vision on the retina with holes punched into filmstock superimposing in the eye to create an abstract dance, animated entirely by the

intermittent nature of continuous projection. In order to get our work before audiences we created a distribution library, which grew into the Sydney Filmmakers' Cooperative, and gained new members of the group in the form of Garry Shead, Michel Pearce and David Stiven. Garry had been pursuing his own film research, resulting in the diary film *Ding a Ding Day* (1961-65), and, inspired by Ubu activity, instigated the production of *The Film* (1966), a spontaneous improvisation shot simultaneously with four cameras by all members of the group, with the exception of Aggy Read who was sick at the time. This liberated film exploration was made possible by the acquiral of some old film stock given to us by a laboratory. Without script or actors, we filmed each other in a series of visual improvisations, with each camera recording at a different speed. A magnetic soundtrack was added to the edited copy, which is now the only print in existence, and is preserved in the National Film Archives.

By 1967 avant-garde film activity in Sydney had blossomed. *Man and His World* had made the finals of a film competition at Expo '67, leading to some international recognition. *Time* and *Newsweek* both ran articles on the New American Cinema, leading to the appellative 'underground' replacing 'experimental' in descriptions of our work. New works abounded. I made *Rita & Dundi* (1966-7), a film poem about some friends, and *Bolero* (1967) a 'minimal' film observing the effect of movement on perception within the framework of Ravel's music. With *Bluto* (1967) I revived the genre of hand-coloured film, leading to a Sydney school in this genre that produced over a dozen films in one year, and issued the *Handmade Film Manifesto, 1967*. David Perry completed *Halftone* (1967), made by enlarging newspaper photos until the halftone dots formed op art patterns, printing them onto film strips, and joining the strips together so that projection animated the patterns into an explosion of kinetic activity, complicated by also printing the images as a soundtrack, so that the op patterns also generated their own optical sound. Aggy Read made *Transition* (1967), a meditative film observing the change from white to black on a screen rapidly crisscrossed by lines until no white area remained. He also made *Superblockhigh* (1967), a handcoloured incised film made on a grinding wheel. Garry Shead's *The Lovers* (1967) integrated some negative, shot on Shackleton's Antarctic Expedition by Frank Hurley, with contemporary scenes of lovemaking in the surf. His *Strange Interlude* (1967), zooming on a nude figure running through the Australian bush, was shown only once, coupled with *Film of Kath* and *Advance Australia* (both 1967) which truncated time by discontinuity editing. Ubu became the focal point for a wide variety of underground activity, mixing media, staging happenings, publishing newsletters, and for the first time in many years, making an effort to get Australian films before Australian audiences. In Ubu film programmes, New American Cinema films were also shown, in particular a retrospective programme of Bruce Connor's works, being a collection of films by one of the most accomplished avant-garde artists in the world today.

This energetic Ubu activity continued into 1968, seeing the production of my synthetic documentary film *David Perry* (1968), David Perry's videographic *Mad Mesh* (1968), and his poetic diary film *Sketch on Abigayl's Belly* (1968), Aggy Read's animated collage *Boobs a Lot* (1968), Garry Shead's kinetic documentary *De Da De Dum* (1968), and new works from people in Perth, Adelaide, Brisbane, Melbourne and Hobart, all taking tentative steps on the avant-garde film path. Ubu also published *Ubunews*, an underground newspaper facilitating communication between filmers which vigorously attacked government film policies, particularly in censorship.

By 1969 this vigorously omnidirectional activity had overwhelmed Ubu, which now had about 100 films in its distribution library, and had generated an interest in Australian film, in the international avant-garde, and in multi-media avant-garde

activities. Reflecting these complex activities, I completed my feature *Marinetti* begun in 1967 and premiered in June 1969 before an audience of 2000 people. Ubu always managed to attract capacity crowds to its public activities, but this one resulted in a virtual riot, for the complex cinematic research evidenced by the film proved completely alien to the audience assembled, who reacted with extreme hostility. That screening marked the real end of Ubu activity in Australia, and was a turning point for avant-garde film activity here. After showing the film in other states, I embarked on a world tour, determined to assess international responses to the film, and to observe more closely avant-garde film activity in other countries. David Perry completed his *Album* (1970) before leaving to live in London, and Aggy Read withdrew from underground organisational roles to complete his film *Infinity Girl* (1971) which forms a major section of his Ubu diary film *Far Be It Me From It* (1971-72). Garry Shead withdrew from avant-garde film activities to make the narrative films *Live Between Evil* (1969) and *Initiation* (1971). Ubu ceased to exist as a local phenomenon, but in its wake was a vast range of independent film activity happening all over Australia, much of it pursuing directions pointed out by traditional avant-gardists and by the Ubu underground.

Two important events obscured the demise of Ubu. One was the return to Australia of Arthur and Corinne Cantrill, who had left Australia in the mid-60s and had begun developing avant-garde aspects of their film work, to take up a Creative Fellowship at the Australian National University. There they fostered appreciation of the avant-garde film tradition, created an awareness of the international New Cinema which resulted in the purchase of some significant works for the National Library, and stimulated film exploration in a wide variety of areas, particularly much neglected expanded cinema. The other was the creation of the government Experimental Film & Television Fund, with a budget of a quarter of a million dollars. While the word 'Experimental' remains ambiguous in the title of this body, it has, since 1970, financed the production of over 100 films which under other circumstances might not have been made, encouraging film novices, and permitting unbridled film and video exploration. This body is unique in the world in terms of its expansiveness and its liberality, and the resultant film activity had changed the attitudes of many Australians towards film-making.

It is beyond my present scope to discuss the considerable body of avant-garde film that has appeared in Australia since 1969. The Cantrills themselves have completed about 30 works, constituting one of the most solid oeuvres of any avant-garde film artists in the world today. In particular I would cite *Earth Message* (1970) as one of the most significant avant-garde works produced anywhere in recent years. Avant-garde works financed by the Experimental Film & Television Fund include several by people associated with the Ubu group. Mick Glasheen's videographic *Teleological Telecast from Spaceship Earth: On Board with Buckminster Fuller* (1970) is a skilled synesthetic film of a type only being made elsewhere in California. Peter Kingston's *Brett & Butter, Jam on His Face, The Horse Has Bolted* (1970) is a culmination of this film artist's explorations in the previous decade, evidencing a peculiar Australian expressionism in a style that was associated with Ubu filmers. Aggy Read's *Far Be It Me From It* (1967-72) is an important variation on the neglected genre of diary film. Paul Winkler's *Isolated* and *Requiem* (both 1970-1) reflect this filmer's contact with German structuralist filmers, while work by Terry Martin (*None as Yet*, 1971) and Anthony Airey (*After Image*, 1971), continue perceptual experiments, and Andrew Pike (*My University*, 1971) and Peter Tammer (*Our Luke*, 1970, *Flux*, 1971) pursue diary forms. There has been no new work from Ian Davidson/Ludwick Dutkiewicz, Stan Ostoja-Kotkowski and Frank Eidlitz who were the major avant-garde filmers outside the Ubu group in the mid-60s, and it seems the avant-garde mantle has largely

been passed on to younger filmers, just discovering film and applying their discoveries outside the restrictions of the commercial orientations of the film industry. There is no discernible Australian style, and, in fact, local manifestations are paralleling independent research in other countries. Recent films by Mike Parr and Peter Kennedy (*Idea Demonstrations*, 1972) further reflect the international trend for painters, sculptors and conceptual artists to follow the pattern suggested by Richter, Eggeling, Duchamp and others in the 20s, using film as an extension of their explorations in other artforms.

Like avant-garde filmers in other countries, Australians are seeking new exhibition outlets for their work. Avant-garde cinema has never fared well in commercial movie houses designed for the illusionist trompe l'oeil presentation of Hollywood cinema. Art galleries are beginning to show films, and our national art museums are starting to show interest. Australia is fortunate in having a strong co-operative movement that has overcome foreign monopolisations of cinemas by starting film-makers' cinemas where filmers show their own works and enter into dialogue with their audiences. Films are still only rarely collected as artworks, partly because the technology for viewing them is so archaic, but this problem should be overcome with videocassettes, so that films will be able to be viewed in the home through the video monitor and played as often as the owner (or renter) wishes, in the way that records or sound tapes already are, leading to a revision of viewing habits, and making complex films more accessible through repeated viewings. This technology has in fact been anticipated by the artworks which already reflect this complexity, and can't be appreciated in the once-only viewing situation offered by commercial cinemas.

It appears, then, that the avant-garde tradition in film is being revived and is beginning to assume the importance in 20th century fine art that commercial cinema has already achieved in popular or commercial art. As one who has recently devoted my whole time to my work as a film artist, I welcome this trend. I am optimistic that it will continue and will assume even greater significance as video hardware becomes more available to people in the community.

ALBIE THOMS

From Sunshine City Logbook (1970-72)

'Thanks to the persistence of the image on the retina, things in movement multiply, are deformed, and follow one another like vibrations in space through which they pass.'

—Futurist Manifesto

For the past two years I have been working on a film called *Sunshine City*. It started forming in my consciousness early in 1970 when I was travelling in Europe. Its first manifestation was this fragment jotted down on a piece of paper when I woke up in the middle of the night in Oberhausen in West Germany:

Sunshine City,
baby, do you know what I mean?
Sunshine City,
baby, that's the place for me.
Sunshine City,
let it all hang out,
Sunshine City,
that's what it's all about.
Sunshine City,
baby, it's just a scene,
Sunshine City,
baby, do you know what I mean?

(April 1970)

This was the ideograph I carried with me for some time as the film took more shape in my mind. In Milano, Italy, a month later, I received news that the Experimental Film Fund was calling for applications. I wrote a request for a grant which outlined more of the film:

> *Sunshine City* will develop experimental approaches utilized in *Marinetti* (which applied the results of experimental shorts, 1965/8). Where *Marinetti* was a film of an artist turning in on his own consciousness, *Sunshine City* will be a film of the artist turning out on the consciousness of his city, which will be seen from the point-of-view of the artist returning to his city after a year of travelling the world observing the works of artists and young people in Europe and North America.
>
> (May 1970)

The following eight pages contain extracts from SUNSHINE CITY work sheets and film clips. *Text continues on p. 49.*

London Aug

INTRO TO SUNSHINE CITY

Red map of Australia

Words: "Australia presents" wipes out
of it to fill screen

cut to kangaroo being chased across desert

Sound: rifle shot / echo — Kangaroo is shot

fade picture to white
cross fade echo to loud aeroplane sound

fade up image of clouds
cross fade to Sydney seen from clouds
keep up sound of plane as it begins to descend

aerial view of Sydney from Harbour

cut to Frank Purnell footage
add sound of faulty motor
cut in flicker pattern
+ single frames Frank + Pat Medford + newspaper headlines

build flicker to explosion
& cross fade plane sound to electric switch breakout

Sunshine City Scenes

Dedication to Frank Farnell & Tricia Cudford

Pitt St — drive along
Bondi Beach ✓
Bush - Rottnest ✓
Windsor Castle Hotel
Party ✓
Circular Quay ✓
Funk ✓
~~Coast~~ Tracks ✓
Balmain ✗
Cross ✓
University
Highway ✓
Expressway ✓
Rocks ✗
Opera House ✓
Bush Swimming Hole ✗
Watsons Bay ✓
Shots from ferry ✓
Long Bay
Army Camp ✗
Disco ? ✗
Head shops ✗

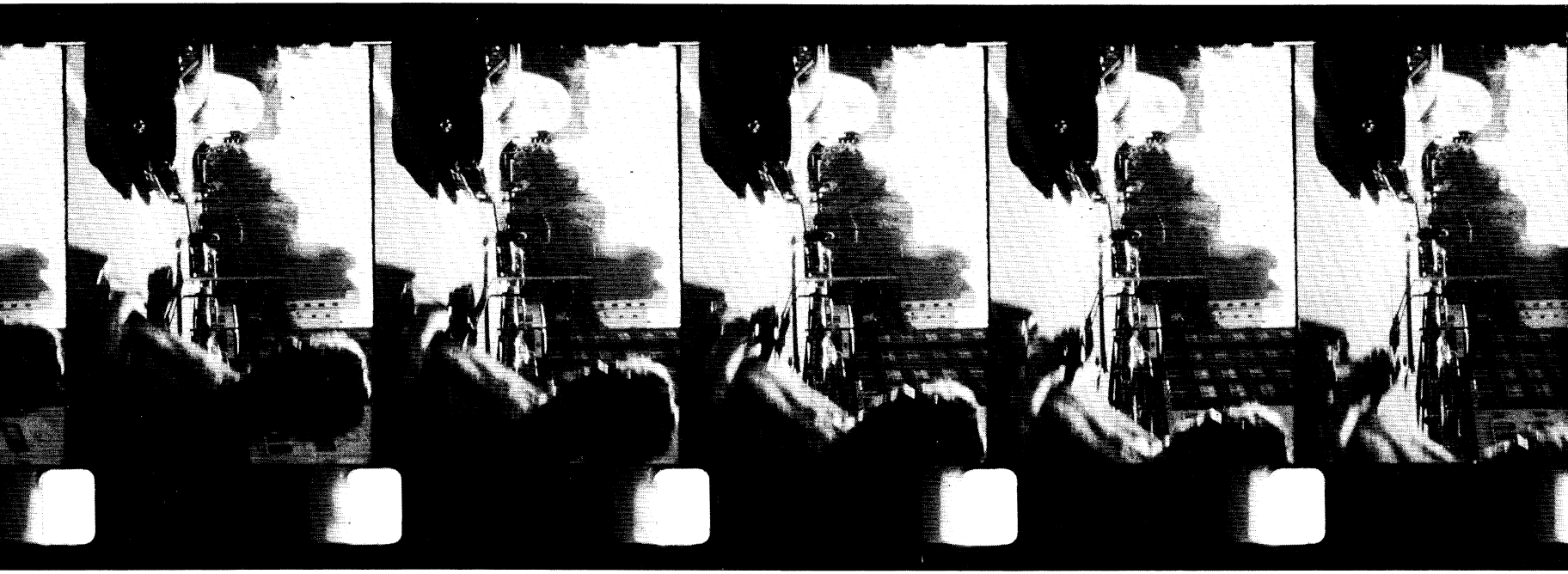
Sunshine City

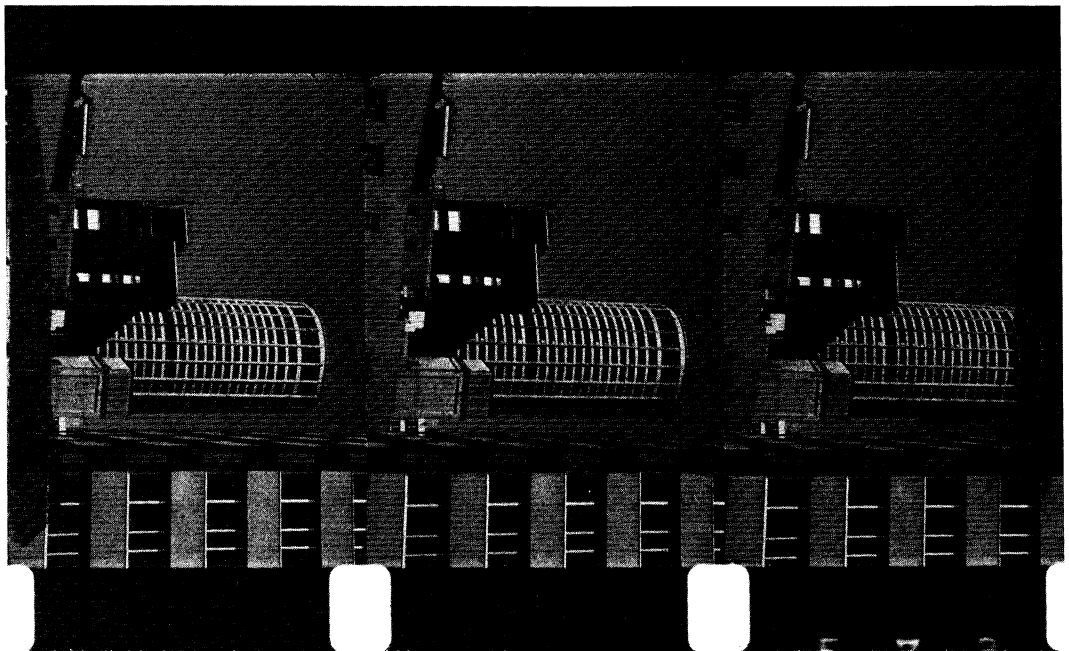
Music montage
- Steve Miller
- Pink Floyd
- Beautiful Day
- Rotary Connection
- Hendrix - Band of Gypsies
- Sly + Machine
- Zappa

People
- Martin
- Dave Elfick
- Dick
- Peter W
- Jim S
- Bruce
- Gary
- David Lichtmoff
- Brett
- Mick
- Jim Anderson
- Pier

- Wendy Bacon
- Judy Bray
- Colette
- Treez
- Wendy Whiteley
- Bliss
- Slavka
- Pipi
- Rita
- Victoria T.
- Norman
- Cynthia
- Linda

Kodak 5068





Sunshine City

Roll 1 – Spring St, Paddington Sts, Kirkcaldie Bay, Palm Beach Sydney from N. Sydney

2. – Macquarie Lighthouse, Woolloomooloo Oxford St

3 – Pacific Hwy, Harbour

~~4 – Harbour / City~~ NG

5 – Bridge / Bondi / Harbour

6 – Bondi ± NG

~~7 – Bondi / Camp Cove / Watsons Bay~~ NG

8 – Nimrod St, Anzac Pde, Bare Is

9 – S. Maroubra Surf Carnival

10 – Watsons Bay long

11 – Watsons Bay short

12 – Cross / Quay

13 – Harbour / Camp Cove / Watsons Bay

14 – Manly ferry

15 – City / Peter Wright

16 – Watsons Bay / Sutherland Hills / Woolloomooloo

17 – Opmain / Lady Macquarie Chair / Harbour

18 – Palm Beach / [illegible]

19 – Bexley / [illegible]

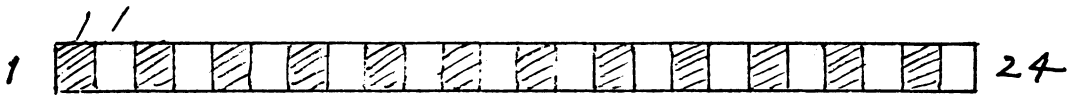
20 – Cap / Dawn

21 – Watsons Bay / Dawn

22 – City

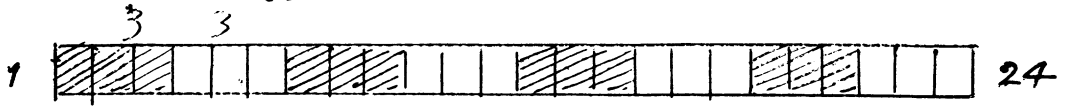
Sunshine City — alternate scenes.

Section 1.(a) 30 secs.



repeat for 30 secs.

Section 1(b) 15 secs.



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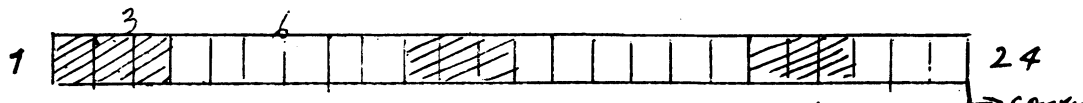
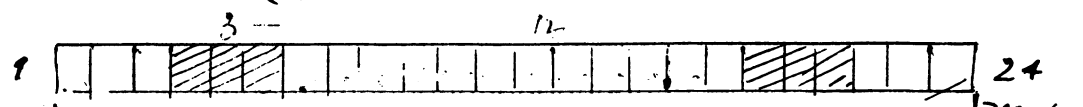
Section 1(c) 15 secs



repeat for 15 secs → continue in 2(a)

Section 2(a) 30 secs.



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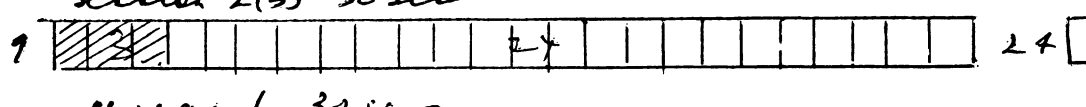
repeat for 30 secs.

Section 2(b) 30 secs.



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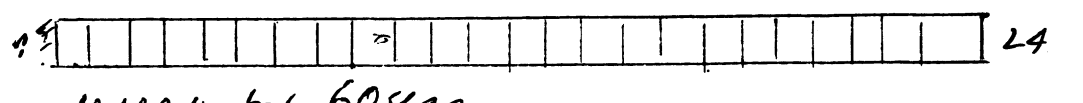
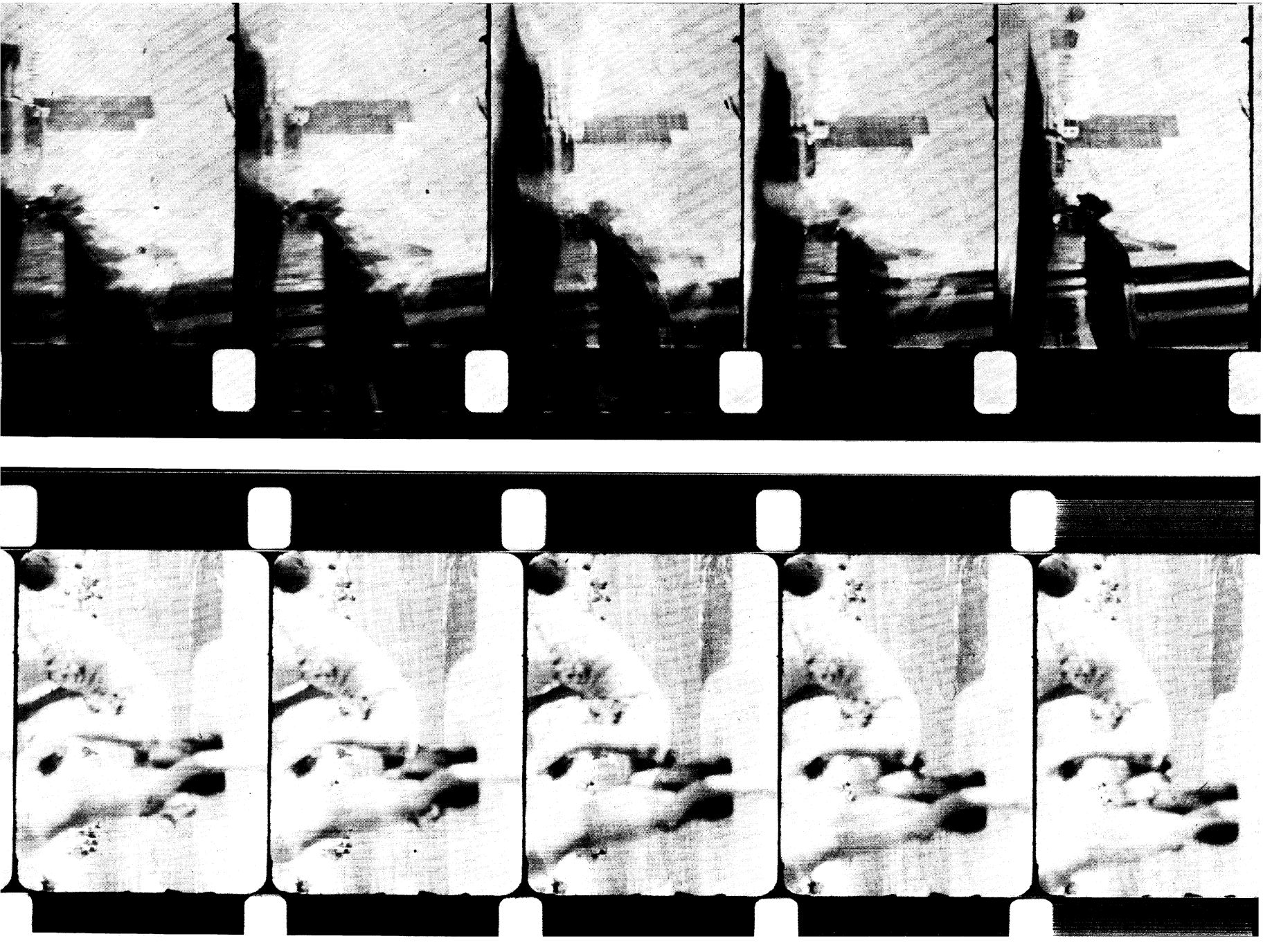
Section 3.



repeat for 60 secs.

Amsterdam Nov 70



In London, in July, 1970, I was advised I had been granted a loan of $5000 to make *Sunshine City*.

I wrote to the Experimental Film Fund asking for more information about how the grant would be administered and set about helping organise an International Underground Film Festival at the National Film Theatre in London, and then went to Holland to organise a cinema and workshop for the Nederlandse Filmmakers' Coop. I was told I had to come back to Australia before I could organise my use of the Fund to make *Sunshine City*, so in December 1970 I returned, hoping to begin shooting immediately. But a contract had to be drawn up, budgets revised and a synopsis (more than I had already indicated) prepared. I wrote the following:

> *Sunshine City* will be a record of my responses to the people and places of the city of Sydney. It will show the visual environment and synthesize the sound environment. It will allow the people to speak, and will try and relate their lives to the environment, and try to express the way the environment, the light, the sunshine, the climate, the visual stimulation, the cultural history of the city, conditions the lives of the people and creates their character. Perception of space and time will be altered to control the experience of the viewer and to express my personal perceptions. It will be an analytic film, determining its own esthetic, forcing attention to the filming process, to the materials of the film experience. (December 1970)

Frustrated at not being able to start the film, I was able to get many of my feelings down on paper in an article commissioned by *Goset* which was never published. It began:

> SUNSHINE, vibrating waves of yellow light, splashing trees and rocks, firing onto the retina at 186,000,000 miles per second. Back in *Sunshine City*, bathed in the smell of gumtrees and the drone of cicadas, Ginger Meggs roaring about on motorbikes, plunging into the surf and riding the watery time machine.
>
> Until you fly over the ocean and land on some new terrain you have no understanding of how the environment moulds the Australian character. Long-haired freaks who draw the wrath of the poker-pulling boozers at the RSL have more in common with their detractors than either of them are prepared to admit. Seeing them standing side-by-side in the surf, stripped of their distinguishing uniforms, one is immediately aware of the Australian virility, the nobullshit getonwithit energy that pushes Australians to success wherever they may be. The balding potbellied digger standing beside his longtressed son both have the glow of sunshine in their eyes, a tough physical demeanour that suggests the wildwest quality this country still possesses. This is the land of the mining strike, the property speculation, the wide-open spaces, that breeds cowboys on wheels, riding through the streets on their ton with a sense of freedom that doesn't seem to exist anywhere else . . . (December 1970)

The Australian Film Institute, which administers the Experimental Film Fund, kept mucking me about during January, and so in February, when I was in Melbourne, where they have their office, to edit an issue of *Revolution*, I managed to get my signature on their contract, and gain access to the money allotted to me. In the meantime, I had recorded the following in my logbook:

> Until 1969 I had always looked to European artists for inspiration—Europeans of the beginning of this century who explored the areas of consciousness that gave basis to the art of our times.
>
> Alfred Jarry was the first inspiration, and we took the name of his grotesque alter-ego for our group. My first film was adapted from Prevert, the second

from Artaud, the third from Schwitters. My first significant work was inspired by Ravel, and the culmination of my work in the 60s by Marinetti. In between was a school of handmade films which owed much to Klee and Kandinsky. *Marinetti* went beyond the limits of its inspiration, infusing futurist esthetics with Albers, Reinhardt, Pound, Burroughs, Cage and Leary.

With this broadening of vision, I travelled seeking new horizons. Once away from my environment I discovered my real inspiration: the sensuality of my city, the sunshine, the Australian vitality. This was the unconscious inspiration that flooded my mind whenever I confronted the cultures of Europe and America—this wareness of the motivation of my work. *Sunshine City* is a condensation of the clouds in my mind as I travelled across America and Europe, my nostalgia, my revery. (January 1971)

The budget allowed me didn't allot much for equipment hire, so I borrowed a camera and started recording what was happening around me. At this time I joined with Martin Sharp in establishing the Yellow House as an artists' commune, and became the organiser of the Ginger Meggs Memorial School of Arts which was responsible for the research and preparation of ideas and techniques to be used in the eventual manifesting of the Yellow House as a multi-media environmental artwork. We took our inspiration from Van Gogh:

> There is an art of the future and it is going to be so lovely and young that even if we give up our youth for it, we must gain in serenity . . .
>
> (Letter to Gauguin, 1888)

Further problems soon arose with *Sunshine City*. My camera was stolen, with a scene still in the camera that seemed important to the film. I rented another camera to record a conversation with Martin Sharp and this film was destroyed by a camera fault. I took these incidents as omens and stopped filming for a while. Instead I began editing some of the footage I already had, and got involved with some 8mm filming and experiments with $\frac{1}{4}''$ videotape. I was also flown to Perth to film one of Dean Hazlewood's Rock Masses. Work progressed in our Yellow House, and I tutored in film, running programmes of historical avant-garde films in parallel with a film-makers' cinema showing new works by Australian filmers. During this time I represented Garry Shead's films, and came across his description of an event that had effected me deeply, and which had direct relevance to the film I was making:

> An afternoon in September 1966. Light reading f16 on Sydney Harbour. Cloudless sky, water on glass. A helicopter hovered silently above the bridge, arcing over the yachts. Suddenly, like a film run at fast speed it spun out of control along the Quay and fell between the buildings.
>
> The impact affected many of us. A roll of partly damaged film was salvaged from a movie camera in the wreckage. It showed the last minutes of the tragedy in one long sequence. Long shots of sailing boats, the Opera House, slow zoom to sailing boats, Circular Quay, the AMP building suddenly whipping out of frame, continuous 360° wipes, flashes, fade out.
>
> Pat Ludford who was directing a documentary for ABC and Frank Parnell the cameraman who remained filming to the end were well known. At this time film came much closer to our lives than before . . .
>
> (*Masque*, Jan-Feb 1968)

One of the first things I had done when I started shooting *Sunshine City* was to request of the ABC that I be able to use that film to start my movie. Frank Parnell had been one of my teachers when I first started making films. Pat Ludford was a friend. I wanted to pay them tribute, and to use their incredible footage to

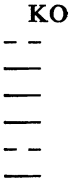
suggest the close involvement we filmers have with our city. The ABC, of course, ignored my request.

In September 1971 our Yellow House was manifest: a multi-media artwork available for the people of Sydney to play in. I resumed my filming. Then the Yellow House destroyed itself, and I went to live in the surfing community on the Barenjoey peninsular. I edited a surf movie while continuing work on my own. Some lines from an old script I had written by the ABC-TV series *Contrabandits* came to mind:

> Histological studies of the human fovea—the point of fixation on the retina —reveal that it consists entirely of cones, each of which is controlled by individual nerves which lead to the optic nerve via the 'blind spot' of the eye.
>
> The eye is a mandala, the centre of which corresponds to the foveal 'blind spot', through which you are going *in* to the brain. (April 1968)

Most of my filming was concerned with how sunshine illuminates the environment in which we live, how our perception is directly related to the frequency of the light entering our retina. I had devised an optical flicker frequency through which to print the film, and had done some experiments on how this was to alter perception of the photographed scenes, approximating somehow to the effect of sitting on a beach for a few hours looking into the sun. Magic mushrooms played their part, with additional help from other perception-altering drugs. On Christmas Day 1971 I consulted the *I Ching*:

KO



Above: The Joyous/Lake
Below: The Clinging/Fire
On your own day/you are believed
Supreme success
Furthering through perseverence
Remorse disappears.
A well must be cleaned out from time to time
or it will be clogged with mud.

I spent the next month or so meditating on my film, occasionally shooting additional scenes. I reread Artaud, and recorded the following fragment:

> Rhythmic repetition of syllables and special vocal modulations, which veil the precise sense of words, evoke multiple images in the brain, (and thereby) create a more or less hallucinatory state, and force the sensibility and the mind to undergo a kind of organic alteration which helps rid written poetry of customary gratuitousness. (*Collected Works*, IV)

The original purpose of my film began re-asserting itself. I was reminded of an article I wrote in *Oz* in 1970:

> Antonin Artaud saw the peyote rituals of the Mexican Indians, and the mystical theatre of the orient, and demanded a theatre that created 'a delerium that is communicative'. Such a theatre did not appear until very recently when American artists inspired by LSD experiences, created multi-media lightshow

environments that expanded the senses, and created the very communicative delerium that Artaud hungered for.

The ancient Hindus discovered the power of *mantras*, words which when repeated constantly set up a brain rhythm which leads to expanded consciousness. In organising the rhythmic patterns of the frames of their films, filmmakers of the New Cinema are achieving the same results . . .

(*Oz* 26, Feb/Mar 1970)

So I moved back into the city and completed shooting of my film. Ten people were recorded in synchronous conversations: Aggy Read, Colette St John, Riitta Latinen, David Litvinov, David Elfick, Cynthia Dyer-Bennett, Germain Greer, Jim Anderson, Brett Whiteley and Pier Farri. I edited the film within the predetermined structural patterns conceived before shooting. The film is now assembled and I am working on its soundtrack. In a few months it will be complete, and the two year journey I set out on when I asked for money to make the film will be ended. What began as a nostalgic experiment has grown into a determined statement. A final description logs some of my recent thoughts:

Sunshine City is a diary of 18 months in my home town: an exterior view, for after *Marinetti* I wanted to turn away from interior exploration and research my environment in an attempt to understand its effect on me. But there are people in my environment, friends, old and new, who helped in my attempt at understanding. All are seen through a rigidly modulated viewing pattern, a visual drone intended to enhance meditation. This relates to the hard sunlight that illuminates my vision in my home town—*Sunshine City*.

(July 1972)

I now leave these thoughts about film-making to return to the sound of my film. In my mind I can hear aborigine music blending with Ken Howard's race commentary. Someone is reading starting prices as a housewife gets it off on talkback. And Brett Whitely is reminding me that Yellow is the colour of madness . . . .

GRAHAM ROWLANDS

Home to Mother

Wrong again.
Because he'd gone for natural foods,
the Christmas cake would sweat into mould
after a few weeks of humid heat,
homemade biscuits the same way.
Wrong again,
not enough beer for his friends
because all hers drank shandies
and after two, no more
for a lifetime.
Like beer, like the uprooted garden
from a half-lost afternoon
when he brought home a schoolfriend
whose dog took to the neatly seeded annuals.

Wrong again, he wouldn't fight
because he'd fly off in eleven days,
exhilarate, jet-lift over the cool apartment
fringed with frangipani.
Lazy and rebellious (both, Mother dear?)
he'd done it this time,
brought them home in long hair
after a lapse of years
for salesmen and tellers to catch up.
After insult and nag
after doing things not needing done
blackmail
should have
wrenched a guilty kiss from ingratitude.
But she was wrong again.

ROBERT BOWIE

In These Woods

In these woods I will step, where the amputated
logs are bundled legs of woodland warriors who
couldn't or wouldn't fight,

and soon the smoking train will come snaking,
rattling its tail, and leave its silver trail
to rust in the forest musk.

I will pass by the mustard trees and the sad-
eyed foxes, who fog the unshined bronze leaves
with their hurried breathing.

It is here that I will search for your broken
words, near the peeled birches, which are leaning
waterward, like they're listening for something,

and I will look below the frowning drawbridge,
where blankets warm the winter boats, and the heron
is rendered passive by the arched-back sea grasses.

From these woods I will look out, where the sea
folds. This is a sea of twinkling nightless stars.
This is a sea, where the unheard birds run on the water.

But it is here, in these woods, that I have come to
look for your broken words, and in some inscrutable
way the broken woods will know.

PETER ANDREN

The Season of the Third Last Doll

Chudleigh heaved himself through the wave. A gasp of air before another dumper thumped down. He was flabby and not conditioned to this. Under another one. Panting hard, he swung back to the beach. He was alarmed for a second when his chubby feet couldn't touch bottom, but he found the edge of the sandbar and then threw his body, like a porpoise, through the waist high chop towards shore. The tow caught and dragged him back, until just his sunburnt bald head was visible amongst the white. Chudleigh spluttered. A big wash lifted his swollen form and shovelled it forward and onto the sand. Quickly gathering what little wits he'd not had knocked out, he hauled himself onto jellying legs. Then another panic. Sue. What about Sue? Christ, she'd best not see me in this state. Trunks restored to the equator, Chudleigh broke into a painful staggering trot back towards the towels. The wind had climbed and the beach was now almost deserted.

'That's funny.'

He found his towel, the red and black one. Sue's was there too, the pastel pink one he'd draped across her before he went for a swim. But Sue was gone.

'Sue!'

He looked about.

'Sue!'

Sand peppered his calves and pinking chest. He reached for a T shirt from the beach bag and began to walk towards the rocks. The sun had lost interest and the wind was stronger, while the sandhills they'd crossed to the beach looked green and closed. By now he'd panicked. He called, but no-one seen could hear him. Sue's towel was picked up by a gust and carried down the beach. Chudleigh was still stumbling away in the other direction, onto the rocks. He kept calling.

'Sue!'

* * * *

'Readallaboudit. Readallaboudit. Man strangled to death on Mountain Road. Readallaboudit.'

Paper sellers emerged on every corner of the city to scream the latest headline. The lines of commutors, instinctively snaking off the streets and down the ramps to the subway, either gave the grubby long-haired kids and their banners a frightened glance, or bought a paper, eyed its headline in horror and quickly folded it for reading in the safety of home. A few dared to speak to their companions.

'Another one?'

'Isn't it awful?'

Chudleigh bought a paper on his way down the ramp. He knew what would be in it. Was it thirty-five or forty-five people dead now? All lone drivers, walkers,

travellers or mothers on the way home from dropping the kids at school. In the mountains, on suburban streets. The technique didn't change much. The masked killer (or was it killers?) rammed cars, set up fallen tree roadblocks, hid in the back seats of cars, or sometimes did it easily, by trapping some foolish dawdler in a park. And even the police said they didn't have enough men to catch him, or them. The bodies were found shot, strangled, bashed. Some rumours said a policeman was doing it. But how could one man move from Delta to Blackwood in half an hour, because that's where yesterday's murders occurred, forty minutes apart. Maybe he's next to me on the train. Maybe I won't see daylight at the other end of this tunnel. Chudleigh pretended to adjust the briefcase between his knees, so he could grab a glance at the guy beside him. Silver rimmed glasses, a Falcon pipe and big nose. Bet it's the Jews or the Panthers. He shuddered and the fleshy rolls sweated under his wash-and-wear that he hung in the laundry now at night and not outside.

'This stop at Charlestown?'

He started.

'Scuse me buddy. Does this stop at Charlestown?'

It was him. Chudleigh didn't look. He dived for his briefcase and stumbled past the long nose into the aisle. A fear, of what he wasn't sure, propelled him along the car, past the seats of lowered silent heads. He reached the entry porch of the carriage as the train shuffled and jerked to a halt. The flow took him out of the train, along the platform, and up the station steps. Why the hell had he changed his pattern and caught the train today

It was almost dark when he slammed the door of his flat above the butcher's shop and leant back, heaving his fears in long whingeing gasps, the perspiration cutting tracks through the city grime that clung to his cheeks.

Sausages and eggs settled his immediate fears. The newspaper lay on the card table next to the egg and sauce-stained plate. He flipped over the front page and looked at the page three beach girl. She was wearing a bikini bottom and posing astride a lifesaving reel. The caption read: PAMMY LIKES IT FINE. And below that the weather details blurred into insignificance. An ad in the bottom corner jumped at him.

BE SAFE WHILE YOU DRIVE.

Chudleigh looked more closely.

LIFESIZE PLASTIC DUMMIES. WE CHALLENGE ANYONE TO FAULT THEIR GENUINE APPEARANCE. PLASTIC COMPANIONS. ANY SIZE, ANY SEX. WIDE VARIETY OF CLOTHES, WIGS ETC. BUY ONE AS YOUR TRAVELLING COMPANION. LIMITED STOCK.

Chudleigh called the after-hours number.

'Plimsoll's Plastic Partners. Hello?'

'Uh.'

'Hullo?'

'Yes ... er ... are you the people advertising the ... the dummies ... the plastic dummies?'

'Yes sir. There's not too many left though. What sex, age and size were you interested in?'

'Uh?'

'Yes sir?'

He hadn't even considered this. What the hell could he say?

'Have you any girls left?'

'Yes ... a few. Ten to sixteen year olds. Fat, thin; no tall ones left but three sixteen year olds at five feet three. Did you want her younger?'

'No ... sixteen would be fine. Are they ... are they ...'

'Attractive? Why sure. In fact, let me have your address sir, and we'll arrange for our van to come around in the morning.'

'No.'

'What was that sir?'

'No. I'm sorry . . . I mean . . . I'll come and see you tomorrow. You must understand. I'm going on a business trip into the country . . . and you know . . . with all these killings . . . I . . .'

'I know exactly sir. That's what Plimsoll's Plastic Partners is all about. We see this as a community service more than a business.'

'Yes . . . I suppose so.'

Chudleigh brought Sue home next night. She had a name, he didn't have to name her. He was glad of that. A day's sick leave and a quick run in the old Volkswagen out to the factory on the southern side of the city had left him with a choice of the three remaining sixteen year olds. He felt safer already. It was unbelievable. She had sat next to him all the way back from the village . . . that's what Mr Plimsoll called it . . . and she tilted her head just slightly towards the passenger's window. He'd stopped at some pedestrian lights and watched the people in the car next to him. There'd been no shock, no surprise. From five feet, Sue looked very real. Her cheeks were flushed that tiny bit, beautiful dark eyes and long brown hair. Good legs, too, he noticed now. He'd grabbed her once when the car in front braked suddenly. She swung back against the seat, just a little too dummy-like, he thought. Must be careful about that.

* * * *

Along the roads, no-one travelled alone now, although there hadn't been a killing for two weeks. Widows and spinsters had well-dressed male travelling companions, interstate transport drivers were illegally carrying passengers. The killer hadn't yet tried to force a vehicle carrying two people off the road. Why, no-one knew. Psychologists and radio talk-backers, having for months asked why the killer chose single victims when he could just as easily kill a man and his wife, were now asking why the killer didn't realise that thousands of passengers were dummies.

'Because they don't bloody well know who is and who isn't.' Chudleigh had it all worked out. Sue had come through their only real test so far without a hitch. In the National Park, when the ranger had offered the entry ticket to her. Chudleigh recalled how he laughed as he reached across.

'She's daydreaming.'

The guy had smiled, accepted it.

Chudleigh felt his health improving. Sue made sure he ate well these days. And he could talk to her, unlike the crowd he worked with, or the pockfaced old butcher's wife who frowned him upstairs each time he came home with Sue in his arms. He'd always slept alone. Never had he felt another body against his. The scrawny she-kid he'd played stink-finger with by the creek in his high school days was the closest he'd ever come to sex—the real thing—not the pinups behind the flat's toilet door who he'd screwed a thousand times then flushed his frustrations away before cleaning his teeth. But the brief creek affair ended when they were found by her brother that day. She'd hitched up her drawers and kicked him in the balls before screaming rape to her brother. But lucky for Chudleigh, he knew her brother was frigging about with her too, so nothing came of that except a dreadful pain that shot his guts to pieces.

That was twenty years ago, and now he lay with Sue. She never spoke, but listened. He could sense she knew she offered all those things he ever wanted in a woman. Afterwards, he would curl behind her as she slept, and feel the tiny buttocks pressing back against his stomach and thighs. He changed the sheets more

often, not because of marmalade and tea on Sunday mornings now, although they shared this with the papers every day.

They drove out to the country most weekends and she sat beside him near the creeks, in paddocks grazed by sheep who nibbled their way discreetly to within a chain or two.

'You realise Sue, I've found new reason, a chunk of life I never knew was mine. You know how much I hate those whispering desks. They never think like I do, Sue ... or you ... even though you only listen, I can listen to you. You and I are like those sheep and their paddock, their air, their grass. Whatever we feed on, whatever we breathe, is of our own choosing, our spirits are free and no-one else knows what thoughts, what understanding is ours.'

He sobbed that day until Sue gently drew his hand into her lap.

* * * *

Five more died that weekend. Why the killings had begun again, no-one knew. But those who were found bashed to death in their cars, or thrown strangled into grass and ditches by the road, were alone. Five of the very few who still scorned the theories and ventured out alone without their plastic friends. Yet, it had been two months since the last killings. Thousands of dummies had joined the 'motoring public', as the Police Commissioner called them in his now regular Friday night television and radio appeals. The Lone Slayer. The press had tagged him that. Despite the speed of his movements, the police still believed it was one man, and LONE now stood for killer and victim.

Chudleigh deplored the way most owners would leave their partners sitting alone, isolated, in a car, whenever they visited a friend's home, or left their cars anywhere. He knew what loneliness was, or remembered it vaguely before Sue. Always, he would carry her if they left the car. The football match. His big effort to introduce Sue to humanity. She deserved the chance to make up her own mind. She'd noticed first the hundreds ... no thousands ... of partners sitting by themselves in locked cars in the parking lot. How they'd stared, bewildered, as he carried Sue through the auto avenues to the ground.

'We came together, we'll pay together.' The dimwitted turnstile operator had only asked for one dollar. The game had been lousy and his mind haunted by the sad Saturday afternoon faces in the cars outside. However, Sue had appeared to enjoy the game. It surprised him almost, the anger he felt at those people who discarded their passengers to enjoy themselves among the safety of numbers. Wished to hell they'd lose their friends and get run off the road by the Slayer. What links have we with them?

'We'll stick inside the flat, or perhaps drive out to your favourite spot. I'll not go to work again, or take you out, until the money I've saved has gone. How's that Sue?' As always, she accepted his judgement.

They dined at home for weeks and loved away the nights and drove the hills and walked the paddocks of their early days now half a year ago. The only jar in their lives was the rudeness of an unavoidable person here or there, but Chudleigh scorned these dull attempts to crack their shell. Sue, he saw, now developed like the chrysalis of some new person-type of which he was the guardian. Their link was complete and her silence sounded loud the affinity he'd searched for with a soul like his own.

'We would ask anyone travelling by car tomorrow or Sunday to make sure you are all accompanied, whether by a friend or a partner.'

So ended another Friday Police Commissioner's warning. The television was the only penetration of their cocoon. He switched it on and off, a power he had always wished he might have over people, especially at the office. And the Lone Slayer invariably headed the television now, but Chudleigh watched with detachment the

covering of each new corpse. Only those still foolish enough to be out alone seemed to be attacked.

'We'll take a drive tomorrow, Sue. We'll see the beach, my beach, where I often used to go so much alone. Let's get up early to beat the traffic. You'll like the beach.' He grinned at her. She smiled.

'Away up the other end, near the rocks. We won't be seen. There must be hundreds on the sand, and look ... only a few have thought to bring their partners down to share the breeze and sun. Swines.'

They lay on their stomachs, and Chudleigh could feel the warmth, bent now and again by the wind, bouncing from his unbeached back and balding head. Sue's skin was brown, he noticed, a constant brown, and she seemed to almost hover above her new pink towel. He guessed her weight. It must be nothing more than twelve to fifteen pounds. So marvellously light. So wasteful, space-consuming are human bodies, when all that's needed is a form to shape the being and a soul, a spirit, to complete the person.

A seagull squawked and startled him from sleep. Tiny storms of sand were swinging in waves across the beach at the whim of sudden gusts. He brushed some from his forehead and looked about. People were hurrying home.

'I'll have a dip, I think, and then we'll go, my sweet.' He lifted the outside flaps of Sue's towel and folded them about her. Then he plunged off down the beach and hit the surf.

A gust grabbed at the pink towel and tugged it upwards. Another, harsher blow dislodged the dummy from the slight hollow where it lay, and gently rolled it down the beach, away from the rocks. A cloud turned the sand to grey. Full blast, the wind swept under the dummy and it tumbled, head over feet, to the spumes of froth on the tide mark. The wave that threw Chudleigh back on the beach gathered Sue on its backward run and lifted her over the first line of breakers.

* * * *

Chudleigh kept trotting, tripping, when he reached the rocks. He clambered up onto a ledge and bent with his hands on knees, panting frustration at the swell that curved and dipped towards the cliff base. Faces in the cliff watched. He howled, but it was swallowed in the roar of the surf.

'Where are you Sue? Why now ... where have you gone? Who's taken you? They hate me.' He collapsed on the rocks. 'THEY HATE ME.' Crawling, sliding, he got back down from the ledge. An arm of rock reached out and tore at his elbow. He spun around, and whimpered at the blood. Then he staggered forward and clung, limpet-like to a boulder. The fear exploded in his bowels.

He gazed along the rocks towards the point, then dragged his eyes back through the grey, across the surf and empty beach. A brown arm. There among the farthest rolls he saw her tumbling like a high jumper over the crest and down into the trough. Then up again, the arm raised in beckon.

'SUE!'

He scraped his shin and felt the blood sticky his toes as he blundered back across the rocks. The wash hit him at the knees and he fell forward into the surf. Brine choked his reason as he waded into the waves. His arms were puppets' but he threw each one ahead, then back. Beyond the chop, beyond a footing, towards the orange of Sue's swimsuit that bumped forever the same distance away. His anguished gulps for air kept strange rhythm with his awkward forward movement. The water slapped his cheeks and the river rose up past them, up the bank towards the sheep. Then he vaguely felt his legs dragging somewhere beneath him, dragging, till the water scorched his nostrils and he turned his face towards the sky. It wrinkled into water once again. Faces in the cars screamed at the paper on the table. The Police Commissioner watched, grim-faced. A quarter of a mile out, he found her.

A first grab at her leg slipped and she bounced yards ahead once more. He cried out and floundered on till he fell across her legs and wrapped his aching arms around her waist. His head fell on her buttocks and rested, how long he didn't know. Then he slid his arms along her body, turning, until her arms hung across his shoulders. He pulled her reluctant back down till the breasts pushed against his chest. But her legs curved grotesquely up to the surface and trailed behind. His heart hammered out the fears. Gradually, the cushion of the swell soothed his panic and eased them into dusk. His ecstatic relief now drugged him, still clinging to Sue, into sleep.

Hours later, Chudleigh woke as the river crawled back and left him by the stream with the dampness of the soil against his face. The moon flecked the oily surface of the sea and the smooth curve of his sunburnt head. Sue was still in his arms. Heavy, growing thuds of footsteps on the damp sand, and the salty taste in his mouth, aroused him to his whereabouts. He turned his head in time to see the outline of moonlit feet approaching.

* * * *

A sandcrab scuttled down the shore and sheltered from the morning sun beneath the edge of a rock. Wash from the surf hustled the creature farther out of sight into the crevice.

The water was red.

The beach was crowded again and the first rock hoppers of the day were climbing the sandstone ledges. Sue lay on her back while he ran a finger over her brown, flat waist and under the bridge formed by her bikini bottom and hip.

He looked down into her dark eyes. 'You'll like me far better than Chudleigh', he said.

LEE KNOWLES

Greenough

Curious, to say the least,
finding in this unpeopled country
the ruins of a grand, three-storeyed house, a literary institute,
the "Golden Sheaf Hotel".

Once, undoubtedly,
a soldier settlement with convicts.
Over the river, the stone bridge still stands.

A place where history almost happened.
Walters' "Flying Machine" was a day's sensation.
It is still remembered how Walters with his preying-mantis legs
climbed a tall haystack and, standing there with arms outstretched,
embraced a multitude.

Several times his wings flapped—a strange, metallic rooster.
Boys in sailor suits cheered wildly, farmers grunted,
the soldiers by the fence twitched nervously.

The moment came, the whole sky blurred as Walters sprang—
and spinning, tumbling, flapping, shedding screws and bolts
he fell, splintering out along the ground.
He never tried again.

A different century.
Nearby among a tangle of grass, bones and paddy melons
an old sheep displays some passing interest.

And beyond,
the meagre sand-hills hold back the sea.

VIV KITSON

Killer

The rat screamed writhed
                I ground my teeth
and ground the steel shaft
                harder
hard steel rent supple flesh
bone blood life
                contracted muscles
my inculcate its elemental fear
I sweated cursed its slow ebbing life

And would reach out and comfort it

For cornered by the cat, it had stood erect;
fine soft pelt, white tufted chest ...
My admiration for articulate form
for life
        It screamed and choked,
gulping our common air and died.
Shaken
        cursing the cat's incompetence
I flipped the quiet body into the garden.

PETER KAY

Jesus Had Long Hair

I

The King is held in the galleries.

The young man awoke much later than he had intended. For a few moments he lay completely still, with his eyes closed, soused by the waves of heat. Through his eyelids it seemed that the pink blanket that Naomi had placed over the windows glowed.

—Naomi?

He turned violently and pressed his eyelids so tightly together that when he opened them the objects in the room shimmered. He shook his head and opened his eyes wide and gradually everything in the room took on form and stillness. Naomi had left her side of the wardrobe open. In the mirror on his side he saw himself sit up and count her dresses and shoes. Seeing them all there, he scratched his beard in content. Then he fell back on his pillow with his hands under his head.

—Naomi, he mused, Naomi. How beautiful are thy feet with shoes, O prince's daughter! the joints of thy thighs are like jewels, the work of the hands of a cunning workman. Thy navel is like a round goblet, which wanteth not liquor; thy belly is like a heap of wheat set about with lilies. Thy two breasts are like two young roes that are twins. Thy neck is like a tower of ivory; thine eyes like the fishpools in Heshbon, by the gate of Bath-rabbim: thy nose is as the tower of Lebanon which looketh towards Damascus. Thine head upon thee is like Carmel, and the hair of thine head like purple; the King is held in the galleries . . .

Suddenly he stopped musing and leapt out of bed and began to pick at the heap of clothes that lay on the chair. The better to get at his own he tossed Naomi's onto the bed. There remained, in reverse order to that he had placed them in, his underpants, his blue jeans, a tomato red T shirt, a red nylon windjacket and his brilliant red crash helmet.

He put on his underpants quickly, but thereafter he dressed slowly like a man who is trying to remember what he has to do. He stepped into one leg of his jeans and tried to remember; he stepped into the other leg and tried to remember; he pulled up the zipper and sat on the bed, trying to remember. Then, deciding that remembering was beyond him until Naomi came back, he lit a cigarette and lay back on the bed. It was time for thinking: he hadn't had a good think since he had woken up.

I am twenty, he thought; therefore I have lived a lifetime, for I am certain that THEY will have me killed before much longer. (At this point he narrowed his eyes and drew deeply on his cigarette.) My childhood, a tragedy, (puff); adolescence, a melodrama, (puff, puff). At nineteen, I decided to switch to comedy: I left home

because my mother insisted on wearing pearls on her chest on Sundays (puff, puff, puff). Consquently, I came to this humble room for which I pay eight dollars and fifty cents a week. (Here he paused, narrowed his eyes again and drew deeply on his cigarette.) At nineteen years six months, while waiting for my fried saveloys at Andrios' Fresh Sea Foods, I met my Jewess, the prince's daughter, and, within two hours, I discovered that the prince had just died, bequeathing to her a treasure chest of scepticism and a holy attitude to all things that are unholy. Three nights later, the prince's daughter became my princess, (a quick greedy puff), and my mother ... my mother? ... my mother! ... my God! I promised to go and have lunch with her today, Sunday! That's what I was trying to remember!

II

The Princess and the Blind Man

When, in response to his knocking, Naomi had opened the door, the blind man was standing in the hall with his white cane raised. He rented the back room which had formerly been a laundry. As he spoke he shook his cane.

—He promised to read to me, he said testily.

—He's asleep, Naomi said, looking back at Boy in the bed. I'll come.

And that was the circumstance which at mid-day Sunday, led to her going to the blind man's room to read the newspapers to him.

Leaning on one hand, she sat on his bed with her legs and feet tucked up to her body. The blind man, Mr Ferris, sat in an old bridge chair so close by the bed that he had only to put out his hand to touch her arm. Several times during the reading he had done so, but since his touch was light and travelled no further than her elbow, Naomi didn't mind his taking this liberty. However, she reckoned without the tyranny that her subservience evoked in him. This dreadful quality became apparent when she was halfway through the second paper. She had just turned a page when the blind man turned sharply to her.

—You didn't say the page-number, he said.

—Oh. Twenty-one, she said.

—You've skipped a page. The last page was nineteen.

—There's nothing on twenty.

—It's blank? A blank page in a newspaper?

Naomi turned back to the page she had passed over.

—It's a full-page advertisement, she said.

—It's blank? he insisted.

—I'm sorry, she said.

Mr Ferris got up and shook his cane.

—If you don't want to read to me, he said.

Naomi touched his hand.

—Mr Ferris, I like reading to you, she said.

For a moment the blind man trembled.

—I didn't ask you to come, he said weakly.

—I wanted to, she said. Now sit down.

He sat, placing the white cane between his legs, resting his hands on it, and, on his hands, his chin.

—The advertisement? he said.

Naomi looked at the page, wondering how to start.

—The forty cent hipnippers, she read, the new forty cent poly-cotton Bikini Brief by Bonds.

—Hip? Nippers? he said.

—That's right.

—Picture?

—Yes, she said, looking at the half nude model in the forty cent poly-cotton briefs.

Describe, he said.

—A young girl in hipnippers, she said.

—Nothing else?

—She has her arms folded.

—Why? he asked.

—I think she must be cold, Naomi said.

Mr Ferris nodded his head sceptically.

—Next page, he said.

—Twenty-one.

—You said that was twenty-one.

—That was twenty.

—But I heard you, he insisted.

—I skipped a page, she said.

Again he stood and shook his cane. For a few seconds he seemed to be waiting for the touch of her fingers, but this time Naomi wasn't afraid of him, and his desperate need never occurred to her.

—If you don't want to read to me, he croaked.

—Mr Ferris, I like reading to you, she said.

—I didn't ask you to come.

—I wanted to come. Now sit down and I'll explain.

He sat, placing the white cane between his legs, resting his hands on it, and, on his hands, his chin.

Naomi turned back to page nineteen.

—Page nineteen was about drugs in high schools, she said.

—I don't remember, he said.

—But you asked me to read it to you.

For a moment his head and body were all agitation. It was as though he wanted to rise but some invisible force held him down.

—Well, what was twenty? he asked.

—Hipnippers, she said.

He nodded with obtuse dignity. Naomi allowed him a respectful silence.

—Headline? he said presently.

—U.S. Government to stand firm, she read.

—Pass on, he said.

Naomi slyly ran her eyes across to page twenty-two.

—Priest plays cupid, she read triumphantly. Teaches shy farmers how to go courting.

—Read, Mr Ferris said.

—Dublin, Wednesday, she read, stealing a glance at her watch and wondering whether Boy was still in bed.

III

Promises Unkept

He was standing before the mirror, trimming his beard, when Naomi came in. She was dressed in jeans and his orange T shirt. Her feet were bare.

—Pax, she said.

—Shalom, he said, watching her in the mirror as he snip-snipped with the scissors. When she tilted her head back against the door and her dark hair fell back from her face, he stopped snipping.

—Where've you been? he said.

—Reading to Mr Ferris, she said, her voice strangely husky.

—Oh my God! he said, and he stamped his feet and began to pace to and fro. Thinking of Mr Ferris who wore a greasy handkerchief around his neck.

—It's all right, she said.

—All right? he said, still pacing to and fro. Thinking now of his mother with pearls on her chest because it was Sunday.

—You should've woken me, he said.

—You looked tired, she said.

—Tired!

He spoke with an intensity that puzzled her. She went to him. When she was so close to him she had to bend back her head to look at him. When she did so, her hair fell back from her face, and he thought of the moment when she stood at the door.

—My Jewess, he said, putting his arms around her.

—My goy, she said, submitting to the pressure of his arms for just a moment. But when she tried to move out of his embrace, he held her more tightly and eased her onto the bed, and they lay across it facing one another, she completely still, he, writhing for advantage. Only when she felt his fingers tugging at her shirt did she start. Levering herself with the knee that lay under her, she heaved herself forward, at the same time digging her nails into his diligent wrist. Playfully he let out a moan and rolled onto his back, and she, immediately seeing her advantage, lifted her leg over his stomach and straddled him. Taking his arms, she stretched them out so that he was like a cross, and she leaned forward and brought her face down to his.

—The triumph of Israel, she said.

For a moment he was held by the glow of her eyes. Then he thought of his mother with pearls on her chest and of the blind man who wore a greasy handkerchief around his neck.

—I will atone, he said.

As he did so he brought his knee up against her bottom and gently sent her sprawling over him.

IV

That Which Was Lost

In Elizabeth Street, on his gleaming red Suzuki, with matching red helmet and red wind-jacket, he was a flame of atonement. On the bridge, with the police patrol-car behind him, he rode straight-backed, a candle-flame of rectitude. At Longueville, where his mother lived, he was a red comet portending disaster.

Outside his mother's house he did a couple of circuits before gliding into the kerb and coming to rest in the shade of an oleander. The triple-fronted duplex was fast asleep. Its blinds were drawn, its lawns trim and newly mown, its poplars just breathing audibly in the breeze. Walking up the drive to the back of the house, he was conscious of the honey-coloured bricks and freshly painted timber exuding the fragrance of newness.

The back door was locked, but he still had his key. Taking off his helmet, he stepped into the kitchen.

—Mother? he called, pausing to listen for a reply, but there was none.

He walked into the hall to the foot of the stairs and called to every room in the house,—Are you there, Mother?

He was listening for a reply when through the doorway to the dining-room he noticed that the far end of the table was set. Feeling hungry, he walked to that end of the table. Before him was crockery and cutlery but there was no food. He was about to go away when he saw the letter on the dinner-plate. Drawing out a chair, he sat down and looked at in a general kind of way; that is, he looked, at the first

page without for the moment trying to read it. It was his mother's hand. The characters were large, rounded, sprawling. On most lines there were only three words. Looking at the page, he thought: this is a letter written by a woman who wears pearls on her chest on Sunday. He began to read:

> Dear Boy,
>
> Since you rang me an important luncheon popped up, and I knew you would not want me to miss it. If I had known where you were conducting your experiment in community living I would have sent you a telegram.
>
> Today, I mainly wanted to see you about your experiment. Really, dear Boy, aren't we a community? Don't you think it is time you came back and did some community living with us? Your father and I have worked hard to provide this beautiful home for you. There is not much consolation in it for us if you are going to go on experimenting in the slums.
>
> I saw you in the city the other day. When I saw your shoulder-length hair, I found myself asking, Is that my Boy? Must he wear that terrible red helmet and jacket everywhere he goes? If I had known that he would wear them so constantly, I would never have given him the Suzuki.
>
> Mother.

On completing his first reading of the letter, he went to the refrigerator and got some food. While he ate, he read the letter three times. Each time that he did so he composed in his mind a lengthy reply in which in different ways, he reproved his mother for not keeping her appointment with him, he explained to her that in his mode of life he had passed beyond mere experimentation, he defended his long hair, red helmet, red jacket, and reminded her that with due respect to the Suzuki, he still had two legs. However, when he came to write his reply he simply scrawled across his mother's writing, JESUS HAD LONG HAIR.

When he had finished writing, he turned to the pantry and took from it a loaf of bread and a bottle of red wine. He placed these in a red string bag that he found behind the door.

Walking down the drive he thought: When I was a man, I spoke like a man, I thought like a man. Now I am a child I have put away mannish things. Despite the excellence of this thought he was not prepared for the shock that awaited him out in the street: the Suzuki was gone. For some time he stared down at the place it had occupied. Then he looked up and down the street, thinking that some practical joker might have removed it. He decided to investigate this possibility. He walked along each side of the street, peering behind hedges, fences, and trees. In the last house in the street, the owner came out and demanded to know what he was doing on his property.

—I'm looking for my Suzuki.

—You can see that I haven't got your Suzuki, whatever that is, the man said.

Boy thought that he was a very ignorant man. He turned to a woman, possibly the man's wife—you never knew in that street—who had stepped out from behind some shrubs.

—Have you seen my Suzuki? It's red.

—Soozooki? the woman said.

—Suzuki, Boy said.

—I do not know Soozooki, she said. Is it a dog?

Boy turned away and walked back to the footpath. He decided that he had had enough of that street, that he would shake off the dust of that street forever. The bus stop was only a mile away and, while he had not walked that distance since his mother had given him the Suzuki, he thought that it would not be beyond the capability of his legs to cover it.

V

Agape!

Sunday was dying. From the railway station people were fleeing to their homes, their faces a raw pink, their eyes bloodshot, their voices hoarse, their sparse and flimsy clothes crushed. Sunday was dying.

Under his shining red helmet, in his red nylon windjacket and blue jeans, with the red string bag in his hand, Boy walked a mile from the railway station to the street where he lived. As he walked he kept looking at the sky and thinking: sunset in the slums is uniquely beautiful, for against the brown and grey walls of the houses, against the slate roofs, against the telegraph poles and wires, against the "Take Vincents" and "Drink Coke" advertisements, the gold and rose of the clouds and the blue of the sky are like the opalescent eye of God.

But Sunday was dying. In his own street people came out to watch it die, to smell the bituminous air, to see how others had endured the heat of the day. Little boys with dark hair and olive skin, dressed in singlets and shorts, dashed at one another with demoniacal energy. Fathers, sleek-headed, greying, bald, sat on front steps, breathing. Aproned mothers, with hair gleaming like hot tar, sat on little verandahs, breathing. Boy, under his shining red helmet, in his red nylon windjacket and blue jeans, with the red string bag in his hand, walked past the houses, breathing. As he passed each house, he turned his head to each of the men sitting on the steps, saying respectively:

—Good evening, Mr Karanikalas.
—Good evening, Mr Papadopoulos.
—Good evening, Mr Gasparinatos.
—Good evening, Mr Samios.
—Good evening, Mr Evangelos.
—Good evening, Mr Smith.

He lived in the eighth of the terrace houses. At his gate he stopped and looked back at the witnesses of his return home. He looked particularly at his neighbour, Mr Smith, whose serene white hair belied the cancer which was gnawing at his lungs. When the old man turned his sad eyes to him, Boy looked away to the sky as though seeking a sign in its depths. He thought: that cloud is like the white horse of Revelations. But deep within him he knew that the thought was a lie.

In their room Naomi sat on the bed combing her long hair. She made a part in the centre of her head and gathered the hair in two strands, each of which she tied with a ribbon and let dangle on her breasts. She had changed into a white smock but had left her feet bare. When she had finished combing her hair, she moved across the room and stood on the chair and took down the old pink blanket from the window. Then she sat down and looked at the sky and began to sing Shalom Chaverim.

Coming down the hall, Boy heard Naomi's singing.

—Pax, he said, entering the room.

—Shalom chaverim, she said, turning her face to him without rising from the chair. Her dark eyes followed him over to the bed where, like a priest unvesting, he removed the shining red helmet and the red nylon windjacket.

—It's late, she said.

For a moment he fiddled with his hands, then he looked across at her with comfortless eyes.

—I went to see my mother.

He heard her murmur as she turned back to the window. It was so much easier to talk to her when she wasn't looking at him.

—I promised her, he said defensively. I promised her I'd have lunch with her today. It was a promise. When you mentioned Mr Ferris, I remembered.

—She wants you to go home? she said.

—Of course, he said, leaping forward and throwing his hands about. She wants me to go home. She wants me to have my hair cut. She wants me to stop wearing my red helmet and my red jacket. She wants me to ... to stop ... breathing!

Just then he caught Naomi looking up at him, her eyes brilliant, her face dusky with the dark hair framing it.

—And what did you say? she said coolly.

—Say! he said, looking up at the ceiling, his eyes and mouth moving.

—I said, Jesus had long hair.

—So, she said, with an indifference that infuriated him. Suddenly he rushed at her and thrust his bearded face down at her.

—And when I came out, you know what had happened? Someone had taken my Suzuki.

He looked so comical she started to laugh, and he felt that he had to turn away and rage at the walls of the room.

—It was probably her, he said bitterly. I mean what's the use of red helmet and a red jacket if you haven't got a red Suzuki. People ... people'll think I'm mad.

When she said nothing, he sat on the floor with his feet crossed. Naomi turned back to the window and watched the last light leave the sky. When it had completely gone, she rose and lit a candle and placed it on the floor by him.

—Shall we eat now? she said.

He nodded and reached up to the bed for the string bag.

—She gave me these, he said, taking out the loaf of bread and the bottle of wine.

Naomi fetched glasses and a bottle-opener and brought them to him. He opened the bottle of wine and filled the glasses. Then he took the bread and broke it and passed a piece to her. As she raised the bread to her mouth, she looked across the candle-flame to him.

—Are you going to say the words? she said.

He shook his head.

—Shall I say them for you?

For what seemed a long time he stared at the candle-flame. Then he turned to her.

—We'll not have the words ever again, he said.

To prevent himself speaking further he put the piece of bread in his mouth. Then he passed Naomi a glass of wine and took up his own. While he chewed the bread he looked down at the wine gleaming darkly and he thought what a miserable afternoon he had had. He had woken up so happy that he could scarcely believe that his mind now was in such gloom. If only Naomi hadn't told him about reading to the blind man; if only he hadn't made his promise to him; if only he could obliterate ...

—Mr Ferris! he said suddenly, leaping up and going to the door.

Naomi looked at him, mystified by the glow in his eyes.

—Where are you going now? she asked.

—I'm going to invite Mr Ferris to ... to supper, he said.

REVIEWS

INNOCENCE AND EXPERIENCE IN THE DESIGN OF VINCENT ERI'S "THE CROCODILE"

Vincent Eri's novel of Papuan life in the nineteen-thirties and-forties has received respectful treatment at the hands of reviewers in Papua New Guinea and in Australia. While admitting "technical blemishes", most critics have given credit where it is due by pointing to the novel's imaginative strength and praising Eri's sensitive portrayal of the main character, Hoiri.

The criticism of technical faults has been mainly directed at the handling of the time sequence in the novel's early chapters and at the shallow characterisation of Australian kiaps and ANGAU officers in the later chapters. These criticisms have been ably answered by James Griffin. He noted that the fluid time shifts "enable us better to merge into Hoiri's immediate feelings", and he suggested that the Australians appear as caricatures because "this is the way in which the uncomprehending Hoiri sees them".[1] Reviewers' concern with "technical blemishes" has taken into account only superficial aspects of the story. Deeper within the fabric of the novel Eri's technical achievements are far more worthy of critical attention.

The Crocodile has a two-part structure based on the innocence and experience phases of Hoiri's development. The two parts are unified by the existence of recurring themes, situations and images. The recurring devices weld the novel together by signalling the progressive stages in Hoiri's development and by acting as reference points for the reader to make comparisons between these stages. In this way Eri gives his novel a flowing rhythm meaningfully stressed throughout.

In the story Hoiri is trapped mentally, and at times physically, between the conflicting forces of the old and new ways of life. In the old way individual fulfilment is gained through interpersonal relationships; in the new way individual fulfilment is measured by material gain. To dramatize the conflict between these two ideals Eri splits the novel into halves.

The first four chapters are devoted to Hoiri's village boyhood and his trip to Port Moresby on the Hiri trading voyage. The purpose behind the vignettes of village life is always to emphasise the human contact and the fulness of interpersonal involvement. The institution of the Hiri voyage is itself a monument to the Papuan cultivation of friendship satisfactions. The trading partners are trusted implicitly and trading transactions are completed within an atmosphere of generosity and conviviality. The climax of the first half of the novel is Hoiri's wedding, this too carried out with the traditional attention to interpersonal exchange extending far beyond the immediate families involved.

While interpersonal relationships are celebrated in the first four chapters, Hoiri's consciousness of the new way of individual fulfilment is awakened and gains momentum. He strives to learn the white man's language because through this he thinks he will find access to the secret of material wealth. Hoiri's cargo-cult belief in the "land of plenty" (p. 14),[2] from which the Europeans have come, is not at all shaken by his unfortunate experiences in Port Moresby. He comes back from the white man's town with the firm conviction that he is "one of the few to whom truth had revealed itself" (p. 46).

The first half of the novel traces Hoiri's period of innocence. His dream of material fulfilment is nurtured in the security of the village where his imagination turns the "bamboo headrest" into a "kapok-filled pillow" (p. 15). The mysterious new world of the white man is Hoiri's ideal world, but his transition from boyhood to manhood brings him into contact with the ugly realities of this "ideal" world. Manhood brings strength, and strength brings con-

[1] James Griffin, "Two Novels from Niugini", in *Meanjin Quarterly*, Vol. 30, No. 4 (December 1971), p. 475.

[2] Vincent Eri, *The Crocodile* (Queensland, 1970).

scription into the white man's service. From Chapter Five onwards Hoiri is subjected to the relentless onslaughts of the new way against the old, yet through his intrinsic innocence he persists in hanging onto the shreds of his original vision in spite of constant cause for disillusionment.

The first test of Hoiri's manhood (this is the way he interprets it) is the paddling of the pig-headed young patrol officer, Mr Smith, up the Taure River. Smith's atrocious lack of concern for the well-being of the men prompts Hoiri's realization that "if people had any feelings at all, it was his people and not the pale-eyed people the patrol officer represented" (p. 72). As the second half of the novel progresses Hoiri is presented with more and more examples of the inhumane treachery in the white man's world. The arrogance and atrocities of the ANGAU officers, the taunting by the district officer, the horrors of war, and the testimony of Sergeant Latu who has served the white man for many years and has seen through the materal status vied for in the new way of life —all these serve to prompt Hoiri's awareness of the freedom he enjoyed in the village life. Yet his war experiences also present him with the examples of the Australian, American and Negro soldiers, whose generosity and friendship fan up the dying embers of the ideal vision in Hoiri's mind.

In the second half of the novel Hoiri is, in fact, a victim of the worst aspects of both the old and the new societies. He experiences the material ideal gone bad in the bombs and gun-fire of warfare, and he suffers the misfortune of being involved in a sorcery payback, the out-come of the personal relationships ideal gone bad. With the loss of his wife, Hoiri's attempt at achieving fulfilment in the traditional way is turned sour. The second half of the novel traces Hoiri's period of tragic experience. He is forced towards disillusionment with both ways of life.

The dream of the first four chapters becomes the nightmare of the last four. Hoiri is robbed of fulfilment in both worlds. As a final act of desperation he passes the shreds of the dream on to his son: "'Maybe this money will send Sevese to the white man's school, maybe he will grow up to understand the things that baffle me'" (p. 178). Hoiri never faces the reality of the new way of life. As he is led off in the white man's handcuffs he bequeaths all the same problems to the next generation, and he does this in spite of his final realization of "all the wasted years ... carrying the white man's cargo" (p. 178).

The two ways of life are mutually destructive. Both have let Hoiri down because they existed side by side. The influence of the missionaries prevented him from fighting sorcery with sorcery, and his own natural instinct for generosity and goodness disqualified him from success in the cut-throat material world. Each way of life on its own may be sufficient, but they don't work together. Hoiri is the representative Papuan crushed in the culture clash. Perhaps the most tellingly tragic moment in the book is where Hoiri signs the papers for the district officer in Kerema. His small amount of education was always the one key Hoiri felt he possessed to open the door into the new way of life. He suffers extreme humiliation for his pretentious attempt to seek equality with the white man:

> Hoiri took the papers away and, in his best hand, printed his name in the positions indicated. He walked back with a light heart, feeling confident that the district officer would take note of the neat handwriting and know that the man he was dealing with had been to school. The cold pupils of the white man's eyes met Hoiri's as he received the papers. Hoiri stood back and watched the district officer's lips playing with one another. Then the muscles in them tightened. The man lifted his eyes and stared at him. The pupils in his eyes had increased enormously in size, with incredible speed.
>
> "You silly ass! Haven't you ever signed your name for anything. Take them back and write your name. *Write!* Not print. Do you hear?" (pp. 175-6).

The novel's basic design rests on Hoiri's progression out of the world of innocence and into the world of experience. The significant event separating these two phases is Hoiri's first sexual experience, during which he "sloughed off his old skin" (p. 56)—the protective skin of childhood innocence which comes to symbolize the lost world of the unviolated traditional village life. Consolidating the novel's unity are various devices repeated throughout Hoiri's tragic development. The first of these is the journey, commonly recognised as an allegory for the individual's pursuit of his ideal. Hoiri undertakes four journeys—one in the first half of the novel and three in the second half.

The first voyage is the trading voyage to Port Moresby. In it Hoiri consciously sets out to learn about the glamorous new world of the white man. His taste of Western life leaves him somewhat baffled but nonetheless eager to work towards a permanent understanding of and involvement in this "ideal" way of life. Hoiri quickly forgets his near-destruction in the disastrous *lakatoi* capsize which ends the home voyage: his excitement for the seductions of the new world allow him to ignore this certain sign of future misfortune.

On his second journey—up the river with Mr Smith's patrol—Hoiri reaches a point just below the great set of rapids. Above these rapids, according to his society's beliefs, there existed a land of ideal beauty, a remnant of the Garden of Eden. Traditional belief does not permit him to view this land, but even if he had wanted to, he is denied any opportunity of investigating the ideal world of his forefathers. His journey is cut short at this point. He is forced to return home by the disastrous news of his wife's disappearance.

Hoiri's third journey is another canoe trip which ends in disillusionment. On the supposition that he is going to pick up the spirits of some dead Papuan people at Bulldog—an old gold-mining area precious in his father's memory—Hoiri sets out happily on this voyage. After a week's paddling he finds that the people to be rescued are not spiritual beings but a large group of sickly white men escaping from the Japanese occupation of Lae. And after another week's paddling on the return trip Hoiri finds that he, along with the other paddlers, is only better off by a few sticks of tobacco.

Hoiri's fourth journey is the longest and most disruptive of all. Pressed into carrying cargo for the white man's war effort, he spends three years in trudging across the Owen Stanley Ranges and in waiting at Lae to board a ship for the return trip. His sole motivation during this period involves his small son's future with the money that he earns from selling carvings to the soldiers. To Hoiri's dismay this money is taken from him by the ANGAU officers, and he is repayed for his three years' service with only a fraction of the sum he gained from his honest labour. He returns to his village with nothing but a strong sense of the freedom offered by the old way of life.

Each of Hoiri's journeys brings him into contact with the white man's world, and each successive contact strips away more of his freedom, dignity, ambition and love for life. Each of Hoiri's journeys is circular in nature. He always ends up back at home; he never actually gets anywhere. Finally Hoiri is a man whose experiences have given him much to ponder on, but nothing he can call significant gain.

Both geographically and mentally Hoiri travels in circles, and the circle image reappears in the novel to illustrate his trappedness and his lack of achievement. The very first description in the novel is of the five-foot bamboo fence encircling the village. This fence "had been erected on the orders of the Government officers" (p. 1) to keep the pigs—traditional signs of wealth—out of the village. From the very beginning Hoiri's efforts to achieve wealth and happiness are circumscribed by the restrictions the white man's world places on the old world. Hoiri cannot break through these limitations. He is punished for reaching across the boundary between the old and new ways of life. Like all the other Papuans of his generation he is just one of the "spokes in the big wheel of events" (p. 151) that has dislodged them from the security of the old way of life but has not allowed them an alternative satisfaction. Hoiri is exploited by the whites but never afforded membership of their society. In addition to this, the circle of his traditional life has spun him off and left him stranded: the moral satisfaction attained by continuing the payback cycle is denied him because of his links with the introduced religion.

As the wheel of his personal experiences revolves, Hoiri meets and remeets situations of despair. The novel begins with his mother's death—caused by sorcerers. Half way through the novel his wife is taken from him by similar methods. On his first contact with Western culture he is arrested in Port Moresby for not obeying a curfew restriction. On his last involvement with the new world in the novel he is once again deprived of his liberty. In his final speech he resigns himself to the strictures of his fate, but hopes that his son will be able to break out of the cycle of events that has effectively limited his own ambition and happiness.

Returning to the reviewers' criticisms, mentioned earlier, it can be pointed out that Eri's treatment of time and character is part of the

general innocence/experience pattern. In the old way of life, where living is a casual, season-to-season continuum, time divisions are not important. Village life, in most respects, is a timeless existence, and this is a quality emphasised by the first half of Eri's book. On the other hand, once Hoiri enters the modern world in earnest, time divisions become very important. During the second half of the novel the reader is kept well-informed about how many weeks and years are taken up by Hoiri's activities. After the timelessness of his innocent phase, Hoiri becomes entrapped in the mechanical divisions imposed on existence by the mortality-conscious world of experience.

Through characterisation Eri emphasises Hoiri's changing social context—from social unity in the novel's first half to social fragmentation in the later half. During his period of innocence Hoiri enjoys a deep, understanding relationship with the characters around him because of the harmony between individuals in the village society. This harmony facilitates the constant flow of sympathies from individual to individual, and as a result, Eri's characterisation of the village people is deep and detailed, and sensitively drawn out. As Hoiri becomes more familiar with the new way of life, these basic human links are shown to be less and less able to survive in the world of experience where people are essentially isolated one from the other and society is a mass of fragments rather than a close-knit co-operative whole. Thus the modern world representatives, the whites, are characterised in a shallow way, each presenting to society only a mask which acts as a barrier against meaningful individual interrelationships. Commensurate with Hoiri's progress through the worlds of innocence and experience, Eri's treatment of time and character moves from the depiction of fluidity and harmony to that of division and fragmentation.

Finally, in the innocence/experience structure of the novel can be seen a model for understanding the plight of Hoiri's Papuan generation. The traditional way of life represents the innocent period of modern man's development. The growth of civilisation and materialism brought man, over a long period of time, into the world of experience. Hoiri and his fellows have been forced to make this dreadful crossing in the space of one generation. All the problems of reorientation are heaped on Hoiri's shoulders. It is hardly surprising that he fails to cope. Something is always lost in the transition from innocence to experience, and in the modernisation of the Papuan race it was Hoiri's generation which was sacrificed.

NIGEL KRAUTH

I. V. Hansen, *Nor Free Nor Secular; Six Independent Schools in Victoria: a first sample.* Melbourne, Oxford University Press, 1971. xii, 323p. $12.50.

The dustjacket describes this book as "the first detailed study of Australian independent schools", and says that Dr Hansen examines in depth the six most important boys' schools in Victoria. There is an attempt to set them in context by comparisons with English independent schools and other Australian schools.

It should be said at the outset that the book is aimed at those who value the Australian independent schools. While it occasionally echoes the criticisms of others, it makes few adverse comments of its own. I do not see this as a defect, for even a scholarly book needs a viewpoint and a set of values. Dr Hansen's values are not dissimilar from those of the headmasters of the schools which he describes. He can understand their aims and sympathise with their problems and failures. Dr Hansen makes no secret of his attitude: in the foreword he writes, "I am personally sympathetic towards independent schools, for they have given to me some of the most rewarding and delightful years in my teaching life."

Although those who have a close personal knowledge of one or more of the schools in the survey may detect errors, the book has a general air of authenticity. As one unfamiliar with the schools, I am prepared to believe that this is a true picture of independent boys' schools in Victoria. Dr Hansen has had very close contact with the schools, and has been at some pains to collect detailed data about them. Fortunately he does not swamp his narrative with minor facts, a tendency which can be detected in most histories of independent schools. He looks for similarities and differences among the schools, and seeks trends in their development.

This could have been a very dull book. It is rescued from that fate by the deft handling of

the factual data, and by the occasional humour which enlivens the narrative. The quotation from T. C. Worsley on page 147 is worth a dozen pages of comments on religion in the schools:

> "To regard religion as the most important thing in these schools, as many ... say they do, is like regarding the lion as the most important thing in the back garden. Perhaps it would be, if it were there."

Anyone who sets out to write about a group of schools should decide whether he is primarily interested in aggregated data and common features or in individual analysis of the schools. One suspects that Dr Hansen is not quite sure which he is emphasising, and sometimes seems to be trying to ride two horses at once. It is to his credit that he does not more often fall between them. Perhaps the Melbourne reader who knows the schools would find a generalised comment on the group rather remote and academic. But the ordinary reader in other States or other countries must often feel that a competent observer such as Dr Hansen has wasted his time on details when he should have been drawing conclusions about selective schools in any modern city in Australia or England.

How does one evaluate the work of six schools over a period of one hundred years? If a set of values can be agreed upon, how does one measure the achievement of the schools against them? To do so for this generation is difficult enough, but on scattered records and hazy memories of the past, the task seems impossible. Dr Hansen chooses a "scatter-shot" approach, hoping that he would hit the target with some of his shots. He uses stories of past headmasters and former students, he provides statistics of past and present enrolments, he outlines academic and sporting achievements, he questions Sixth Form boys and tries to select representatives of various social classes and attitudes, and he follows up the careers of many who have attended the schools. The result is a fascinating collection of data, competently organized and with pertinent comment from the author.

Dr Hansen does not dwell unduly on the history of the schools: his "Historical Perspective" occupies only about one-sixth of the book. Some of the history is tedious detail about financial problems in one school or the tuckshop in another, but there are some fascinating glimpses of the pioneers of the independent school movement in Australia, and their vision of what the schools should be and do. In 1903, for example, the Headmaster of Geelong Grammar School anticipated the current criticism of the emphasis which the schools place on sport:

> "It is not often that I allude in public to the achievements of the school because I think the spirit of athleticism requires rather to be restrained than stimulated in this country."

An early Principal of Scotch College, Melbourne, was described by an ex-pupil as follows:

> "Five days a week, forty weeks in the year, he stood in the pulpit wringing his hands, shouting at God (and at us) and calling on him to help us all to be better schoolboys, which meant for him, and he told us so, working harder for examinations, playing harder to beat Grammar in the football match, studying harder to be better men.... He believed in hell-fire and damnation rather than the possibility of salvation and was determined to make us believe in them too."

Perhaps the most significant comment, however, is from another ex-pupil of Scotch College who wrote:

> "There were six 'Great Public Schools' as they were pompously called, in the State of Victoria. All the others were looked down upon by us, either because they were grammar schools or because they were State Schools.... To us it was less a school than an institution, a belief, a state of mind (or, if you like, of grace) into which you were born and to which you could not and perhaps did not wish to aspire."

The extent to which the schools are socially divisive is examined in some detail. "Headmasters and staff alike", says Dr Hansen, "claim that schools are not socially divisive and tend to quote individual cases of boys who come from less privileged backgrounds.... While these schools may not as such create social or class distinctions, that they perpetuate social distinctions is difficult to refute. Most educational institutions tend to perpetuate social distinctions anyway." The case of a country high school which was shown to strengthen the "subtle but real social distinctions of the district" is mentioned.

This discussion is fruitless for two reasons. First, it is obvious that the independent schools cater for a favoured socio-economic group, even if it is not the small wealthy group which many people imagine. Secondly, a book of this kind is not the place to embark upon an attempt to rate occupations by social standing or acceptance. The various scales advanced (including one invented by Dr Hansen himself) are confusing and unsatisfactory. To apply these manifestly unreliable criteria degrades schools which have no need to rely upon real or imaginary social standing in defending their contribution to Australian education.

One might claim that there is too much of everything in this book. It almost seems that the author has been driven to desperation in his search for the best evaluation approach, and has carried the reader with him through all his struggles. Personally, I would have preferred Dr Hansen to struggle less, and to write the kind of book which he is obviously well-equipped to write: a thoughtful, reflective book about his impressions of the schools and his judgment of how they measure up to his criteria for a good independent school. Perhaps he will turn to this kind of writing now that he has collected and published his wealth of empirical data.

But this is carping at a fine book and one which will give pleasure and interest to anyone who is in any way involved with independent schools in Australia. The educational literature of Australia (happily now expanding) will be richer for the publication of I. V. Hansen's *Nor Free Nor Secular.*

ROY ADAM

F. K. Crowley, *Forrest 1847-1918. Volume One 1847-91 Apprenticeship to Premiership.* University of Queensland Press, 1971. 323 pp. $12.50.

For most of his lifetime John Forrest's name was a household word throughout Western Australia and even today, more than fifty years after his death, he would probably top the poll if a sample of Western Australians were asked to nominate their state's most distinguished son. As the first native-born 'sandgroper' to make his mark nationally as well as on the local scene, Forrest has come to occupy a position in the history and mythology of Western Australia analogous to that of William Wentworth of New South Wales or Alfred Deakin of Victoria. It is curious therefore that Forrest has waited so long to find his biographer and ironic that that biographer should be a 't'othersider'; and the irony is deepened by the fact that Deakin's biographers to date have been Walter Murdoch, who spent most of his life on the staff of the University of Western Australia, and John La Nauze, one of its graduates. However, Frank Crowley is no ordinary 't'othersider'. Like the gold-rush immigrants of the 1890's who within a generation had virtually taken charge of Western Australia, to the dismay of the local establishment, Crowley wrought a revolution in the study of Western Australian history during his lively twelve-year stay in the State. So it is perhaps appropriate after all that his pioneering efforts in developing the historiography of Australia's western third should be capped by this particular biography.

The present volume deals with the first forty-five years of Forrest's life and spans the history of the struggling young colony of Western Australia from just before the first convicts arrived to just after responsible self-government was granted. Forrest rose in the world in step with the colony and this book is fundamentally a study of his progress up the ladder to social and political eminence. We must wait for Volume Two to see what Forrest did during his twenty-five years of power in colonial and federal politics, and what twenty-five years of power did to him.

Born at Picton, near Bunbury, in 1847, John Forrest was the fourth of ten children of an inconspicuous flour miller and his wife who had migrated from Scotland a few years earlier. After a surprisingly good education, Forrest served an apprenticeship in surveying. His leadership of two successful expeditions across Australia's 'dead heart' in the early 1870's won him nationwide fame as an explorer, and this together with his high professional competence won him the post of Surveyor-General and a seat in the Executive Council in 1883. From this point onwards he became steadily more interested in politics and had little difficulty in securing the premiership when responsible government came in 1890.

It would be easy to attribute this meteoric rise to luck, as some envious contemporaries did, and certainly Forrest had his share, but Crowley seems to me to hit the nail on the head with his throw-away remark on page 234, 'he had risen by boot-straps, marriage, and imperial patronage'. Forrest was an expert trigonometrical surveyor, an accomplished bushman, and a good leader of men. These qualities were at a premium in an agricultural and pastoral colony with vast land resources waiting to be exploited, and he thoroughly earned his appointment in 1876 as Deputy Surveyor-General at the age of twenty-eight. Later, as premier, Forrest put himself into an unshakeable position through decisive leadership, painstaking administration, and an ability to command the loyalty of his followers. But it is open to question whether he could have made the decisive transition from civil service to politics by 'boot-straps' alone. His marriage to Margaret Hamersley in 1876 brought him not only an alliance with one of the colony's most influential families, but the day-to-day support of a remarkable woman. Almost equally valuable was the support of Sir William Robinson, who used his gubernatorial influence to block a move to abolish Forrest's post of Deputy Surveyor-General in 1879, recommended his promotion to the Surveyor-Generalship in 1883, and sent for him to form the first cabinet in 1890. Without wishing to denigrate Forrest's formidable abilities I cannot help wondering whether it is significant that in federal politics, where his wife's connections cut little ice and imperial patronage was no longer a relevant factor, Forrest was never quite able to duplicate his Western Australian success.

Like his subject, Crowley is a hard worker, and *Forrest* is clearly based on many years of meticulous research. It is likely to stand for several generations at least as a definitive biography and though it has a few of the vices of such works—the narrative moves rather slowly and the prose is a trifle flat—it also has most of the virtues. Crowley writes with authority on the techniques of surveying and exploring and skilfully depicts the changing fabric of colonial society, without ever diverting attention away from Forrest. Above all he gives one the feeling, as a good biographer should, that he knows his man better even than the subject's wife or family did. Forrest emerges as a bluff, kindly, straightforward man, who made the most of his opportunities and enjoyed life to the full. 'Big' in every sense of the word, his ambition and determination were matched by his energy. From this account, the 1880s seems to have been a crucial period in his life, and it is fascinating to see how his horizons widened, his ambitions grew, and his self-confidence developed almost to the point of arrogance, during his seven years in the 'bear garden' of the old Legislative Council. Since his youth Forrest had known that as a practical bushman he had few equals; now he weighed the colony's leaders against himself, and found them wanting. From that point onwards, there was no holding him.

B. K. DE GARIS

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