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1978

Tension on the Reel

An inside look at the dynamics of film-making in Australia

PROLOGUE

In 1970 the Producers and Directors Guild of Victoria staged a media workshop and ran a competition, which drew over ninety entries, for a one-act play.

Of these plays, six were chosen for production — each as a film, a TV screenplay and a stage play. The object was to illustrate to writers the different treatments that the same theme requires when the medium is varied.

Following this, in 1971-1972 the Guild moved to involve leading Australian writers in film-making, and invited Thomas Keneally, Hal Porter, Craig McGregor and David Williamson to submit script-ideas. This was the basis of the four-part film "Libido", produced in 1973, which was the first film to explore complex Australian themes.

In presenting here the story of one of the segments of "Libido", that produced by Tim Burstall, Overland (we believe) presents for the first time anywhere a close and honest look at the problem of writer *versus* director and of fiction *versus* film. These are themes of great interest and importance, not only to those who wish to understand the creative tensions behind the screen, but to those who wish to see an effective writer/director relationship develop in Australia.

Jill Forester, John Williams, Don Featherstone (Production Manager), Robin Copping (Director of Photography), Dan Burstall (camera operator), Tim Burstall (Director)

HAL PORTER

The Jetty

The original story-outline

Martin is ten years old but his eyes, so stilled, so dark, so impenetrable, are as ageless as those of the enigmatic and impassive inhabitants of a Giorgione painting. Their regard leaves one at a loss. It could be an arraignment or, more deadly, a warning of annihilation. The 1912 world it appears to focus on could be being seen as not what it is. For instance, when he stands absolutely immobile at the end of the jetty, seeming to do no more than watch the brassy plaque of the sun slide down behind the horizon, what does he really see? What does he hear?

Behind him a distraught yet sumptuous garden cascades down from his mother's bayside house, and at sunset the suburban birds behave deliriously there, calling and counter-calling from its depths. Is it possible that Martin, transfixed in silhouette against the improbable sky, hears instead of bird-calls the thin squeals of the drowning, tattered cries for help (his father's voice among them: "Martin! Martin, my son"), and the faint and fractured sounds of a ship's orchestra playing "Nearer, my God, to thee"? Does he see a *Titanic* upended, about to plunge from view, or his father's hand clawing up above the brazen ripples of the bay? Who knows! His profile betrays nothing: his eyes are unflinching; there is an arrested silence within him. His mind, like his baffling gaze, is dark and private.

It is always so. When he comes home each day from school there are the unfathomable eyes beneath the brim of his boater. The house is drugged, noiseless, and he enters it without a sound, soft-footed as an assassin. He takes off the boater as if someone is watching and waiting for this polite gesture, hangs it on the hall-stand, puts his strapped-together school-books on the console table beside the salver littered with visiting cards. As he opens the door to his bedroom the wind-bells hanging from the hall ceiling make a glassy comment.

From elsewhere, from the drawing-room perhaps, comes his mother's voice, careless, drawling: "Is that you, Martin?" He does not answer. He goes into his room, slips off his college blazer, puts it on a hanger in the wardrobe, undoes his ties, hangs it carefully over the curlicued end of his bed, and then stands staring at the framed picture which hangs above the ewer and basin on the wash-stand. It is an artist's idea of the last moments of the *Titanic*, the liner reared up, its lights still ablaze, like a sea-monster in agony. Life-boats draw away from her; the waves are over-populated with writhing forms. As he stares, his mother's voice rises again, less careless, not so drawling, "Martin, is that you?"

Again he does not answer, but moves from his room in the direction of the voice. His mother in the pose of one who lives a life of blameless monotony, is lying on the ottoman in the bay-window of the drawing-room. The venetian blinds are down but not closed: stripes of light and shadow fall on her through the slats. He does not approach her, walks instead to the chimney-piece, and watches her from there. The cushions behind her back and shoulders, the fashion magazines and yellow-backs lying on the carpet, the palm-leaf fan on the sofa-table, the smoke writhing languidly up from her black Sobranie cigarette, all suggest summer indolence but she's too posed, too elegantly corseted and dressed for the indolence to be utterly authentic. Her hair faultlessly piled up, her flower-embroidered blouse with the whale-boned collar, the revealed *broderie-anglaise* frills of her petticoats foaming above her stylishly crossed ankles, the number of her bangles and rings, all the crispness and glitter and control suggest something other

than indolence—she is alert, waiting, ready to be restless or wilful. On the shelf of the marble chimney-piece, and reflected in the vast, gilt-framed looking-glass above the fireplace, are a number of porcelain figurines, Petit Trianon shepherdesses and milkmaids, pretty swains in perukes and ruffles. She flourishes her cigarette and holds her book, with the same over-graceful gestures they flourish their tiny porcelain posies with.

"Why didn't you answer me, Martin?" She has not lifted her eyes from the book since he came in, and does not do so as she speaks.

He says nothing. He touches, and makes tinkle, the lustres at his end of the mantel-piece. She reads a little more, puts a fringed book-mark in its place, closes the book, reaches for the palm-leaf fan, and agitates it with the artful gesture of one of the figurines, her arm curved like a porcelain one, her fingers as curled as porcelain fingers. Still not looking at him she blows smoke towards the ceiling.

"Mother," she says, "has had a dreary day . . . a very dreary day." There is a pause, empty as a vessel to be filled with a dangerous liquid. Then, his face a mask, he says:

"Mother, are you a merry widow?"

She becomes moveless, but continues to keep her eyes turned toward the ceiling.

"What makes you ask that?" She speaks very softly. "Did someone say I was?"

"Who would say? No, no one said, I wondered myself."

"Did you, indeed!" She blows smoke towards the ceiling, talks towards it. "Perhaps I am. Yes, I suppose I could be called that. The question is: what makes you think I'm a merry widow?" Her voice becomes drowsy: "Is it because I'm always going out?"

"Yes, mother."

Now she looks at him, swings her feet to the carpet, sits up. "I've nothing to stay home for." She stubs her cigarette. "During the day you're at school. At night you're asleep. If I'm out, you have Mrs. Purchase to minister to your wants. That's what housekeepers are for . . . at least that's what she's for." She stands, smoothing down her skirt over her hips. "Anyway I'm home now."

His face, his eyes, show no emotion, as he says, "But someone must be coming to see you. You're all dressed up."

She does not become angry with him, but distressed at something else. Restlessness overtakes her, and petulance: her nature is too shallow for love or hate, cataclysmic rages or volcanic outbursts.

"You sound like your father. You look like your father." She is pacing about in the striped light, but stops to say, "Your father was a bad man, Martin, a bad, selfish man. He left me. If he hadn't been drowned when the *Titanic* went down, he still wouldn't be here. He wasn't ever coming back. I'd still be a widow . . . a grass widow."

Once more, imperturbably, he touches the lustres, and makes them tinkle.

"Stop that. Go away. You've given me a headache. Go away. Tell Mrs. Purchase to bring me some tablets . . . but go away . . . you're a bad selfish boy."

If she's not in the drawing-room when he comes home from school, she's out and Mrs. Purchase, on her knees in the hall, polishing the legs of the console table, says in a close-lipped way, "Your mother's out. God knows when she'll be home . . . at all hours. Now don't hang about inside. And don't get out of earshot either. Come in the moment you're called. Tea will be early. I'm going out tonight too. Do you hear me, Martin?"

He does not answer.

If his mother is not on the ottoman or is not already out she is on the point of going out. As she buttons her twenty-buttoned gloves or fiddles with the osprey in her hair she softly sings:

"When you dance tonight, wear a rose of white,
It will show you'll forgive me again,
But if instead it's a rose of red
It will show that my hopes are in vain . . ."

Sometimes he watches her drawing down the spotted veil over her face, or lifting her arms balletically in front of a looking-glass as she stabs in ten-inch hat-pins with jewelled tops, or snatching up a seal-skin muff when Mrs. Purchase calls out, "The cab is here, Mrs. Beaufort!" A door slams. A cab drives away. Mrs. Purchase is always calling out, or appearing, rigid and upright, to announce coldly, as if she abhorred cabs, "The cab is here." A door is always being slammed; a cab is always driving away; he is always being left with reverberations and echoes: his mother's voice . . . "Remember, Martin, in bed by nine!" or Mrs. Purchase's . . . "I've left your tea on a tray in the breakfast-room."

When the echoes die out, and the wind-bells stop vibrating and everything is dead-still and grave-silent he stands in the drawing-room as

though he has been put there by hazard, he and his expressionless face, he and his dark, undeviating eyes. His gaze sweeps over, yet neither kindles at nor seems to take in, the lustres and figurines, the occasional tables with their Richelier covers and *bric-a-brac*, the elaborate kerosene lamps, the what-nots crowded with china boots and shoes, the jardiniere-crowned pedestals, the piano with its candle-sconces . . . everything is inimically not his. He is lost among a merry widow's bibelots and canterburies, tasselled cushioned and over-stuffed chairs.

What does he do on such days, what does he do on solitary evenings? He begins to play chess with himself. He deals out a game of Patience. He turns the pages of a book of Dore engravings or famous shipwrecks, of windjammers with shattered masts and shredded sails foundering in a lunacy of nineteenth-century typhoons and water-spouts. Nothing however, holds him. He seeks a someone or a something not there. He shuts the book. He pushes aside the knaves and aces of the playing cards. He flicks over the Knight, the Bishop, the chess-board Queen. He does all this impassively, but wearily, as if it's his fate to be punished by living forever solitary.

At night, late, in bed, he's not even allowed the charity of sleep. Something wakes him. There are voices and laughter in the drawing-room. His mother squeals, "Oh, Monty, you *naughty* man!", and men and women laugh. A voice sings, "Champagne Charlie is me name . . ." but someone breaks in, starts to play "Alexander's Ragtime Band". A man tries to sing it but stops at "It's the best band in the land" while the others laugh. Does he hear, at the same time, the far-off wails of people drowning in icy waters, the broken and wavering sound of the ship's orchestra playing "Nearer, my God, to thee"? What does he really hear? What is he always searching for from the end of the jetty, or in the November magnificence of the garden? What is to be found among the huge Oriental poppies, the thickly starred jasmine, the crab-apples and hawthorns clotted with blossom, the bushes freighted with roses?

He's in the garden, in the sunlight, hypnotized it seems by the translucent roses when his mother's voice comes from within the house: "Martin! Martin, where are you? There's someone to see you . . ."

As he reaches the drawing-room door, Mrs. Purchase, playing maid in an embroidered apron but certainly not wearing a cap, is wheeling in the ceremonial tray, altar-like with its crocheted cloth, its silver kettle under which the methylated-spirit flame already burns, its silver teapot and jug and sugar-basin, its tiered silver stand of sandwiches and cakes, its cups with violets painted on. She hisses, "You've a smut on the side of your face," and sweeps past him. Beyond her back, and the moving altar, he sees his mother. She's sitting on the spindle-legged but full-bosomed fireside sofa in a tea-gown and smoking a Sobranie in a holder of carved ivory.

"Here he is, Sybil," she says. "Don't hang back, Martin. Come in, dear. This is Miss Windsor. You won't remember her, but she knew you when you were a little baby."

He sees her before he hears her say, "And now he's a handsome young man."

His eyes show that he sees her, and that he sees her as he saw the mesmerizing and luminous roses. She, Miss Windsor, has already drawn off one glove, and stands smiling by the marble chimney-piece. His eyes kindle — to him she must be blinding, incandescent, instantly to be fallen in love with, a miracle. The diaphonous roses of chiffon mounting the upturned, transparent brim of her hat are reflected in the looking-glass. There are chiffon roses at her waist. She extends her hand to take his heart, and, fascinated, he moves forward to offer it up.

"Rosalind, he must call me Aunt Sybil." As she speaks there is the rippling music of the wind-bells from the bay-window and the clock plays its brief glassy melody before revealing that it's four o'clock of a dazzling afternoon. "I'd like that, Martin. You must call me Aunt Sybil."

His lips silently say, "Aunt Sybil."

"You've made a conquest," says his mother, tilting the silver kettle above the silver teapot. "He's smiling. Martin, go and wash your face."

"It's nothing . . . nothing at all," says the goddess. She reaches for one of the afternoon-tea napkins, and wipes the mark from his cheek. "See . . . nothing at all serious!" She kisses the cheek lightly.

Now, when the candles are lit in their sconces, he turns the music as she plays the piano and sings to him:

She watches and waits for him, day by day,
He sleeps in a watery grave, far, far away,
For him her heart doth yearn,
She prays for his return,
As she watches and waits for him . . .

His mother, smoking while she buffs her nails, reclines on the ottoman in the half-gloom.

On the sand beside the jetty, he writes her name . . . SYBIL WINDSOR. He writes his own name beneath hers . . . MARTIN BEAUFORT. Next, he encloses the names in a heart.

He comes across a perfect rose in the garden, takes out his pen-knife, carefully cuts it, and starts towards the house in which the piano is being played. Sybil Windsor begins to sing the Sun-and-Moon song from *The Mikado*. Martin doesn't notice the portmanteau in the hall, the man's boxer and overcoat and walking-stick on the hall-stand but, as he enters the drawing-room, the rose held behind his back, he cannot help but see the man leaning against the piano, his hand ready to turn the page of the score, the good-looking young man with his waxed moustache, richly waved hair, watch-chain, signet ring. He puffs at a meerschaum. Her back is to Martin but she sees the man's eyes see Martin, and stops singing and playing.

"David," she says. "This, darling, is Martin. Mr. Roberts, Martin, the man I'm going to marry."

"Dav-id!" It's his mother, all ostrich plumes and feather boa, arriving home in a rush, and sailing past Martin with her arms theatrically outstretched to the newcomer. "I'm so sorry I wasn't here when you arrived but . . ."

The boy's eyes have become inscrutable. Beyond the rim of things, backing away, he looks at the rose. A spider creeps out of it.

Again, there is no one to play chess with . . . there's an adult gabble in the background as he flicks over the White Queen, the Black King. He watches the lovers playing diabolo. He watches them walk on the jetty, far-off, arm-in-arm, the woman's head on the man's shoulder. He plays tiddleywinks by himself on the carpet. He deals out the cards for patience. He abandons everything as soon as he starts it . . . the piano distortedly jangles; the adults' laughter and conversation excluding, also distorted, now sharp and jumbled, now hissing and hoarse.

His mother and the lovers are playing cribbage by lamplight . . . their faces seem older, seem cruel and sinister. As he passes the drawing-room door in pyjamas and dressing-gown, his mother sees him.

"Martin, you're surely not creeping off to bed without saying good-night!"

He turns at the doorway.

"Did you leave the bathroom clean? Mrs. Purchase tells me that yesterday there was sand all over the . . ."

"Yes, mother."

"He's a good swimmer, you know." All their faces are turned in his direction . . . the man's satanic, mocking. The face of his false goddess is a blur. "His father taught him." Her lips, his mother's lips, make a wry movement above the fan of cards: being able to swim was no advantage when the ship struck the iceberg, and the orchestra played on the canted deck. "I . . . of course . . . can't swim a stroke."

Sybil Windsor's voice comes from the blur: "Neither can David."

"No, not a stroke. I was brought up in the back-blocks . . . there wasn't anywhere to swim. I didn't even see a big river or the ocean until I had a moustache." The man twirls his pointed devil's moustache.

"Too late for me to learn, eh Martin?"

"Well, say something, Martin. At least say good-night, and go to bed . . . go to bed . . ."

He sees the lovers in the garden, but they cannot see him and his motionless eyes. She picks a flower, and puts it in the button-hole of his lapel. Her hand rises to touch with tender fingertips the waxed moustache. The man takes hold of this hand and presses a kiss on its palm. He takes her in his arms. They kiss deeply.

They cannot hear or see what Martin hears and sees . . . the screaming of gulls, the uplift and downfall of monstrous waves, all the crash and roar of lunatic seas on jagged black rocks. He is no longer in the garden. He stands in his bedroom looking at the picture above the wash-stand — the gulls still screaming, the waves still crashing destructively down. The fury abates, gradually, gradually. The water becomes oil-smooth, scarcely a ripple. He is in his rowing-boat, a little off shore from the end of the jetty. He rests on the oars, his head bowed.

"How deep is the water?"

It's the man's voice. The man has walked to the end of the jetty, and stands there puffing at his meerschaum. The sun is about to set. "Very deep." There's a pause. Then the boy says, "Would you like a row, Mr. Roberts?"

"I've never learned, Martin. Thank you, though."

"I can teach you." The surface of the water is glossy, scarcely moving. "It's quite easy."

The man puffs at his pipe. "Perhaps tomorrow, eh?"

"It might be rough tomorrow." The boy is

intense . . . what are his thoughts? "If you learn you could take Aunt Sybil rowing . . ."

Perhaps the man has an idyllic vision . . . she lies back on cushions under a Japanese sun-shade, a baby in her arms, while he rows dashingly. She is smiling. There is a white swan. Snowy petals fall.

"Yes . . . yes, why not?" The man puts his pipe carefully on the top of a mooring-post. With one thrust of the oars the boy brings the boat into the jetty, steadies it against a pile. The man, uncertain, somewhat awkwardly, sets one foot on the boat.

"Never too late to learn!" he says as the boat glides away from him. With a swift strong pull on the oars the boy sculls the boat away from the drowning man. His face doesn't flicker at "Martin . . . Help me . . ." and his eyes are opaque as the water cruelly offers its services.

After a while there is silence. The smoke from the meerschaum on the mooring-post fades from the air.

The boy rows placidly towards the shore, and does not look back. The boat moored, he walks inexorably up towards the house. He stops. Once only . . . a flawless rose glows like a light at him. He takes out his pen-knife and cuts it.

Holding the rose before him, he enters the drawing-room which is lit only by the long rays of the setting sun striking in hazily through the venetian blinds. Sybil Windsor is idly playing the Sun-and-Moon song, and continues to do so as she says, "Where's everybody?"

The boy shrugs his shoulders. He puts the rose on the piano top with a gesture patently expressing, "This is for you!" The woman smiles. He takes a sheet of music from the several sheets on the top of the piano, and opens it out on the stand before her. Once again the woman smiles, and begins to play and sing.

"She watches and waits for him, day by day,
He sleeps in a watery grave, far, far away . . ."

The boy's face has hitherto been closed and dispassionate, but is now smiling and radiant.

TIM BURSTALL

Comments on "The Jetty"

Response to Hal Porter's story

Hal Porter said the "spine" of the story was: "Little Man Knocks Off Big Man". When I first read it, I was reminded of those Edwardian "Ruthless Rhymes" — you know the sort of thing:

> Oh Mummy dear come quick and see
> Young Archie's chopped off Sarah's knee
> Naughty, naughty Archie! There!
> You won't get any jam for tea!

A civilized, urbane voice telling you a rather cruel story. Telling it, what's more with a certain amount of relish. Anyone who has read or seen Hal's period play "The Tower" will immediately recognize the ancestor of the boy in "The Jetty". He too is enigmatic, a loner and a deliberate killer. And he is also, in my opinion, a considerable problem. It's not that I don't think children aren't capable of murder. I'm sure they are. But if they are murderers and if the audience is to retain any sympathy for them I do think they've got to be under extraordinary pressures. Otherwise they will appear like the child in "Bad Seed" as rather grisly little psychopaths.

Hal was out of the country when I began on the film so I had to go ahead and make the changes I thought necessary without consulting him.

The first thing was the boy. In Hal's story the boy entices Roberts into the boat knowing he can't swim. As Roberts is getting in he pulls on the oars and drowns him. In my script the boy doesn't know Roberts can't swim. He objects to Roberts getting into the boat but Roberts insists. As Roberts gets in he pulls on the oars intending to tip him into the water.

Then Roberts calls for help saying he can't swim. It's only then that "intention" can be said to enter the situation, and even then it's somewhat ambiguous. The boy ignores Roberts' calls for help and rows off upstream. Now for the other changes.

1. In the original story the boy falls instantly in love with Sybil. There is absolutely no development of their relationship before the arrival of Roberts. I wanted to build up this relationship — if possible without Roberts and without the boy's mother. Could Sybil in fact come to look after the boy while his mother is away?
2. In the original story the boy's only reason for murdering Roberts was the fact that he was Sybil's fiancé. I wanted to build up far stronger reasons for the boy's resentment of Roberts. Roberts had to be seen as the interloper in the boy's relationship with Sybil. I needed the boy to feel he had been violently rejected by Sybil if the drowning scene at the end was to be properly motivated.
3. In the original story the boy's father has been drowned before the story opens. Martin merely broods on his father's death while he stands on the jetty or gazes at a picture of the sinking of the "Titanic".

I wanted to *show* the loss of the father. The story I concocted is a sort of mini-Hamlet. Martin's father is removed from him. From a recognizable voice, he dwindles to a postcard, pins on a map, an overheard conversation between his mother and a neighbour. Finally the boy hears his father is dead.

First Loss:

REMOVAL OF FATHER'S LOVE

Enter Roberts (the Claudius figure). He is in fact the neighbour talking to his mother. Was he the mother's lover before the father left? Is the father

really ever going to come back? The boy doesn't know, the audience don't know. He sees his mother spending the night with Roberts, overhears the housekeeper criticizing his mother.

Second Loss:

REMOVAL OF MOTHER'S LOVE

Enter Sybil, who for a brief period is to act as a surrogate mother. They go boating together, ride in a magic coach, climb a circular staircase (Freudians take note) and even have a love-scene where Sybil reads "David Copperfield" to him. But Roberts then returns and moves in on the surrogate mother.

Third Loss:

REMOVAL OF SURROGATE MOTHER'S LOVE

This I think gives enough motivation for the drowning to occur. Everything which was internalized in Hal's story I had to externalize in terms of action and dialogue. A large part of Hal's original story was straight description — the mother wore such-and-such, the furniture in the room was so-and-so. In place of this I had to drum up new *events*.

Structurally I've split up the action and dialogue sequences. Usually the situation is mounted in dialogue — the audience is told such-and-such will happen — and then in the next sequence a surprise is sprung on them — something else happens.

The Shooting Script of 'The Child'

TIM BURSTALL

The move into production

The original title was changed to "The Child" to fit in with the other segments of "Libido", which were entitled "The Husband", "The Priest" and "The Family".

30 minutes. 16mm. Eastmancolor (to be blown up to 35mm. sound).

SEQUENCE ONE

FADE IN:

1. EXTERIOR STEPS OF COUNTRY MANSION — WIDE SHOT — DAY

On the front steps JASON BEAUFORT, a tall imposing man is saying his last goodbyes to his family before leaving for a long trip abroad. The year is 1911. His wife ROSALIND is a beautiful young woman of thirty. His son MARTIN is a dark nine-year old. The housekeeper Mrs. PURCHASE stands nearby. In the foreground a horse and carriage is waiting with a driver.

2. CLOSER SHOT — JASON AND ROSALIND

JASON (taking her in his arms)
Goodbye Rosalind.

He kisses her and then turns to Martin.

3. CLOSER SHOT — MARTIN
Looking up at his father.

4. RESUME JASON

JASON
I'll see you this time next year Martin . . .

5. RESUME MARTIN

JASON'S VOICE
. . . Look after your mother.

6. WHOLE SCENE FROM CHANGED ANGLE

JASON
Goodbye Martin . . . Goodbye Mrs. Purchase.

He walks down the steps, gets into the carriage and is driven away.

7. ROSALIND AND MARTIN ON STEPS
Watching carriage drive away.

8. Mrs. PURCHASE ON STEPS
Watching carriage drive away.

9. CARRIAGE DRIVING AWAY FROM MARTIN'S EYELINE

10. CLOSE SHOT — MARTIN
Watching carriage drive away.

11. CARRIAGE DISAPPEARING FROM VIEW ROUND CORNER OF DRIVE

SEQUENCE TWO

12-21. Ten shots of country mansion across which titles appear. The tower, the colonnaded verandah, vistas of garden, etc.

SEQUENCE THREE

22. INTERIOR HALLWAY — CLOSE SHOT — PICTURE POSTCARD OF SPHINX IN MARTIN'S HAND — DAY

JASON'S VOICE
This is what the Sphinx looks like, Martin . . .

23. CLOSE SHOT — MARTIN

24. INTERIOR MARTIN'S BEDROOM — CLOSE SHOT — MAP OF EUROPE AND MIDDLE EAST ON BEDROOM WALL

JASON'S VOICE

. . . I got off the boat at Cairo . . .

Martin's hand enters frame sticking pin into Cairo.

JASON'S VOICE

. . . And have bought you a fez cap . . .

25. RESUME CLOSE SHOT — MARTIN

Looking at position of Cairo on map.

JASON'S VOICE

. . . I hope it fits.

26. INTERIOR HALLWAY — Mrs. PURCHASE DUSTING STATUE WITH FEATHER DUSTER — DAY

MARTIN'S VOICE

Where's Wien, Mrs. Purchase?

He pronounces it "wine".

Mrs. PURCHASE

Wine? What you drink?

27. MARTIN

MARTIN

No, its' a place.

28. Mrs. PURCHASE

Mrs. PURCHASE

Wine? Never heard of it . . . (suddenly remembering) Oh, you mean Vienna.

29. RESUME MARTIN

Mrs. PURCHASE'S VOICE

. . . It's the capital of Austria.

30. INTERIOR MARTIN'S BEDROOM — CLOSE SHOT — MAP OF EUROPE AND MIDDLE EAST ON BEDROOM WALL

Martin's hand enters frame sticking pin into Vienna.

DISSOLVE TO:

31. CLOSER SHOT — MAP

Martin's hand enters frame sticking pin into Paris.

DISSOLVE TO:

32. CLOSER SHOT — MAP

Martin's hand enters frame sticking pin into London.

33. INTERIOR DINING ROOM — NIGHT

Seated at the table are MARTIN, Martin's mother ROSALIND BEAUFORT and a good-looking sensual-looking man, DAVID ROBERTS who is a neighbour of the Beautforts.

DAVID

I envy him. I wish I were gallivanting round the world.

ROSALIND

Yes but you're a gallivanter, David. Jason isn't.

34. CLOSER SHOT — MARTIN

Listening.

DAVID'S VOICE

It surprises me his leaving London so soon . . .

35. DAVID AND ROSALIND

DAVID

. . . I thought most of his business was in the Old Country.

ROSALIND

No, the family has interests in the States. Florida, I think . . . You know he's wangled a passage . . .

36. RESUME CLOSE SHOT — MARTIN

ROSALIND'S VOICE

. . . on that new White Star liner — what's its name?

37. INTERIOR HALLWAY — CLOSE SHOT TELEGRAM IN ROSALIND'S HAND — DAY

The word "TITANIC" in centre of frame. Other phrases "DEEPLY REGRET" "HUSBAND LOST AT SEA" etc. can just be made out.

ROSALIND'S VOICE (in whisper)

The Titanic.

Camera tilts up to Rosalind's face. She doesn't speak.

38. CLOSE SHOT — Mrs. PURCHASE

Mrs. PURCHASE

(almost ready to break down)

Oh, Mrs. Beaufort.

39. RESUME CLOSE SHOT — ROSALIND

ROSALIND (deathly quiet)

Mrs. Purchase, will you help me to my room?

40. EXTERIOR TOWER — MARTIN — DAY

Martin in the tower looking out across his father's estate.

41. CLOSER SHOT — MARTIN
Gazing into the distance, brooding expression on his face.

42. LONG SHOT FROM MARTIN'S EYE-LINE OF COUNTRY FROM TOWER

SEQUENCE FOUR

43. INTERIOR STAIRCASE — WIDE SHOT — MARTIN — DAY
Martin slowly walks down stairs into hallway. His mother calls from the drawing-room.

ROSALIND'S VOICE
Is that you, Martin?

44. CLOSER SHOT — MARTIN
He pauses on the staircase without answering, then proceeds down into the hallway, CAMERA DOLLEYING with him along hallway up to drawing-room door.

ROSALIND'S VOICE
Martin, is that you?

Again he doesn't answer but opens door into drawing-room.

45. INTERIOR DRAWING ROOM — CLOSE SHOT — MARTIN — DAY
Hesitating in doorway as he looks at his mother.

46. ROSALIND FROM MARTIN'S EYELINE
She is lying on an ottoman reading and smoking a Sobranie. She looks up for a moment, then resumes reading.

47. MARTIN
CAMERA PANS him across to the fireplace where he begins fiddling with the lustres on the mantelpiece.

ROSALIND'S VOICE
Why didn't you answer me, Martin?

He tinkles the lustres.

48. ROSALIND ON OTTOMAN
She puts a bookmark in her book and closes it.

ROSALIND
(blowing cigarette smoke towards the ceiling)
Mother has had a dreary day . . . a very dreary day.

49. RESUME MARTIN

MARTIN (after a pause)
Mother, are you a merry widow?

50. CLOSER SHOT — ROSALIND
She suddenly becomes very still but doesn't look at Martin.

ROSALIND (softly)
What makes you ask that? Did someone say I was?

MARTIN'S VOICE
No. I just wondered.

ROSALIND
Did you indeed (blowing smoke towards the ceiling) . . . Perhaps I am. Yes, I suppose I could be called that. The question is . . .

51. CLOSER SHOT — MARTIN

ROSALIND'S VOICE
. . . what makes you think I'm a merry widow?

52. RESUME CLOSE SHOT — ROSALIND

ROSALIND
Is it because I'm always going out?

53. RESUME CLOSE SHOT — MARTIN

MARTIN
Yes, mother.

54. TWO SHOT — ROSALIND AND MARTIN — FAVOURING ROSALIND
Over Martin's shoulder. Rosalind looks at him and sits up.

ROSALIND
I've nothing to stay home for (stubbing cigarette). If I'm out you've Mrs. Purchase to look after you. That's what housekeepers are for . . .

55. TWO SHOT — MARTIN AND ROSALIND — FAVOURING MARTIN
Over Rosalind's shoulder.

ROSALIND'S VOICE
. . . Anyway I'm home now.

MARTIN
But someone must be coming to see you. You're all dressed up.

56. RESUME TWO SHOT — ROSALIND AND MARTIN — FAVOURING ROSALIND
Rosalind begins pacing round the room CAMERA PANNING with her.

ROSALIND
You sound like your father. You look like your father.

She stops, looking directly at Martin.

57. CLOSE SHOT — MARTIN FROM ROSALIND'S EYELINE

ROSALIND'S VOICE

Your father wasn't what he seemed, Martin . . .

58. RESUME TWO SHOT — ROSALIND AND MARTIN — FAVOURING ROSALIND

ROSALIND

(turning away to the window) If he hadn't been drowned when the "Titanic" went down he still wouldn't be here . . .

59. RESUME CLOSE SHOT — MARTIN

ROSALIND'S VOICE

. . . He wasn't ever coming back.

60. WHOLE SCENE FROM CHANGED ANGLE INCLUDING DRAWING-ROOM DOOR

Mrs. Purchase enters room.

Mrs. PURCHASE

The carriage is here, Mrs. Beaufort.

ROSALIND

I'll have to go now. Remember Martin, in bed by nine!

She sweeps out of the room. CAMERA slowly moves into closer shot of Martin who wanders from mantelpiece across to bay window, CAMERA PANNING across with him.

61. LONG SHOT FROM MARTIN'S EYELINE — MOTHER GETTING INTO CAB

Shot through window. The cab drives away.

62. RESUME CLOSE SHOT — MARTIN

Watching cab drive away.

SEQUENCE FIVE

63. INTERIOR DRAWING-ROOM — CLOSE SHOT CLOCK ON MANTELPIECE — NIGHT

The pendulum swings. It is 6.30 p.m.

64. CLOSE SHOT — MARTIN'S HANDS DEALING OUT CARDS ON CARPET

Camera pulls out to reveal Martin playing Patience by himself. He sorts a few cards, then loses interest, pushing them aside.

65. RESUME CLOSE SHOT — CLOCK ON MANTELPIECE

It is 7.30 p.m.

66. CLOSE SHOT — ENGRAVING OF SHIPWRECK IN BOOK FROM MARTIN'S EYELINE.

Camera pulls out to reveal Martin sitting in chair looking at engraving. He flicks page, then losing interest, closes book.

67. RESUME CLOSE SHOT — CLOCK ON MANTELPIECE

It is 8.30 p.m.

68. CLOSE SHOT — MARTIN'S HAND SHIFTING BLACK KNIGHT ON CHESSBOARD

Camera pulls out to reveal Martin playing chess with himself. Again after two moves, he loses interest.

69. CLOSE SHOT — MARTIN

Deciding he is bored with the game. He will resign.

70. CLOSE SHOT — MARTIN'S HAND KNOCKING OVER HIS KING

SEQUENCE SIX

71. INTERIOR MARTIN'S BEDROOM — MARTIN ASLEEP IN BED — NIGHT

He wakes up hearing the din of a motor car on the driveway. He sits up, then gets up out of bed in his nightgown and goes over to the window.

72. CLOSE SHOT — MARTIN AT WINDOW

73. EXTERIOR DRIVEWAY — LONG SHOT FROM MARTIN'S EYELINE — MOTOR CAR DRIVING UP TO FRONT STEPS

In it are DAVID ROBERTS and Martin's mother ROSALIND. As the car comes to a stop, Rosalind can be heard laughing and giggling. She is in fact slightly tipsy and David has just finished telling her a risque joke. They are obviously flirting.

ROSALIND

David, you naughty man . . .

74. TWO SHOT — ROSALIND AND DAVID — FAVOURING ROSALIND

ROSALIND (a tone of mock rebuke)

To repeat a joke in such . . . (she giggles) . . . such questionable taste — and to a lady. (She "tut tuts".)

75. TWO SHOT — DAVID AND ROSALIND — FAVOURING DAVID

David is leering towards her.

ROSALIND

It's a liberty no gentleman would take . . .

DAVID (leering closer)

There are all sorts of gentlemen, you know.

76. CLOSE SHOT — ROSALIND

ROSALIND

Theres' a name for that sort of gentleman.

77. CLOSE SHOT — DAVID

DAVID

Hmmm . . .

78. RESUME CLOSE SHOT — ROSALIND

ROSALIND (giggles)

A cad.

79. RESUME CLOSE SHOT — DAVID

He leans forward and kisses Rosalind CAMERA LOOSENING slightly to include them both in a tight two shot. At first she holds back, then responds fiercely.

80. INTERIOR MARTIN'S BEDROOM — MARTIN AT WINDOW WATCHING

81. EXTERIOR LONG SHOT OF DAVID AND ROSALIND KISSING FROM MARTIN'S EYELINE

They disengage and David helps her out of the car. The two of them, their arms round each other, go into the house leaving the empty car standing in the driveway.

DISSOLVE TO:

82. EXTERIOR LONG SHOT — EMPTY CAR STANDING IN DRIVEWAY — DAY

Shot from identical position as previous shot. It is dawn and David who has spent the night with Rosalind comes out and starts cranking the car.

83. INTERIOR MARTIN'S BEDROOM — MARTIN ASLEEP IN BED — DAY

He wakes up hearing the noise of the car being cranked. He gets out of bed and goes over to the window.

84. CLOSE SHOT — MARTIN AT WINDOW

85. EXTERIOR DRIVEWAY — LONG SHOT FROM MARTIN'S EYELINE — DAVID CRANKING MOTOR CAR

Motor starts. David gets into car and drives away.

SEQUENCE SEVEN

86. INTERIOR STAIRCASE — MARTIN — DAY

Martin coming down the stairs, CAMERA TRACKING with him as he descends. He hears raised voices in dining-room. He hesitates, listening.

ROSALIND'S VOICE

It's not your place to tell me how I should behave.

Mrs. PURCHASE'S VOICE

I know it's not, M'am, but if I don't, who will? Everyone knows Mr. Robert's reputation.

Martin tiptoes down the last stairs, CAMERA MOVING closer towards him.

ROSALIND'S VOICE

I've decided to go.

Mrs. PURCHASE'S VOICE

Well, it's your decision. As long as you realise all your neighbours will notice when you leave. And they'll also notice that at exactly the same time Mr. Roberts will be leaving too.

87. CLOSE SHOT — DINING-ROOM DOOR FROM MARTIN'S EYELINE

ROSALIND'S VOICE

I don't care.

Mrs. PURCHASE'S VOICE

You know he'll never marry you.

88. RESUME CLOSE SHOT — MARTIN LISTENING

ROSALIND'S VOICE (sharply)

I've had quite enough of this conversation, Mrs. Purchase. I'm leaving on the weekend.

SEQUENCE EIGHT

89. EXTERIOR LONG SHOT FROM MARTIN'S EYELINE OF COUNTRY FROM TOWER — DAY

ROSALIND'S VOICE (calling out)

Martin . . . Martin . . . Where are you?

90. MARTIN IN TOWER

ROSALIND'S VOICE

. . . There's someone to see you.

He leaves tower.

91. INTERIOR DRAWING-ROOM — CLOSE SHOT — SYBIL — DAY

A beautiful young girl of twenty. CAMERA

PULLS out to two shot of Rosalind and Sybil.

ROSALIND

Oh, there you are, darling. Martin, this is Miss Windsor.

92. MARTIN IN DOORWAY

ROSALIND'S VOICE

She's going to be looking after you the fortnight I'm away.

MARTIN (obviously very smitten)

How do you do?

SYBIL

Hullo.

93. RESUME TWO SHOT — SYBIL AND ROSALIND — FAVOURING SYBIL

ROSALIND

You won't remember her but she knew you when you were a little baby.

SYBIL

My goodness, you're a lot bigger now.

94. CLOSER SHOT — MARTIN

Looking at Sybil.

ROSALIND'S VOICE

Darling, she's not really your aunt but you can call her Aunt Sybil.

95. CLOSE SHOT — SYBIL

SYBIL

Oh Rosalind, that sounds a bit formal. Just Sybil will do. You'll have to show me over the estate, Martin . . .

96. RESUME CLOSE SHOT — MARTIN

SYBIL'S VOICE

. . . I'm sure there are lots of things we can do.

MARTIN

I could take you up the tower.

97. RESUME CLOSE SHOT — SYBIL

I'd love that.

98. RESUME CLOSE SHOT — MARTIN

MARTIN

And we've got a jetty. I could take you rowing.

99. RESUME CLOSE SHOT — SYBIL

SYBIL

I'd love that, too.

100. WHOLE SCENE FROM CHANGED ANGLE INCLUDING DRAWING-ROOM DOOR

The door opens and Mrs. Purchase wheels in the tea things on a trolley.

ROSALIND (to Sybil)

You've made a conquest.

(To Martin) Martin, you can hand round the cakes . . .

She looks at Martin closely noticing a smut on his face.

101. CLOSER SHOT — ROSALIND

ROSALIND

Oh dear! How did you get that smut on your face? . . .

102. CLOSER SHOT — MARTIN

Ready to look crestfallen.

ROSALIND'S VOICE

. . . You'd better go to the bathroom and wash it off.

103. CLOSER SHOT — SYBIL

She reaches for one of the afternoon tea-napkins and leans down to Martin. CAMERA WIDENING to a tight two shot as she wipes the mark off his face.

SYBIL

It's nothing.

SEQUENCE NINE

104. EXTERIOR ROAD ON ESTATE — CLOSE SHOT — CARRIAGE WHEEL GOING ROUND — DAY

105. TRACKING SHOT — HORSE IN SHAFTS FROM MARTIN'S EYELINE

Again tracking shot.

106. TWO SHOT — MARTIN AND SYBIL

Again tracking shot. They are sitting together next to driver. Martin looks up at trees passing overhead.

107. BOUGHS OF TREES

Again tracking shot.

108. CLOSE SHOT — MARTIN

Again tracking shot. He looks down from trees and across to Sybil.

109. CLOSE SHOT — SYBIL

Again tracking shot. She smiles back at him.

110. RESUME CLOSE SHOT — MARTIN
A transported expression.

111. WIDE SHOT — HORSE AND CARRIAGE ON ROAD
Approaching head-on towards CAMERA. Horse trots past.

112. EXTERIOR JETTY WITH BOAT MOORED BESIDE IT — DAY
Martin is already in boat. He is helping Sybil down from jetty.

113. CLOSER SHOT — MARTIN AND SYBIL
He holds her round the waist in a way which is vaguely sexual. She sways, nearly losing her balance. He steadies her and helps her into seat in stern.

114. CLOSE SHOT — OAR DIPPING INTO WATER
Tracking shot.

115. PROW OF DINGHY CUTTING THROUGH WATER
Tracking shot.

116. MARTIN ROWING
He smiles at Sybil. Tracking shot.

117. SYBIL IN STERN
Smiling back at Martin. Tracking shot.

118-122. FIVE SHOTS OF MARTIN LEADING SYBIL UP STAIRCASE TO TOWER
A sense of mounting excitement.

123. EXTERIOR TOP OF TOWER — MARTIN AND SYBIL EMERGING AT TOP
They go across to the parapet.

124. TIGHT TWO SHOT — MARTIN AND SYBIL
Looking out across country.

125. EXTERIOR LONG SHOT FROM THEIR EYELINE OF COUNTRY FROM TOP OF TOWER

126. INTERIOR DINING-ROOM — DOORWAY — DAY
Martin comes into doorway and hesitates.

127. Mrs. PURCHASE
Setting the table for two places.

MARTIN'S VOICE
Mrs. Purchase.

Mrs. Purchase looks up.

Mrs. PURCHASE
Yes, Martin.

MARTIN'S VOICE
When's mother coming back?

128. RESUME MARTIN IN DOORWAY

Mrs. PURCHASE'S VOICE
Next week.

MARTIN (very quietly)
What about Sybil?

Mrs. PURCHASE'S VOICE
What about her?

MARTIN
She won't be going, will she?

129. RESUME Mrs. PURCHASE

Mrs. PURCHASE
I don't know, Martin. You'd better ask her.

She goes on setting the table.

130. EXTERIOR BEACH NEAR JETTY — MARTIN DRAWING WITH STICK IN SAND
He is enclosing two names in a heart. He finishes the heart and stands back to look at it.

131. CLOSER SHOT — MARTIN

132. CLOSE SHOT — DRAWING ON BEACH
The two names in the heart read: SYBIL WINDSOR and MARTIN BEAUFORT.

133. INTERIOR MARTIN'S BEDROOM — CLOSE SHOT — SYBIL'S ANKLES — NIGHT
CAMERA slowly PANS up her body to her head. She is lying on top of Martin's bed. Martin is lying inside bed. She is reading "DAVID COPPERFIELD" aloud to him.

SYBIL
"Now," said my aunt, "Here you see young David Copperfield and the question I put to you is: What shall I do with him?"

134. CLOSE SHOT — SYBIL

SYBIL
"Why if I was you," said Mr. Dick considering and looking vacantly at me. . .

CAMERA PANS across to Martin. An entranced expression.

SYBIL

. . . "I should" — the contemplation of me seemed to inspire him with a sudden idea and he added briskly, "I should wash him!"

Martin grins happily.

135. WHOLE SCENE FROM CHANGED ANGLE

Sybil closes the book and gets up from bed.

SYBIL

That's a good place to stop. We'll go on tomorrow.

She bends over the bed to kiss him goodnight.

136. CLOSE SHOT — MARTIN

MARTIN

Sybil.

SYBIL

Hmmm.

MARTIN

Are you going to stay with us?

137. CLOSE SHOT — SYBIL FROM MARTIN'S EYELINE

SYBIL

I'd like to Martin but your mother mightn't want me to stay here forever.

138. RESUME CLOSE SHOT — MARTIN

MARTIN

I want you to.

CAMERA LOOSENS as she bends forward to kiss him.

SYBIL

Go to sleep.

SEQUENCE TEN

139. INTERIOR DINING-ROOM — CLOSE SHOT — CHANDELIER — NIGHT

CAMERA TILTS down to the table where Rosalind, David, Sybil and Martin are sitting eating dinner.

SYBIL

And how was the trip? Where did you stay?

ROSALIND

The Hotel Imperial. And the people were simply dreadful. Weren't they, David?

DAVID

One doesn't go to the Blue Mountains to enjoy one's fellow man. One goes there to enjoy the beauties of Nature. Or so the travel brochures say. Have you ever been there, Sybil?

SYBIL

It's so long ago I can hardly remember. I was only a child.

140. TWO SHOT — ROSALIND AND DAVID

ROSALIND

I can remember Sybil when she was no older than Martin . . .

141. TWO SHOT — SYBIL AND MARTIN

Martin listening intently.

ROSALIND'S VOICE

. . . She looked quite a beauty even then.

SYBIL

It's not true. I was quite plain.

142. CLOSE SHOT — DAVID

DAVID

How much longer are you staying, Sybil?

143. CLOSE SHOT — MARTIN

SYBIL'S VOICE

Well . . .

144. CLOSE SHOT — SYBIL

SYBIL

. . . That really depends on Rosalind.

145. RESUME TWO SHOT — DAVID AND ROSALIND

ROSALIND

As long as you like, my dear.

DAVID

How would you like to come to the Races with us tomorrow? . . .

146. RESUME TWO SHOT — SYBIL AND MARTIN

Martin listening intently.

DAVID'S VOICE

. . . You must be sick of child-minding.

SYBIL

I'd love to come.

SEQUENCE ELEVEN

147. EXTERIOR JETTY — MARTIN SITTING ALONE ON JETTY — DAY

Dangling his legs over the water. He throws a few stones into the water. A disconsolate impression.

148. CLOSE SHOT — STONE HITTING WATER

149. EXTERIOR GARDEN — CLOSE SHOT HOLLYHOCK STANDING UPRIGHT IN GARDEN — DAY

A switch slashes the head off the hollyhock.

150. MARTIN

Wandering through garden lashing the tops off the flowers. He passes. A bored, frustrated impression.

151. INTERIOR HALLWAY — MARTIN LETTING HIMSELF IN FRONT DOOR — DAY

He slumps back against door looking at the floor. He looks sullen and beaten.

152. Mrs. PURCHASE

Coming through dining-room door. She stops, noticing Martin.

Mrs. PURCHASE

Cheer up Martin, there's no need to look so down in the mouth.

153. CLOSER SHOT — MARTIN

MARTIN (grumpily)

Where is everyone?

154. RESUME Mrs. PURCHASE

Mrs. PURCHASE (matter-of-factly)

Your mother's upstairs. The others are in the garden . . .

155. RESUME CLOSE SHOT — MARTIN

Looking up puzzled.

Mrs. PURCHASE

. . . They've been home for hours.

Martin's eyes light up. He turns, pulls open the door and is gone.

156-160. FIVE TRACKING SHOTS OF MARTIN HURRYING THROUGH GARDEN, LOOKING FOR SYBIL

A sense of expectancy, excitement.

161. EXTERIOR GARDEN — CLOSE SHOT MARTIN — DAY

Coming to a stop as he sights something.

162. EXTERIOR GREENHOUSE

CAMERA PANS across to David Robert's motor car. It is empty.

163. RESUME CLOSE SHOT — MARTIN

He moves towards car.

164. CAR

Shot taken over steering-wheel. Martin comes up to car and peers in. On the seat are Sybil's gloves. He picks them up then drops them back on the seat.

165. RESUME CLOSE SHOT — MARTIN

Turning round and peering into the bushes.

166. SCREEN OF BUSHES FROM MARTIN'S EYELINE

167. MARTIN

He is aware of something out of the ordinary and advances towards the bushes on tiptoe, CAMERA PANNING with him.

168. CLOSE SHOT — MARTIN'S FEET

CAMERA PANS them tiptoeing towards bushes. Martin steps on a twig which makes a loud noise as it breaks.

169. DAVID AND SYBIL ON FAR SIDE OF BUSHES

They are half-naked and making love. David stops, looking back over his shoulder.

170. CLOSE SHOT — SYBIL

171. SCREEN OF LEAVES FROM SYBIL"S EYELINE

Martin pushes leaves aside and looks down at the lovers. An expression of disbelief, fear, pain. He runs away.

SEQUENCE TWELVE

172. EXTERIOR GARDEN — MARTIN RUSHING THROUGH SHRUBS — DAY

CAMERA PANS him walking fiercely along, his head low.

SYBIL'S VOICE

Martin! . . . Martin!

MARTIN

Go away!

Sybil enters frame. She catches him up and pulls him round to face her.

SYBIL

Don't Martin! . . . You mustn't think about it like that. You'll understand it all when you're grown up.

MARTIN

I never want to see you again.

He turns and walks fiercely away from her. CAMERA MOVES IN CLOSER to Sybil as she watches him go.

173. MARTIN WALKING AWAY FROM SYBIL'S EYELINE

SEQUENCE THIRTEEN

174. EXTERIOR JETTY — MARTIN FITTING OARS INTO ROWLOCKS OF BOAT — DAY

DAVID'S VOICE

Can I come for a row with you, Martin?

MARTIN (without looking up)

No.

175. DAVID ON JETTY FROM MARTIN'S EYELINE

DAVID (evenly)

Why?

176. RESUME MARTIN IN BOAT

MARTIN

You're too heavy.

DAVID'S VOICE

It looks a pretty solid boat to me . . .

177. RESUME DAVID FROM MARTIN'S EYELINE

DAVID

. . . Besides I want to talk to you . . .

178. WHOLE SCENE FROM CHANGED ANGLE

David prepares to get down into the boat.

DAVID

. . . Can you steady the boat while I get in?

179. CLOSE SHOT — DAVID'S FACE

As he eases himself down. He looks unsteady.

180. CLOSE SHOT — DAVID'S RIGHT LEG

Reaching for the stern seat of the dinghy.

181. CLOSE SHOT — MARTIN'S FACE

Watching tensely.

182. CLOSE SHOT — DAVID'S TWO LEGS WOBBLING ON STERN SEAT

183. MARTIN

Suddenly pulling on oars.

184. WHOLE SCENE

David topples into the water as the dinghy shoots forward.

185. CLOSER SHOT — DAVID

Surfacing.

DAVID

Martin . . . help me. I can't swim . . .

He disappears again.

186. MARTIN IN BOAT

He pulls away. He ignores David's plea for help.

187. CLOSE SHOT — DAVID

Tracking shot. Taken over stern of boat as it moves away.

DAVID

Martin . . . help me.

He is beginning to drown.

188. RESUME MARTIN IN BOAT

Pulling away on oars.

189. SYBIL

She has heard David calling out and runs up towards jetty.

190. DAVID FROM SYBIL'S EYELINE

Surfaces and sinks for the last time.

191. CLOSER SHOT — SYBIL

SYBIL

For God's sake, Martin . . . help him.

192. PATCH OF WATER FROM SYBIL'S EYELINE

David has disappeared.

193. RESUME CLOSE SHOT — SYBIL

An agonized expression.

194. RESUME MARTIN IN BOAT

He continues to row away.

195. RESUME CLOSE SHOT — SYBIL

Looking up from the water to Martin rowing away.

196. LONG SHOT — MARTIN ROWING INTO DISTANCE

SLOW FADE OUT.

Filmography

TIM BURSTALL

THE PRIZE (1960), NULLARBOR HIDE-OUT (1964), 2000 WEEKS (1969), STORK (1971), THE CHILD (segment of LIBIDO) (1973), ALVIN PURPLE (1973), PETER-SEN (1974), END PLAY (1975), ELIZA FRASER (1976). Chairman of Directors, Hexagon Productions, Melbourne.

DAVID BAKER

THE FAMILY MAN (segment of LIBIDO) (1973), THE GREAT McCARTHY (1975), SQUEAKER'S MATE (1977).

JOHN B. MURRAY

THE NAKED BUNYIP (1969), THE HUS-BAND (segment of LIBIDO) (1973). Execu-tive Officer, Film and T.V. Board, Australian Council for the Arts 1973-5. At present Aus-tralian Cultural Attaché, New Delhi, India.

FRED SCHEPISI

THE PRIEST (segment of LIBIDO) (1973), THE DEVIL'S PLAYGROUND (1976). Chairman of Directors, The Film House, Melbourne. On Board of Victorian Film Commission.

The author's initial response—Segment from an interview

HAL PORTER:

I can write dialogue in a short story, where the eye takes what the ear is supposed to hear. I can't draft dialogue onto a film. I can't be dishonest about this. I wrote to the Producers and Directors Guild and told them—I can't do dialogue, I don't want to learn, I haven't time. So instead I sent down three ideas for a film—they chose the wrong one, but that's beside the point —so I then wrote a short story about a boy and the loss of innocence. I think it was incomparably bad. It's not a short story I would permit to be published as such. I was thinking of scenes, of dialogue. I had to do something almost impossible for me as a writer—I had to write dialogue which was to be spoken, not rendered. The moving picture is utterly different from my story. For a start, I don't think a little boy would be particularly shocked at the sight of backsides and sex—he'd think it was pretty exciting and have a bit of a snigger. It wouldn't trigger him into killing. The whole scene where Martin runs away from seeing the lovers in the house is appalling. As if a women who's just been having sex would get up and rush after a kid to soothe his ruffled feelings anyway. You see, I think the truth is different. Little boys are killers. I ought to know, I was a little boy. Not many of them get the opportunity to act out their desires, but this child did. He was lonely, unusually so, and a rival came along to steal the woman he idolised. Simple enough.

Tim used only the beginning and ending of my story—I could, in fact, have given him the idea for it in four minutes in the back of a pub. And he put in a lot of his own dialogue—there was some faultless dialogue in the story that he didn't use.

My family was supposed to be middle class —his were pretty fancy.

I think a director should be able to translate to film what the writer has tried to say. Italians can translate—think of that marvellous film "Death in Venice." The director knew what Thomas Mann meant. Of course that director had more money to spend than Tim Burstall, and he'd have no casting problems. Tim got the boy right anyway—he was very good, and he looked right. Actually Tim did get from A to Z somehow. The film looks all right, although the story has been changed. Of course I'll be around if there was another film in the offing, but next time I'd be on the spot to at least put my point of view.

The directors talk

TIM BURSTALL, DAVID BAKER, JOHN MURRAY, FRED SCHEPISI:

John

I read the boy's story as a sort of "The Innocents", the film on Henry James' "The Turn of the Screw". Take Martin in Hal's story. That kid's mind has a greater depth than perversity. It is apparent in his relationship with the governess. He drowns his rival and then goes and picks a flower out of the garden to present to his beloved as if nothing had happened. The boy's consciousness is much more subtle-astral if you like than a normal boy's. And this is the ingredient you took out by altering it the way you did.

Tim

You're right. But I couldn't believe in Hal's boy. I've never met any of these "astrally conscious" people.

David

I think the crucial change that you made and the one I think goes so completely against Hal's story is that you have removed the element of premeditation from the boy's behaviour. In Hal's story he sets out to deliberately kill his rival. In yours he brings it about—as it were by accident.

Tim

That's right.

David

You believe an audience couldn't sympathise with a deliberate killer?

Tim

Not in the way I wanted them to. For me it was very important that the audience didn't say, "that little bastard", but that they went along with the boy.

David

Why are you so concerned with great dobs of sympathy? It's whether what's up there on the screen holds your attention. I would have thought audiences would have found a boy who commits premeditated murder pretty riveting.

Tim

Like a sort of "Bad Seed?" I suppose it

could be riveting in a way. But I was more interested in the other thing.

Fred

But then as a director you're not interpreting his script, you're entirely changing it.

Tim

That's the issue, I agree. I've obviously said in effect: I don't want to do Hal's script as it stands. I want to use certain parts of it, extend it here, alter it there . . .

Fred

You think it's fair for a director to just use any material as grist for his own mill? What about the integrity of the thing?

Tim

Put it this way Fred. I think you will be forgiven if what you do is okay and you'll be hated forever after if what you do isn't okay. I think that's what you're hoisted on.

David

Absolutely!

Tim

What do you do when you're faced with a script you have reservations about? How many times have you seen directors going ahead with scripts whose faults they know inside out? And how many times have you listened to those same directors pleading afterwards that their show was bad 'cos they had a lousy script?

Fred

So?

Tim

It's not good enough. A director's responsible for the whole thing—script included. An actor can plead he had a bad script and escape to some extent, but a director never can.

Fred

Would it have been better to have refused Hal's script?

Tim

I considered it. But there were so many things in it that attracted me. The mood—the precision of Hal's prose; the nostalgia for place and period, the contrast between the romanticism of the setting and the hard-heartedness of the story; the possibility of making a picture of some complexity. (The danger of course was that the picture would be sunk in atmospherics and impressionism, that it would be lacking in energy.)

David

One of those half-a-mile an hour pictures like "Death in Venice".

John

That's what I question you on Tim. You say that Hal's story was only 7 pages long and would run about 6½ minutes. But it seems apparent to me in your film that this comes out too—that you've padded it out with lyrical sequences, which, speaking for myself, were a little old hat. The struggle through the symbolic forest and wood. Chopping and getting through and overcoming.

David

The old circular staircase.

John

To me it seems to go on a bit long. You really labor your point.

Tim

I don't accept that account. I didn't set out to pad out Hal's script—quite the contrary. And I didn't for that matter set out to be intentionally lyrical. You can point to the ride in the carriage and the boat and climbing the circular staircase and what not, but the reason they were there was to develop the relationship between the governess and the boy.

John

And as the boy rows her in the boat, a stallion on the rise!

Tim

Very D. H. Lawrence, I know, I know. Perhaps it does seem to you a ham-fisted image but it doesn't to me. I wanted the male thing (which a stallion epitomises) connected with the landscape the boy was moving through. For my money there was not a single image in the film that was stuck in for its so-called "symbolic" value. Everything is "symbolic" in some sense. Take the tower. What's a tower? A high point, a place that gives you a large panoramic view of the world. When I stuck the boy up in the tower straight after his father's death, the idea in my head was: "He looks at his threatened estate." And when the birds were flapping round the flag pole, my idea was: "Birds of ill-omen, a vague sort of threat." Is this being lyrical or symbolic or is it just naturalism? Does it matter a bugger what it is?

Fred

But in the last analysis you only agreed to do the film *on your own terms.*

Tim

What other terms can there be? I can only work with what I know. If I'd been asked to

do a script on negro coal-miners in Trinidad I probably would have had very little to draw on. But Hal's story deals with a world I know. I know what a surrogate mother means to a child. I think I'd know what say the class relations between the mother and the governess would be like, etc.

David

But the other part of Hal's world was a deliberate child killer. You knew nothing about that.

Tim

You're right. But in my heart of hearts I don't really believe Hal did either. Haven't you noticed in the story how often he refers to the boy as "enigmatic", "impassive', "inscrutable", "baffling", etc.? That's the internal evidence I think that unconsciously Hal feels the boy lacks credibility.

John

That's a bit easy, Tim.

Tim

It's what I think.

The author's 1977 views: Afterthoughts

HAL PORTER:

Whatever I'll be writing about my story ("The Jetty") and Tim Burstall's heathenizing of it into a film ("The Child") had better be prefaced by an admission. Decades before I knew of Burstalls existence I already disapproved strongly of certain sorts of directors, *strongly*. The "certain sorts" I had in mind were theatre directors. In their near-criminal ranks were such chi-chi play-manglers as infest the Royal Shakespeare Company, and far too many egoists (and egotists) who knew—oh much better than the playwright himself—what the playwright was up to. I'd once innocently thought that, since they're paid, they're patently obliged to use whatever nous and experience they may have to transmute—literally—an author's typed words into three-dimensional and oral action. The important adverb: lit-er-al-ly—at least as literally as the fallings-short of actors, set designers, electricians, stage hands, and other members of the coven allow. It was not, I thought (and still think), any director's function to so manhandle a script that transmutation becomes interpretation.

Admission made, conviction revealed, I now proceed.

When an unknown John B. Murray, on behalf of the Producers' and Directors' Guild (whatever *that* was), wrote inviting a script for a short film I was only too happy to reply that script-writing wasn't my cup of tea. The Guild was not deterred. It was, after all, not a charitable sodality with lily-white ideals, far from, but a predatory collusion of would-be Hal Roaches or Ingmar Bergmans on the hunt for writers. Without writers how can guilds of this kind survive? Therefore a further solicitation, seductively worded: would I submit ideas for a film? This was easier. I submitted three, each a *précis* of about a hundred words. One was chosen. Against a small fee (I forget how much, but there must have been some inducement) I inflated the *précis* to approximately 4,500 words, a sort of short story. It wasn't the sort I'd have written to be *printed* and *read,* but was aimed at actors with dialogue to emit, cameramen with points to make visually, and—the risk of hitting no bull's-eye very great—a director with percipience. It was, in essence, a shooting-script, rather compressed, certainly not in technical jargon, but absolutely lucid.

At the time, during an interview with some hobbledehoy offsider of the Guild, I uttered into one of those recording gadgets that I considered the story "incomparably bad" (i.e. as a short story), and not one "I would permit to be published as such". Now, several years later, a re-reading shows the thing to be, as a short story, not really "incomparably bad", merely tainted, somewhat impure. As a form of shooting-script it's more skilful, thickly clue-ridden, and useful than I'd remembered. Anyway, John B. Murray wrote another of his suave and flattering letters: "The Jetty" was to be filmed. He added a sentence that made me flinch. Tim Burstall was to direct.

Oh dear dear dear dear *dear!*

I should, of course, never have got involved in the first place. I should, at this stage, have backed out like one of those anonymous Shakespearian attendants. I'd already had, you see, a couple of experiences with Burstall's work—one in London (a private screening of "2,000 Weeks"), one in Australia (the script of "Eliza Fraser")—and had every reason to deem backing out a wise move: the experiences, though more or less of a bystander nature, had been curiously bloodcurdling. Both had left me rather unnerved, and quite uneasy. For one thing, as a much older mortal than Burstall, and as an ex-film-addict still lynx-eyed and leery, I instantly

spotted that what he was trying to do wasn't at all what directors of the calibre of D. W. Griffith, F. W. Murnau, Federico Fellini, King Vidor, René Clair, Sergei Eisenstein, and Josef von Sternberg had long ago convinced me was worth trying to do. It wasn't for nothing I'd sat through all those now-called-classic moving pictures, silent and sound. Long before Burstall was conceived I was subliminally garnering a comprehensive knowledge of cinematic conventions, felicitous tricks of technique, *und so weiter*. I needed no theoretical drivel to back up this acquired knowledge, and disdained Freud, Freudians, and Freudian symbolism as fervently as ever Nabokov did. I was astounded and repulsed to find Burstall awash with theories, and a great one for the symbol which he cherished nearly as much as he did the *cliché*. These revelations occurred during the one and only brief encounter we had before filming began.

This was my fault. I'd come up from the country one day, and was Qantasing off to London the next. Two hours was all I could spare to "discuss" the proposed film. Had my pride been in order, and I'd had my wits about me instead of scattered over a wide area of things-yet-to-do and last-minute threads to tie off, this really *would* have been the moment to back out. Encounter and "discussion" only pointed up how vast the distance between us. Let it be said, quite without feeling, that Burstall does shamelessly and happily belong to the "certain sorts of directors" tribe. He and I are also extreme opposites practically all along the line—politically, culturally, morally, theologically, aesthetically and —it now turns out—cinematically. The profoundest chasm separating us is the one that separates all creative men from all non-creative men, the architect, say, from the builder, the fugue-composer from the fugue-player, a Chekhov from a Stanislavski, a Shakespeare from a Peter Hall. It's a chasm only rarely bridged with a worthwhile structure.

The nastiest aspect of the Burstall-Porter encounter was our mutual disesteem. In 1969 I'd been driven to be truthful about "2,000 Weeks", and had turned down an invitation in 1970 to rewrite his own lamentable script for "Eliza Fraser". His disesteem far outran mine. As a director he was, in this, not being unorthodox. Directors, by and large, seem to regard the dramatists and script-writers who keep them employed as highly imperfect workmen. I caught inklings of the disesteem during the "discussion" but was so engaged in decoding his vogue words and mumbo-jumbo into simple English, and in refusing to agree that the end of the story should be changed—he seemed, unbelievably, to be proposing something sub-aqueous and, I think, symbolic—that I neglected to consider, and make arrangements to forestall, whatever else he might have in his addled mind about the rest of the story. His disesteem was, I discovered, very much greater than I'd have believed possible. It amounted in fact to insult.

By the time I returned from abroad the film was at a pre-penultimate stage of processing, and was run off for me. It was fascinating, appalling and infuriating to see the mischief Burstall, who *believes* a director has a God-like responsibility for everything, had perpetrated. It was very shrewd mischief. Since I'd not been about either to stop his vulgarizations, or remove the story from his high-school hands to discreet and preferable anonymity he had had a field day but, although behaving like Whelan the Wrecker, did —the shrewd bit!—leave enough of the plot's strong scaffolding to support his jerry-built alterations. These included some very shopsoiled stuff —which made no point except that an attempt was being made to make a point—with staircases being wistfully sidled down, saplings tomahawked, towers climbed, with "ominous" birds about and a stallion doing its Freudian best for those who have theories about stallions. I went hot and cold with embarrassment as each of these *vieux-jeu* events happened, not because they were Burstall inevitabilities (the sort of film he makes isn't one I'd walk across a road to see), but because my name was being bruited about as that of the script-writer, and they'd be laid at my feet. I went hotter and colder at the Burstall dialogue. I'll never be able to understand how a man with his wordy theorizings and pretensions as a film-maker couldn't sense that, in their particular context in the script, statements such as "Mrs Purchase will you help me to my room" and "You'll understand it all when you grow up" are more hilarious than otherwise. However, it's more than probable that such symbolic and vocal *betises,* outrageous to me, aren't even dimly apparent to Mr and Mrs Joe Blow, and I'm wasting embarrassments.

My true distress lies elsewhere. Burstall took the tension and chill out of the plot by pincering out the final sting, and by making the adults blameworthy and the boy a sort of come-by-chance murderer when the whole point of "The Jetty" was that the adults were essentially harmless, the murderee particularly so, and the boy

sinister, selfish—and a premeditating murderer. I found it particularly offensive when Burstall coarsened the situation by making my 1912 characters behave, not like the human beings they'd been created as, but like the imitations of characters out of any 1960s best-seller by an American Jew. In "The Jetty" an innocent and pleasant young man is deliberately lured to his death by drowning because the boy villain sees him kissing his fiancée among the roses. In "The Child" a lecherous middle-aged cad, who sleeps with the boy's widowed mother, is caught by the boy in *flagrante delicto,* and, having fallen in the river, is left to drown on a sort of boyish impulse. The story mother is merely a selfish gadabout, and her visitor friend merely a charming young woman engaged to marry an agreeable young man. They appear sinister only to the evil boy. In the film he is presented as quite unevil though rather dotty, while both the mother and the visitor are promiscuous with the one dreadful bounder, the visitor cuckoldizing the mother. In short my three nice enough people have to be replaced by a squalid trio filched from Iris Murdoch so that—God help us!—the audience will "go along with the boy" who, filleted of intention and taking on—by contrast with the immoral adults—a late-Victorian goody-goodiness and East Lynne quality, Burstall thinks, should have the sympathy of the general public. I still can't see why it's theatrically better to angle somewhat heavy-handedly for sympathy on the boy's behalf, by making his victim accidental as well as repulsive and expendable, than to let the boy behave as he must, and the sympathy fall where it will (on the murdered fiancé? on the bereaved girl accepting the rose from the murderer?), and the audience's feeling for the boy be other than sympathetic, be a feeling of admiration or rage or shock.

Curiously, the film, the Burstall-Porter mongrel, embarrassing to me as it was (though not to Burstall), seemed to be—according to the reviews I saw—considered the least embarrassing of the four films in "Libido". I wasn't able to judge: watching the film was like looking at a photograph printed from a negative on which two different scenes had been taken. I could keep on keening about lost opportunities, mishandled moments, permissive-age crudities—and about the insult of having a commissioned story mangled and mistranslated, but shall stop.

However, a lesson has been learned. I can draw some comfort from the fact that "The Child" is highly unlikely to tarnish any silver screen ever again; and that I now know that my long-time wary disdain of directors was justified. It has hardened into a distrust brightly striped with contempt. If a director can't do what the writer does, can't literally transmute (as Fellini, say, did for Mann in "Death in Venice") it's much much safer and wiser and kinder to leave the thing in words: "Hamlet" will always defy impeachment, and unblinkingly outlast any number of Hamlets no matter whom—Richard Burbage, Johann Brockmann, Henry Irving, Sarah Bernhardt, Ernesto Rossi, John Gielgud—and the particular Svengali each used, the diabolic director.

Would I then, the interviewing young man asked, still be interested in writing for the films again? I seem to have answered that I might be interested but that, before the chopping and changing started, I'd be on the spot to put my point of view. That was four years ago. Today I'd be tougher. If a film were to be made of something of mine I'd be boringly and maddeningly underfoot protecting the home product so that it wasn't deformed, decorated, blown up, pruned, "interpreted" in any way by some mechanic and his gang of mechanics. Soothing to know there's very little danger of again being "interpreted" (this is how directors spell misrepresented)—most of my writing, thank God, performs the deed it has to well enough not to need the expensive support of those who require its existence to support them.

The final rally

TIM BURSTALL:

Postscript

The Brutal Vulgarizing Director Versus the Creative Writer. Heigh ho!

I can very well understand Hal's annoyance at what I did to his story. But—contrary to what he may say now—I think he forgave me at the time. "It's not my story of course", I remember him saying, "But it works". At the time he found that fact puzzling and now—having read my reasons for the changes I made—he finds it downright insulting.

I'm sorry. I didn't intend to insult Hal for whose writing—whether he likes it or not—I have the greatest respect. One of the ironies of the "Libido" exercise is that it was I who suggested we try and get Hal. When he objected that he was no scriptwriter and no writer of film

dialogue I remember saying that was of absolutely no consequence—what was wanted was a Hal Porter-ish idea for a film—a piece, if you like, of Hal Porter's world.

That I think is what we have in "The Child." That is certainly what as a director I was trying to get onto film. I had no idea—since Hal himself had dismissed "The Jetty" to me as unpublishable—that he saw it in the same light as say *Death in Venice* — a classic masterpiece with which only a "Diabolic Director" would dare to tamper. (The director of *Death in Venice* by the way Hal—since you've suddenly developed into such a film-buff—is Visconti—not Fellini).

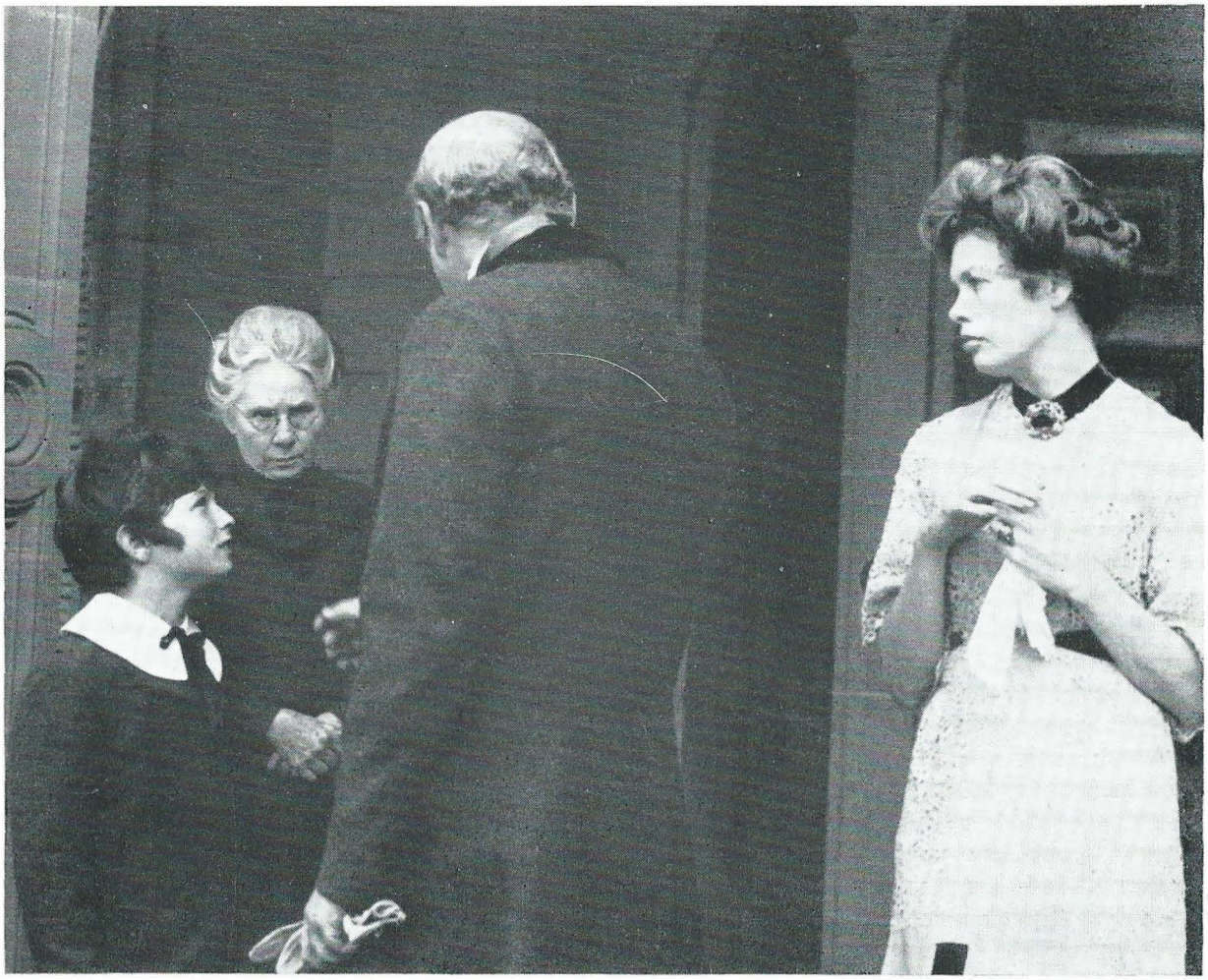
The "Auteur" argument I used in the Symposium discussion (i.e. that the director is responsible for everything that goes into a film including the script) is I'm sure a red rag to most writers. And it's an argument that I invoked principally because the Australian directors I know use the argument that a script is bad all too often as a defense for the shortcomings of their work. I believe directors should be *committed* to the script and sufficiently committed to change it—if they think it is the right thing to do.

On the jetty

Director meets the child

Director,
Governess
and Child

Judy Morris as Sybil, the Governess

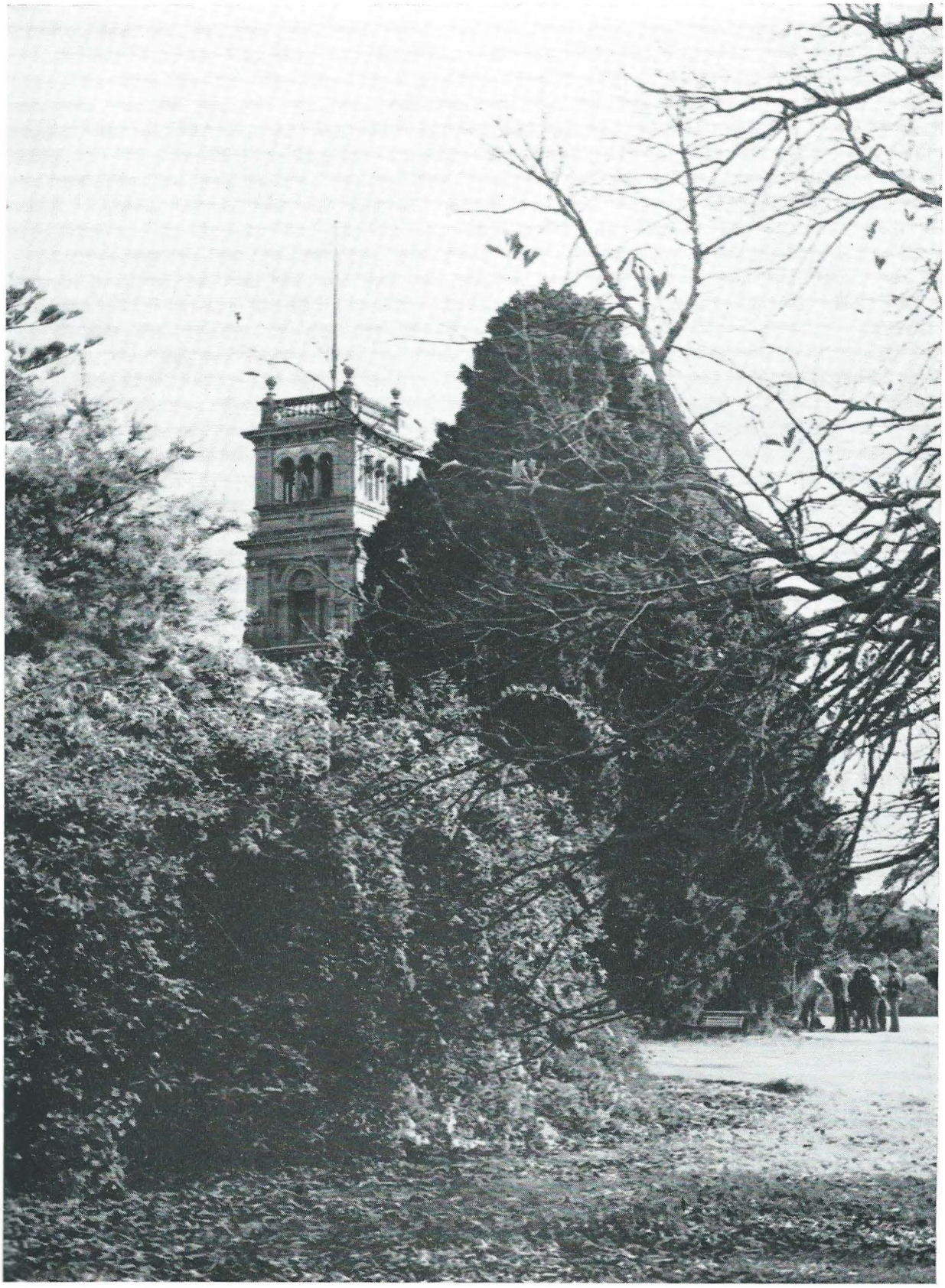


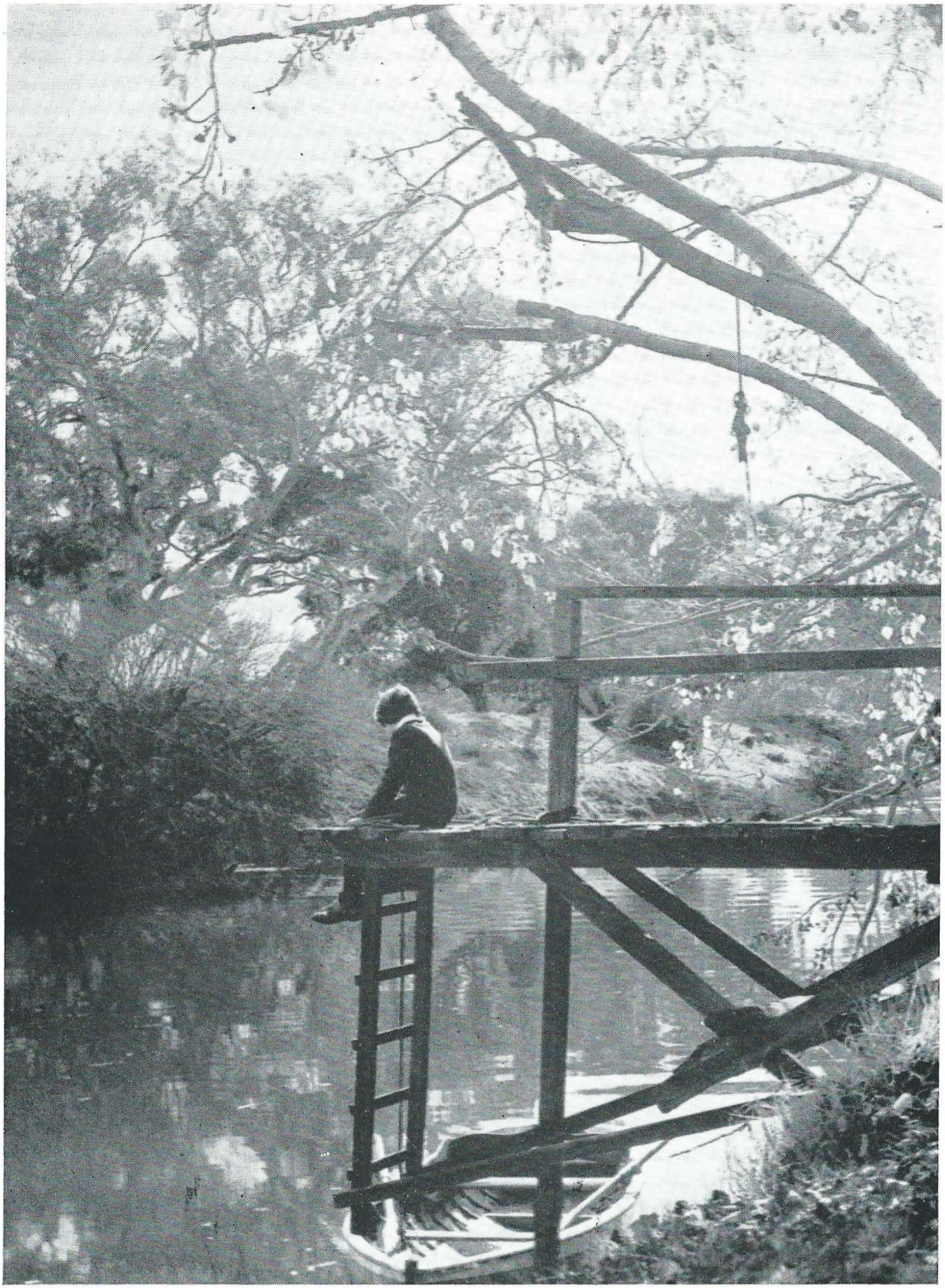
The father (George Fairfax) says goodbye to son Martin (John Williams), the housekeeper (Louise Homfrey) and his wife Rosalind (Jill Forester)

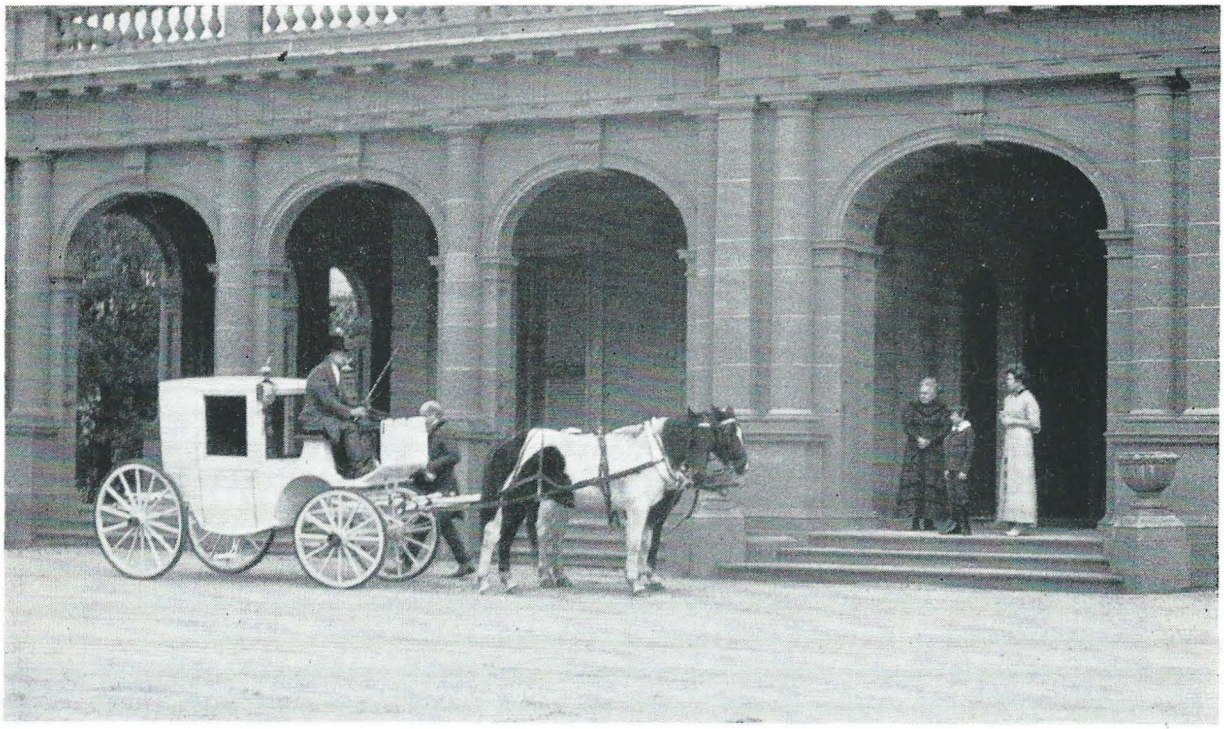
Jill Forester (the mother, Rosalind Beaufort)

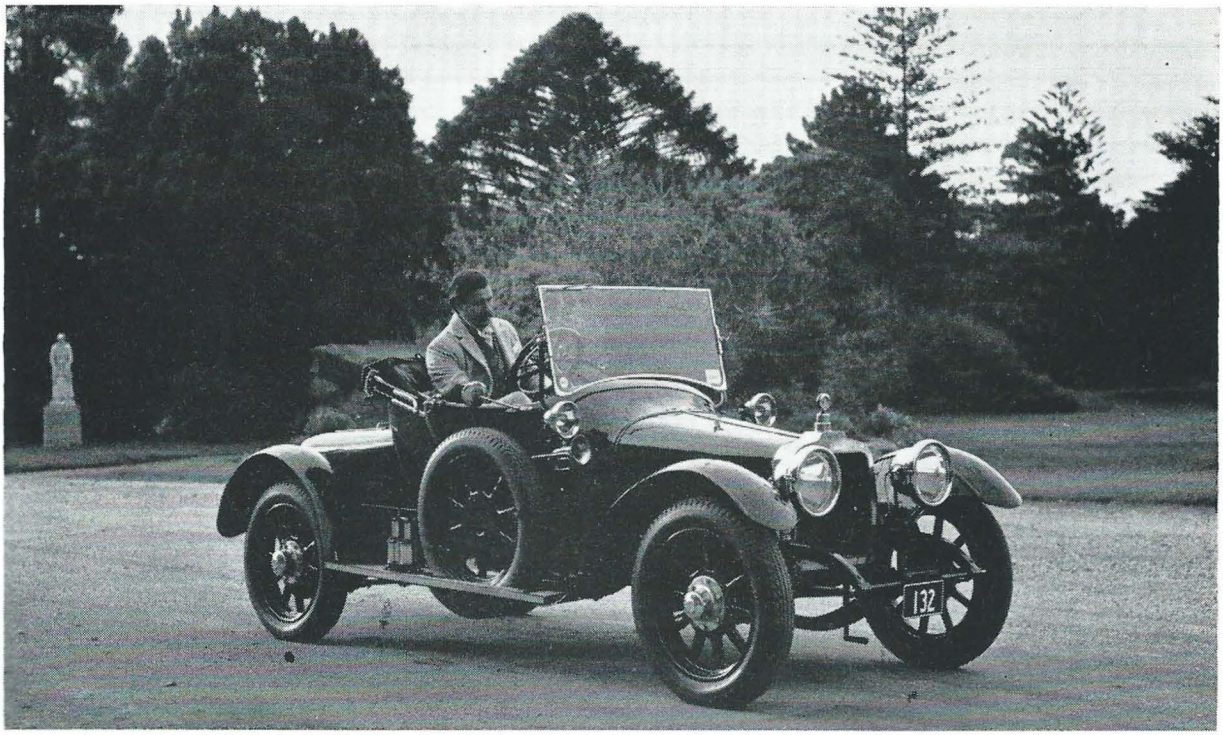
Opposite: The location, the Werribee Park Estate, the old Chirnside estate, built in the 1870s

Below: The coach. The old Daniel Mannix coach reputed to be 135 years old





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GLEN LEWIS

Two Too Honest Films

Few of the recent wave of Australian feature films have looked at the lives of ordinary working people, and even fewer of these have succeeded critically or commercially. Short films are more suited to experimentation in this vein because of their relatively lower cost, and even though they may only reach a restricted audience they still can be quite important in presenting other alternatives to the fairly hackneyed subject matter of most features. Two recent films of this kind are John Ruane's *Queensland* and Steve Wallace's *Love Letters From Teralba Road.*

Love Letters is a nicely controlled short film that you'd like to have been longer. It's about a working class guy who's broken up with his wife on account of his bad temper and his violence. He's previously beaten her up, now they're separate and he's trying to persuade her to return to him by writing a series of love letters. These letters are quite unlike his normal manner towards her; they're flowery and formal, while in person he's businesslike and rather cold towards her. Partly because of the difference between these letters and what she knows about him, she doesn't trust him. He's living away in another town with his mum, who wants to keep him under her own wing; she can't understand why his wife won't come and live with them in the same house. The wife also has a girl of about eleven, who's just pubescent. In one nice sequence, after his wife has refused to sleep with him due to his roughness, he's left bereft on the couch until his daughter comes out to offer him a pillow and he gives her a more than paternal goodnight kiss. With such small touches as these a convincing sense of claustrophobic intensity in their situation is conveyed.

Perhaps the main flaw in *Love Letters'* dramatic structure is in the wife's character. There are too few clues about why she married him in the first place, or whether she'll go back to him in the end. But mostly it's an impressive film in its understatement and sense of purpose. The final shot of the (Newcastle?) steelworks stays in your mind as a symbol of what's on both of their backs.

Queensland, on the other hand, is less satisfactory technically and dramatically, yet there is still an underlying sense of conviction to the film which makes up for its more obvious defects. Like *Love Letters* it really deserves a lengthier treatment. The story-line revolves around Doug, a factory worker in his forties who's going nowhere fast, drinking and chain-smoking himself into the ground, and daydreaming about getting out of the miserable Melbourne winter to sunny Queensland. That's a very nice touch for two reasons. It conjures up the old image of Queensland as a workers' paradise — a kind of Australian deep south and California wrapped into one; and secondly, it's doubly ironic because he and his pals never get there. A series of minor accidents stemming mainly from their own personal inabilities continually frustrate their attempts to leave. The final shot is a slow long one of Doug's old Holden sputtering aimlessly into a maze of red-roofed suburban houses.

Once again, ordinary working people are portrayed as caught in personal traps against the ugly background of grindingly routine jobs and a depressing physical environment. However the film lacks as firm a dramatic centre as *Love Letters* because the main personal relationship is between Doug and his pensioner off-sider Aub, played beautifully by Bob Karl, and this is interrupted half-way through by the arrival on the scene of Doug's old girlfriend Marg. Her role, just as the role of the wife in *Love Letters*, is largely passive

— perhaps even more so. Another main defect is the script. There are far too many heavy silences, which are usually broken by Doug's monotonous use of four letter words. This may have been a device intended to heighten the sense of the character's alienation, but it comes through more in practice as a feeling of woodenness imposed on them by an inflexible script.

Both *Love Letters* and *Queensland* are basically serious films. Probably they are too serious. There is an oppressive sense of futility about *Queensland*, where *Love Letters* has more of a sense of prickly tension and anxiety. But perhaps the greatest weakness of both movies as depictions of contemporary Australian working class life is that they show so few signs of really being set in the present. *Queensland* especially, in some ways seems to be more of a reflection of the old ocker Australia of the 1950s, when the mateship world was so dense and impenetrable. And because they are imprecisely set in time they can offer no suggestions about how the characters trapped in the films might ever manage to fight back. Part of the dilemma of both films here is their unswervingly realistic treatment. Although Ruane's production company is entitled Film Noir productions, there's no sense of that experimentalism and expressionism in camera or lighting techniques which was a feature of some of the Hollywood forties 'black' social comment films. Rather, these two short films are closer to normal Australian features in their style of story-telling than to the experimental cinema of Aggy Read, David Perry, and Albie Thoms.

So finally, because of the sum-total of their minor flaws, their lack of a clearly identifiable contemporary setting, and their lack of formal adventurousness, they fall short of that sense of tragedy and explicit protest which films about the situation of oppressed people should aim for. Still, they are a tremendous improvement on *Alvin Purple, Eliza Fraser*, or *High Rolling*. They are honest films about an important subject.

Winning Post

At the finish there was a post
stolid and wooden and standing
alone with the winner who had
left his friends for company of
a post.

Strung out behind him,
the retinue developing
sympathy, forming company;
they began unwinding, laughing
at their failures, ignoring
the finish once the race was run.

The post held no significance
more than a timber obstruction
to be drawn from the earth, dragged
away as lumber.

The winner
tried to merge back with the people,
but had to part company
first with the post whom he had thought
an important companion where
he may lift a leg any time.

JOHN BLIGHT

DAVID BAKER

Bias

The Producers and Directors Guild of Australia in Melbourne at one of its monthly dinner meetings recently debated the question of content and its bias: human enrichment or commercial considerations? It was not much of a success.

The PDGA is formed from producers and directors of the performing arts. It aspires to be a professional guild. Our members are mainly those who are gregarious, underchallenged and/or discontented and see in our association a means to advance themselves and their profession through political means. Generally speaking, successful, busy producers don't belong. We are a moribund organisation.

Our members know this but cannot accept it. Most of them are attractive as individuals. But meeting and reacting together we show an ugly side, contemptuous of ourselves and maddened by our own confusions and frustrations, unable to do anything about it or come to terms with ourselves we bathe in paranoia and we lust for blood. Why is this so? Are we unique? Our work obliges us to make some sense of a confused world of values but are we putting up an honest fight? Do we really endure exemplary experiences?

The debate got under way: arid formulae or human enrichment? In a materialist society most of our members just get by. About half of 'em are structured into bureaucracies of various sorts. Another third are directly subsidised. One sixth struggle on in some independent freelance capacity operating in a disordered market place. The bureaucrats envy the independent's freedom and the independents envy the established positions of the bureaucrats. In a world in which 700 hours of TV are transmitted each week in the Melbourne area, nine radio stations scream incessantly and 10,000 new titles are published each year I would have thought the question of discrimination in popular culture would have found a few buyers among our members. Not so. We're deafened by noise but what's being said?

Another curious feature of this particular evening was members' reluctance to speak up for commercial considerations. We displayed a mixture of maidenly reticence and distrust about dough. No-one had much conviction that Reg Grundy, Harry Miller or Graham Burke had much of a case to put or answer. We don't feel connected to them or they to us yet our fellow citizens have accorded these chaps the only prize they feel's worth giving. Hector connects. So Hector scores a prize. Most members feel they never can connect in this way nor ought they and I can only assume they feel a deep ambivalence about those who do or try to. Like the critics we're very high-minded. Well, where *is* the action? No one knows and most don't care any longer if they ever did. That's what they say. But I don't believe them.

Cynthia Finney (Al's sister) led for the negative. She opened up hot and strong, the purity and dark brilliance of her venom a sight to behold. The air fumed with bile. Gifted, romantic Cynthia destroyed the evening and the question which haunts her and us all which we cannot answer or avoid. We loved her for it as we winced. We hate these evenings but we can't stay away. Many of us retire hurt for a couple of months and decide we simply cannot stand any more after these humiliating occasions.

Yet we come back. It's hellish but it's our hell and no-one else understands. It's true Cynthia was under some strain. Two of her speakers dropped out at the last minute and she thereupon decided to speak for the whole team! Four speeches one after the other! Happily, her furious fire was momentarily quenched by Betty Pounder who spoke up simply and sincerely for the human delights of escapist fantasy. We couldn't understand much of what Cynthia was saying as she

read her stuff so quickly. But we knew the tone of her voice.

Outside our dingy meeting place the world roared on: hijacking, boozing, designing killer satellites and glumly watching television. Why are we satisfied with so little? We are effectively excluded from the medium of our age. Of total transmission hours Australian audiences watch 65% filmed drama of which our share is 3%. Poultry farmers, inter-city road hauliers or automobile manufacturers wouldn't put up with it. let me assure you. We're in a classic bind. We feel an urge to bounce off our world but our fellow citizens feel safer copying stuff or buying it off the shelf and this painful frustration sets up a crucifying resonance among us. It's like Utah Development. We wouldn't lay it on the line when the going was tough. But we don't like it when they scoop off the cream. Ideas are much harder than coal. We're third rate duplicates or retarded primitives discontented either way. No wonder Cynthia was wild.

What a cage full of wild animals! Of course we brought it on ourselves. People might say we should have known better but I wouldn't. John Ellis said something nice about Shakespeare but his remarks were lost in screams of rage. It must be great to live in a serenely prosaic world, have a good steady job and pick your nose in a Holden at the traffic lights as you drive to work each morning just like everybody else. We're not insane. We're not naturally masochistic or insensitive to joy. I suppose we're obsessives but we *are* human. It's just that we'd like to take ourselves seriously but the cards are stacked against us.

In cinema the party's over. Our box office has fallen away by 40%, our budgets are up by 40% and promotion and cost of theatres by 40%. Europe's a disaster area. UK admissions are 15% what they were in the mid fifties. We're in the middle of a vast change in social habit and cultural need. People don't want cinema any more. Or not so much. P. Adams puts out a good box office performer but he can't make any money. Film bureaucracies spring up like mushrooms. It's sad that all this activity arrived at the end of an area. If we'd had anything like it in the mid sixties we'd all have been in clover. It takes the media three years to catch up with what's happening, the politicians get it three years after that and the public registers the news about itself three years later. And now we're developing a nationalised industry more and more cautious and unsure of itself. Depend upon it — public servants ain't no buccaneers!

Cynthia disintegrated with rage and the fireworks really started. People hurled stuff. Deborah waved her leg in the air. Ah, dear reader, if you feel a warm impure glow at this spectacle of human pain it's because you know BHP directors meeting in their brilliant boardrooms aren't all that different. Or jam factory general managers or plodding union secretaries up at the THC.

We are involved in an effort to reconcile manic and disordered forces. Where are the barricades? Nobody knows. What is the enemy? He is dark and indistinct. Fred is having his moment with god. He is getting a very good press right now. They *chant* his praises. Fred is a peasant saint. He is spending a million. Let us pray he will survive this fiery encounter. Tim spent a million. "Alvin", "Petersen" and "Eliza" are doing good business in purgatory. The devil liked "Eliza" especially. Everyone's fleeing to Sydney. That's where all the high-steppers are going. Maybe Sydney's more stylish limbo. Their footwork's very fancy. But I'd rather stay here with the friends I know.

The caterer started to turn off the lights and gather up the glasses. Charitable friends were picking Cynthia up off the floor and sticking the bits back together again when an awful voice sounded. Everyone froze. God spake thus to us, with plenty of echo. "Fear not Cynthia," He spake, "and PDGA members." A few fellows looked furtively for the exits. "Kneel blast you!" He yelled. All kneeled. "Cynthia," He continued in more kindly tones. "Cynthia. Take it easy. I know you're a bit cut up because the AFC's turned you down on your latest film that's got money written all over it. It is indeed a bitter blow. But consider this. Those frightful turds wouldn't know if you were up 'em. *I* know you've got the goods. Take courage! Hack $30,000 off the budget then go back to them after you've made it and stick it on for promotion. Sell 'em the Polish rights. Shoot it on 16 mm. Do anything you bloody well can. But get that bloody picture made! And speak to me not of suffering. It is only because you are in a high-risk capital intensive racket you feel demented and specially accursed! Think of drunken jugglers in night clubs and seedy TV variety show gag writers. They have their own little feelings too, you know. They are all my children. You are nothing special. No, I'll change that. You *are* special. Specially dear to Me. Unlike jam manufacturers or codgers who make a crust organising conventions for run-down

paint salesmen in Albury you are on about intangible dreams. And that is nobly difficult. But do not let me catch you boring Christ out of everyone like this again! One last word only. Go for the money, Cynthia! Go for the money! Farewell!"

It was sad midnight and morbid. Everyone felt purged and humble and a bit bucked God had turned up. He's always welcome but He hadn't been for the last few meetings. In a feeble voice Cynthia demanded strong drink. Her recuperative powers are astonishing. People gathered in subdued little groups and muttered over our monthly intake of junk mail from other beleaguered outfits like 3ZZ and the AFI. Human enrichment or commercial considerations! Insane ambition! I think I'll give the PDGA a rest for a bit. I don't want to learn anything or forget anything of our Dostoevskian revels but I think I'll take a holiday and get myself fit. And when I've replenished my store of pudding and fight I'll come among my brothers and we'll appear to each other in a shower of gold.

THE STORM

Untidy heat: winds
quietly gathering

inside you, grass
the colour of wheat

trees balancing
their jugs of leaves

horizons taut
as rubber bands.

And a blue filling
the sky to its brim.

Now it darkens
and flows through you.

GARY CATALANO

Australian Scenes and Scenarios

KEITH CONNOLLY

Disappointing though it must have been for him, the failure of Fred Schepisi's film "The Chant of Jimmy Blacksmith" to crack it for an award at the recent Cannes film festival is less than a tragedy for Australian film.

The fact that Schepisi's film was selected for judging at Cannes, the world's major competitive festival, is in itself substantial recognition. He should be able to sell the film overseas, although whether it finally makes a profit is a question hedged by considerations other than its undoubted distinction.

To be honest — and certainly intending neither disrespect nor disregard for one of our best filmmakers — I realised that my reaction to the Cannes jury's verdict was curiously ambivalent. Of course I wished Schepisi, a director I admire professionally and like personally, every success.

But I also couldn't dismiss a sneaking sense of relief when the news came from Cannes. So much bulldust about the Australian film industry had piled up in the weeks preceding Cannes — a lot coming from people who should know better — that one began to dread the consequences of "Jimmy Blacksmith" scooping the top honors, as the grapevine-swingers were predicting it would.

Such a result, however well-merited, would have been used to inflate further the already overblown image of the Australian film industry. Australian film is near the end of a heady decade of revival and expansion. But it's not about to conquer the world, as a casual observer who took the pre-Cannes euphoria at face value, might easily suppose.

The Australian Film Commission, overlording the Australian selling mission at Cannes, unrolled 16 new features in the market place. The wise guys of world cinema, who came to taste and try, but not necessarily buy, could not but have been impressed.

At time of writing, the bids aren't in. But it should be remembered that big deals simmering promisingly in the Riviera sun also have a regrettable tendency to evaporate. Nor should we be carried away by the very real advances and achievements of Australian film in the last decade, when it has made the greatest comeback since Lassie.

And just as the nation's almost uninterrupted growth and prosperity for a quarter-century was due to probably unique economic and historical factors, it would be less than realistic to expect the film industry's salad days to continue indefinitely.

Even Hollywood has been through bad times, particularly since the studio system broke up. France, the first and arguably the best, filmmaking country, has its vintage years — and seasons of blight. Italy's postwar triumph of neorealism gave rise to Hollywood-on-the-Tiber delusions, long since crumbled, Britain's once-proud industry is in almost total eclipse.

Sure, London's National Film Theatre recently staged a season of Australian films, to rapturous applause. But tell that to the cold-eyed British distributors, who wouldn't have a bar of a lovely film like "Storm Boy", finally sold to British TV for a negligible sum.

So one's caution is not exactly unjustified. Of course, the proliferating official corporations, commissions and boards are not unaware of these things. But their professional woods are dark and deep, they have promises to keep and (hopefully) many miles to travel.

In the relatively brief history of world cinema, no nation of our size has yet sustained a boom for much beyond a decade. Even the Swedes, with a lot of past government help (and Bergman, don't forget) aren't making many waves, old or new, these days.

I'm *not* contending that Australian film has no future. A literate and still-prosperous country will never be totally without film-makers, certainly not one with large TV networks and a film school whose graduates are now entering the industry.

To assess the future of Australian film, though, we really should begin at the beginning — and some people could be surprised at just how deep Australia's film roots are. They predate Hollywood — and federation — and are among the world's earliest.

It can be argued that the first narrative feature was not, as most histories have it, Edwin S. Porter's "The Great Train Robbery", made in the USA in 1903, but a curiosity called "Soldiers of the Cross", made by a Major Joseph Perry of the Salvation Army and first shown in the Melbourne Town Hall in 1900.

Shot on a tennis court in Malvern, it combined slides and live action, presumably running to feature length (no copy exists — the fate of most early Australian films).

Australia's film story falls into four clear periods — the silent era, in which production was intermittent but occasionally vigorous; the coming of sound, with production gradually waning; a long drought — then the resurgent 1970s.

Before the talkies, Australia had been one of the innovators. Australian film-makers made several longer features before D. W. Griffith followed the Italians in reaching beyond the standard two-reeler of the time. Australian theatrical entrepreneurs, such as the Taits, backed several films.

By the time sound made film-making a much more expensive enterprise, "going to the pictures" was the nation's major recreation, and the cinemas were almost totally controlled by, or tied to, overseas interests, chiefly Hollywood. Australian film-makers had limited prospects of reaching the general public unless they, too, were part of the system. Union Theatres, forerunner of today's Greater Union organisation, set up Cinesound Studios to produce Australian films.

Ken G. Hall, consciously imitating Hollywood B-pictures in style, but employing popular local symbols like Dad and Dave, as well as outdoor adventure-drama topics, in the 1930s made numerous features that were commercially successful, but pretty banal.

After the war, however, the circuit lost interest in Australian production, Cinesound was sold to TV and Hall himself became a TV executive.

A more important film-maker than Hall was Charles Chauvel, a doughty independent who overcame innumerable setbacks and frustrations to make, over a period of 22 years, seven films celebrating mateship, pioneering, and the Australian fighting man. His last work, "Jedda", was about Aborigines.

After Chauvel, two decades of almost total silence followed, broken by visits of some big overseas names — among them Lewis Milestone, Fred Zinnemann, Stanley Kramer, Michael Powell, Tony Richardson — to make films set in Australia. They brought stars and key personnel with them, but Australian actors and technicians also got a look in. These productions, plus the advent of TV in 1956, helped keep film-making skills not just alive, but kicking.

Then came the Spring, heralded in 1969 by an unlikely cuckoo in Tim Burstall with "2000 Weeks". A somewhat glossy examination of the cultural cringe, it was — undeservedly — a critical and financial disaster. Yet, looking back, there's little doubt that Burstall's film, gloomily regarded at the time as abortive, marked the rebirth of Australian cinema.

An even more unlikely participant in the delivery was John Gorton, then Prime Minister. Whatever else Gorton did, or failed to do, in his uneasy years at the head of the Liberal-CP government, he was jolly good to Australian film-making. The establishment of the Film Development Corporation, now the Australian Film Commission, opened a pullulating era of government film-funding with, ultimately, every state climbing on the cinematic bandwagon.

There have been almost as many steps backward as forward, but the flowering of Australian films in the 1970s undoubtedly flows from the establishment of official bodies empowered to fund, foster and, in some cases, actually produce films. The fact that governments were heavily involved financially also emboldened private investors. (The politics and practice of government activity in film-making is an ideological minefield too vast and too complex to canvass here).

Also active in the renaissance (and, given the Florentine diversity of his cultural interests, far more congruously) was Phillip Adams. In 1970, Adams produced, and John B. Murray directed, a witty pastiche called "The Naked Bunyip", which cheekily tested a more relaxed moral climate. Most importantly, however, the film was a trail-blazer in that they broke through the big-exhibitor barrier (which, they kept insisting, was largely illusory, anyway) by promoting marketing, distributing and exhibiting the film himself.

That did it. Encouraged by the confirmed atmosphere of public acceptance and accessibility, Burstall scored with two sex comedies, "Stork" (1971) and "Alvin Purple" (1973). Bruce Beresford, who had been making thoughtful, artistic, documentaries in Britain, returned in 1971 to direct for Adams that ultimate in ockerism, "The Adventures of Barry McKenzie". Applying the marketing know-how acquired earlier, Adams scored smashing box-office results which paved the way for more serious films, also directed by Beresford.

After a quarter-century that produced but a handful of indigenous features, Australia began to turn out more than a dozen a year.

Some are best forgotten, but there was quality, too, as significant directors emerged — Peter Weir in 1971 with "Homesdale"; Fred Schepisi, 1973, with a segment of "Libido"; Tom Cowan, 1973, "The Office Picnic"; John Duigan, 1974, "The Firm Man"; Michael Thornhill, 1974, "Between Wars".

The South Australian Film Corporation succeeded magnificently when Ken Hannam, returned from overseas, in 1975 directed "Sunday Too Far Away" (in spite of unevenness caused by post-production cutting, it remains my favorite Australian film), and Henri Safran, from Europe, directed a lyrical masterpiece aimed at children: "Storm Boy".

Weir, so far our most individual and accomplished film-maker — British critic Alexander Walker calls him "the antipodean Antonioni" — went on to three winners: "The Cars That Ate Paris" (1974), "Picnic at Hanging Rock" (1975), and last year's "The Last Wave". His films, fantasising upon social reality, exert a compelling ambience of unease and gathering menace.

Strong-minded Schepisi, who owns his own production business, wrote and directed the autobiographical "The Devil's Playground", about a school for potential Roman Catholic priests, before the international success of "The Chant of Jimmy Blacksmith".

Beresford, thoughtful and precise, was dismissed in some quarters as merely a specialist in ockerism after two Barry McKenzie movies and his adaptation of David Williamson's "Don's Party". The insight he showed into Henry Handel Richardson's purpose in "The Getting of Wisdom" would not have surprised anyone who saw his British documentaries, particularly one that beautifully interpreted the paintings of Rene Magritte.

The others haven't quite lived up to earlier portents. Cowan's subsequent "Promised Woman" (1974, about Greek migrants) and "Journey Among Women" (1977, a fantasy on feminism) were imaginative, but flawed. One of Australia's finest cinematographers, Cowan obviously has a lot to offer.

Duigan could be on the way. His uneven "The Trespassers", set in the Vietnam protest movement, was actually a provoking examination of male-female dependency. At time of writing, I haven't seen his "Mouth to Mouth" (shot by Cowan) which is about disoriented, unemployed, young people. The film has been booked to premiere at a Melbourne cinema, something of an achievement in itself for a low-budget, serious Australian movie.

Thornhill, formerly the film critic of "The Australian", followed his 1974 "Between the Wars" — which didn't fully grasp the issues it raised — in 1976 with "FJ Holden", a naturalistic depiction of teenagers in Bankstown. A little cool for my taste, the film nevertheless presented the young people with a lucid honesty as sharp-eyed as it was understanding.

In Hannam and Donald Crombie, Australia clearly has two more very considerable talents whose later films were not as impressive as they might have been. Hannam directed the nostalgic "Break of Day" in 1976 and then the atmospheric would-be thriller "Summerfield" — both interesting, but deficient, films. Crombie successfully blended nostalgia and social comment in "Caddie" (from the Dymphna Cusack-inspired autobiography of a Sydney barmaid) and continued the nostalgia cycle with "The Irishman", in release at the moment.

Compared to these later arrivals, Burstall, at 49, is almost a father figure.

His key place in the story of the Australian cinema's revival may be more significant as precursor than practitioner. A facile director, he appears in later years to have cast himself as a latter-day Ken Hall, as head of Hexagon, the production company associated with the Village-Roadshow-cinema chain.

Burstall last directed in 1976, when his "Eliza Fraser" was, up to that time, Australia's biggest-budget film. Featuring, among others, English stars Susannah York and Trevor Howard, with original screenplay by David Williamson, it suffered from an all-too-patent concern for the widest-possible market. The contrast between this stylistic mish-mash and Patrick White's novel "Fringe of Leaves", based on the same events, is instructive.

Burstall has directed more features than any Australian since Chauvel and Hall. His best film was the widely-misunderstood "Petersen" (1974), about the frustrated attempt of a former football star to reorient his life.

If Burstall represents the old guard, most of the others mentioned belong to an established middle generation.

They in turn are being challenged by an even younger group, not exactly young Turks, who nevertheless display a dispassionate irreverence that promises interesting features.

The most recognisable talents are Stephen Wallace (my view is based on one very striking short feature, "Love Letters from Taralba Road"), Gillian Armstrong, who impressed with "The Singer and the Dancer", from an Alan Marshall story, and Phil Noyce, whose full-length "Newsfront" followed a 50-minute feature "Back Roads".

So where does Australian film go from here?

Without pretending to possess a crystal ball, one gathers some idea of what could be ahead through present trends in film-making content and policies — examined in the light of past experience, here and overseas.

A change in content is clearly underway, with a swing from nostalgia. The nostalgia lode may have been overworked in recent years, but it has been less obsessive than some criticism would indicate.

Of 58 features released in the last three years, only 16 could be fairly described as nostalgic in theme or atmosphere. The fact that most of the bigger budgets were expended on that 16 may account for the lopsided impression.

Nostalgia, of course, has been a temptingly safe bet for film-makers trying to cajole support from investors and corporation assessors. It is true, too, that some of the bigger productions did indeed wallow in lush period settings and blandly inoffensive reminiscence: "Break of Day", Kevin Dobson's "The Mango Tree" (from Ronald McKie's fruity novel) and, the most indulgent of all, John Power's "The Picture Show Man".

In contrast to this tendency, there have been other films with hard-nosed contemporary themes — Ebsen Storm's "27A" (alcoholism and human rights), Tom Jeffrey's "The Removalists" (from the Williamson play about police brutality), Bert Deling's "Pure S" (drugs).

Another frequent, and more soundly-based, complaint about modern Australian films is that they are recessive, by which the critic usually means a reluctance to put one's ideological cards on the table. Provided the film-makers hold any . . . some of them seem to be seized with nothing more than a desire to produce a film that people will pay to see (no crime, to be sure, but a sure cause of artistic flatulence).

The worst aspect of Australia's cinematic recovery has been that too much money has gone on beautiful packages around anaemic contents.

I'm not pleading for more "message" movies, although, patently, they're what I prefer. But I *do* say that the first requirement of any worthwhile film is a well-stated theme, a clear indication of intent. It needn't be something intense, serious or "significant", any more than it must bear a message, even hold a point of view. The choice is boundless, from social comment to antic spoofery and, yes bless us, nostalgia, but the theme's the heart of that most unique quality of cinema, emotional accessibility.

Caution about content is, however, understandable in a climate of financial uncertainty, with budgets increasingly difficult to amass. A temptation to equate appeal with causing the least-possible offence can easily become a predominant attitude.

But it goes deeper than that. Phillip Adams put it like this a couple of years ago, when film finance was a good deal easier to come by: "Australia is such a bland, easy-going nation . . . the significant film industries develop in countries with social problems, where there are class wars and political despotism. It is easy to achieve proficiency and professionalism at a technical level — we've done that for years in our television commercials — but to make significant feature films you need *content*".[1]

Adams was indicting his fellow film-makers, and it's undoubtedly true that too few of them are people with something to say and a burning determination to say it. Admittedly, speaking out is always the hardest way, a way that won't become any smoother. The kerfuffle over the rejection by the Minister for Home Affairs, Mr Ellicott, of Film Australia's projected feature based on the David Ireland novel, *The Unknown Industrial Prisoner* has ominous implications. But this question, also, is snagged with too many considerations, such as the role of Film Australia, for it to be fully discussed within the present article. So I'll confine myself to two points.

Firstly, and most disturbingly, the fact that the minister canned a film of acute social relevance

[1] Cinema Papers, March-April, 1976.

(he insisted that his decision was prompted chiefly by doubts about the project's commercial prospects). Much opinion submitted on the proposed treatment (co-authored by Alan Seymour) was that Ireland's theme of working-class alienation had been captured effectively.

Secondly, attitudes that emerged during the debate. Defending his decision in Parliament, Mr Ellicott tabled assessments, same favorable, from leading film people. The view that struck me most, however, was that of Graham Burke, a member of the Australian Film Commission and the head man of Village-Roadshow.

Vigorously rejecting the proposal, he said, among other things: "The message is labored and one that perhaps had more relevance in 1925 . . . it will play to the comfortable converted and after the first week, when the Gucci socialists and pipe-smoking educators have been, I think the word of mouth will be bad . . ."

Coming as they do from such a prominent cinema figure, Mr Burke's comments throw considerable light on what people seeking to make films on contemporary, socially-concerned subjects are up against.

So much for external difficulties. What are the chief shortcomings within the industry itself?

The most frequent complaint is about the quality of script-writing, but recriminations on this score can be a convenient cop-out for other, wider, faults.

The importance of a film's screenplay is self-evident, but it should always be seen as a variable factor in the film-making process — far more so, for instance, than in stage drama. The film script is never really finite, it frequently, and necessarily, undergoes reworkings by others, particularly the director.

A poor, or insufficiently-developed, script can destroy a film. But the film is always ultimately the work of the director. How it turns out depends on his vision and judgment — and that includes responsibility for, and use of, the script. One director went on record recently with the surprising admission that he had proceeded with a script he wasn't happy about.

If the auteur theory needed further exemplification (it doesn't) the last decade of Australian cinema surely provides it. The real successes have been the work of directors who know exactly what they want and how to put it on film: Weir, Schepisi, Beresford. A director is far more than the able skipper of a diverse crew of talents, although he must be that, too. It is the director's vision that the audience finally judges.

The Australian Film Commission made its biggest overseas sales bid at Cannes. The *immediate* future of Australian film-making could hinge on just how much of that bulldust turns to golddust. But don't hold your breath.

After the prolific recent past, there has been a production hiatus in Australia, with projects hanging fire in anticipation of promised tax concessions. Investment obviously needs prompting. The cold, hard truth is that a film must gross at least four times its budget to make any return. With most feature budgets edging toward the million mark, some higher, overseas sales become essential.

One doesn't need an old-buddy rating in Hollywood to realise that only a small percentage of Australian films will make it in the world market. Despite the blah from Cannes, a more realistic indication of prospects can be gained from the "Storm Boy" experience.

So what happens now? There are several scenarios, mostly predicated on the boom being over. The gloomiest is that as the economy deteriorates, private investment dries up altogether and governments lose interest, Australian film retreats to square one-and-a-half (while there's TV, we'll always have *some* film production). Another sees overseas investment, Hollywood-inspired, saving the day (with saviors like that, who'd need Hades — the British film industry's parlous state is due in considerable measure to a flight of U.S. capital).

Mike Thornhill, now a director of the NSW Film Commission, speculates whether the Australian film industry should concentrate on just a few specific overseas areas, beyond the domestic market.

Other, more optimistic, appraisals see a reasonably-healthy tomorrow, provided Australian film makes intelligent use of its resources. Ken Hall, who surely has a right to be heard, believes that Australia is making far too many features and should concentrate its energies on fewer, and strictly entertainment-oriented, films.

There is yet another approach, one with little appeal for those who see film-making as showbiz razzle-dazzle. Young director James Ricketson enunciates this viewpoint in the latest issue of "Cinema Papers". (Incidentally, if Australian films were as good as the industry's informed quarterly journal, there would be little to worry about):

> It would be foolish to assume that government funding will continue indefinitely and there can be no doubt that the industry, as it is

presently structured, would die if the funding ceased.

Ricketson believes that Australian film should establish itself on what he rather unfortunately calls "poor cinema" — budgets limited to between $50,000 and $200,000, and a more economical approach to production and distribution. He sees these policies making the industry more economically viable, diversifying its films, developing a more discerning audience and improving artistic content.

There's a lot to this — and it may be the best option. Films made under these conditions would obviously need to concentrate on theme over spectacle. There are obvious parallels, here, with the flowering of indigenous theatre in the 1960s.

The sort of smaller Australian film recommended wouldn't need overseas sales. But the odds are they would be just the thing to appeal at festivals and to the very considerable U.S. and European art house circuits. The benefits to Australia would be far greater — and much less costly — than attempting to match Hollywood at its own game. The prospects of doing that are, anyway, negligible — and who the hell wants to?

This may seem like siege mentality. But it's a lot more realistic than some of the bigger'n'better hoopla we've heard lately. Moreover, it's an approach that not only promises survival in form, but flowering in content. And which film did *you* think more of: "The Seventh Seal" or "The Sound of Music"?

floating fund

Our thanks to the following contributors, without whose help we would not be able to maintain our functions.

$200 P; $72 KI; $30 Anon; $20 JMcD; GP; $12 JB, Anon, AD, ML, BNS, MT, MK, MTCH; $10 VO'C, HB; $8 EC; $7 JD, NG; $5 AJ; $4 AD, BW, MM, TE, JMcK, TD, MG, RE, HH; $2 LP, LF, JB, PN, DW, AH, HF, BC, HdeJ, AC, DF, NS, PM, YG, WA, RG, TIM, VB, ER, CC, AS, MR, LR, LC, IM, RB, CW, JH, JB, LB, NK, BK, TG, JP, EK, AH, RW, RM, GP, JG, ED, LMcK, JG, GL, JMcKW, TB, MR, JJ, FW, HS, KT, GW, WW, HW; $1 GA, MF. Total: $621.

JOHN McLAREN

swag

Readers may be surprised to receive this issue so hard on the heels of the last Overland. It is in fact an additional issue to our 1978 schedule, but we have had to do this to make up for the one overdue in 1977, and so to meet our commitments to subscribers and to the Literature Board. The next issue, which will appear in August, will commemorate the tenth anniversary of the Russian invasion of Czechoslovakia — an event being celebrated in that country by a visit from the leader of the invaders, Mr Brezhnev, who seems to be assuming Stalin-like status in his own country, and by the detention of those dissidents who have been active in promoting Charter 77. Our final issue for the year should appear at the beginning of December, and will complete the eight issues due in 1977-78. Subscriptions, of course, are for four isssues or twelve months, so some people whose renewal was postponed until the beginning of this year will receive a further renewal notice after number 27.

One of the great pleasures of editing Overland is the opportunity of reading the correspondence which comes with our renewals. Each time, of course, a few people find that their disagreements with the journal are such that they must cancel their subscriptions. Objections raised this time include those to our mediocre poetry, our inscrutable cartoons, and our lack of fighting spirit for social and political change. Other readers commend our continuing commitment to democratic values, our attempt to provide a forum for the discussion of the issues confronting Australia, and our encouragement of new poets and story writers. The sad letters, however, come from those, particularly the old, who, in our age of gloom, are no longer able to afford their subscription. I would like to point out that all pensioners are entitled to the concession rates.

My friendly neighborhood bookseller informs me that, as magazines creep up to the two and three dollar mark, their over-the-counter sales decline. This has been particularly noticeable over the last twelve months, although we do not seem to have been affected yet. The problem is that our costs increase faster than our revenue. We expect to hold our price at its present level for the time, but we can do this only with the help of our readers and contributors. The floating fund does in fact keep us floating, and we are very grateful. Now that postal charges are again rising, however, we are again faced with increased costs. One of our most irritating costs is return postage on contributions which we cannot use. I must emphasise that we do not guarantee return of contributions unless a stamped addressed envelope is attached, and that in future we will not be able to return work which does not come with this attachment.

The idea, the enthusiasm and the stills for the special film feature in this issue came from Tim Burstall, and I would like to express our particular gratitude to him for his help.

Continued Page 60

Australia

Variations on the theme 'Australia' after reading variations on the theme 'The Mail' by Rainer Kunze.

1

When Australia
is written on the horizon
I sleep
like a faun

2

Australia
you dooropener
to a nonexistent
world

(your torch
is daylight)

3

Australia
master of accounts
your grandmother
is the Royal Mail

4

From the distance
what do I hear?

Wake up, letters

5

O
how your shores
are fast

like a plane

6

Australia
I steal your letters
from the overseas mail

you have to lock me up

7

Sometimes
I collect mistresses

what does it mean
what does it matter

8

Australia
you lover
of many nations
your neighbour
is water

9

Admirateur
of cooking
your art
is macabre

10

Maker
of cans 7 beans
your god
is tough

11

On your benches
sit the naked apes

they have:
a femme without a cunt
a bunch of forget me nots
butterflies pissed to the wall

they like:
a splendid bookkeeper
as a Prime Minister

he tells me:
never rubbish
my wife

12

Australia
I wish you

a sky full of poets
and the truth of the matter

that should be easy

plus:
a Concorde from Russia
filled with kookaburras

13

Australia
I find it difficult
to die

it's easier
to be born

14

Australia
your beautiful cars
are heading for Pompei

all other news
are nonsense

15

dear Australia:
thank you for your letter
I have no time to read it

16

dear friends:
don't yawn
I can't pay my debts

please:
no condolences in words
otherwise I become
a superfluous immortal

17

Australia
to be a postman
day & night
is to be a foot
without a floor

it reads:

my letters
never arrive
they got lost
in the end.

RUDI KRAUSMANN

Partial Attraction, Total Acceptance

Love, you begin with these: bright hair, soft lips,
perhaps a certain shape,
the narrow waist, the fulness of the hips,
the gentle, unprotected nape—
but most, men find, there's no escape
from the imagined power and light of eyes,
that searchlight souls, their colour and their size!

We suffer the attraction of the parts,
each in its own degree,
in lovers' language these first break our hearts
and what we touch and smell and see
is flowerlike as, like a bee,
each flies, attracted so, to penetrate
the mystery, intoxicated state!

Yet though first beauties made her seem divine,
it's never very long
before her duller features start to shine,
her imperfections seem not wrong,
there's no false note in all the song,
all, all, we worship — we adore the mole —
attracted by the parts, we love the whole.

GAVIN EWART

Yellow Robin

The Yellow Robin bold and chipper
rolls the scrub-wren in the dust;
he chases every other chirper,
defends our camp with prance and thrust.

White ants are his especial tipple;
he flutters up to watch me chop;
inspects the flinders as they topple,
and grabs the termites from a chip.

He struts around us, neat and dapper,
gobbles a March fly on the hop,
jumps on a log with flirt-wing caper;
the fly bulges his downy crop.

FRANK KELLAWAY

The Dates Are All Set

The distinguished overseas guests are bashful, lonely as hell
being fingered by flabby compliments and invitations
Drinking, but not too much
he's wrapped in his fluffy christianity, that coddles now
like unprocessed wool, his sheep's jaw screws up
into an insular smile, then it's lax in an odd country
for a time desolate, unaware

There seemed no harm, less risk. The heart's
in the right place, but something's sagging crudely
He shifts his glass from hand to hand, an occupation
like baldness, a perimeter. The loudness measures him critically
deluded, in an egalitarian approach. He misses the point, wondering
if he should look that way, or if he needs to

The Pope's word is inflammable
that is, not likely to catch on
fire (my brother said that), and the guests are coated
with throw away satisfaction that doesn't quite cover
but the crowd's thoughtless enough. The exit door rises up
like the Harbour Bridge

GIG RYAN

alternative society blues

well I walked round & round th town
shouting
KEEP URANIUM IN TH GROUND
UP
JUMP JUMP
DOWN
KEEP URANIUM IN TH GROUND
well you might think & and you might say
what's this fella actin' this way?
walkin' up & down th street
shoutin' slogans at th people you meet
. . . must be a protestor
. . . bankrolled by th kremlin
. . . most likely
went to northern queensland
found 3 ASIO men
under a mushroom
well I've been to nimbin & lived in a tree
tried to be a poet in a non verbal society
you say who are you
& they say
oh
I'm just me
called her jo but her name was fred
she heard voices in her head
UFO's
flying saucers
elder brothers
next wednesday night
in th showgrounds
hare krishna
hare chico roll
hare gumboot
well I was actin' like she was dumb
said maybe billy graham will come
next wednesday night
at th showgrounds
step outa that flying saucer
UFO
whatever you call those things
thinkin' she was crazy
stark bonkers / she said
but I don't *believe* in billy graham
well I come back to town
got on th dole as a poet
they give me a job as a tyre retreader
spend my whole time walkin' round
shoutin' KEEP URANIUM IN TH GROUND
UP
JUMP JUMP
DOWN
KEEP URANIUM IN TH GROUND

ERIC BEACH

Unlove Song

It's a slap in the face when a loved one turns snarky
and tells you she doesn't care
(she may have a perfect pair
and wonderful pubic hair)
but this was what made the boys put on khaki,
join the Légion Etrangère —
the result of that frosty stare
was apparent everywhere,

it was cold enough to make you feel parky
and not like Robin Adair —
more a taxi without a fare,
a stallion without a mare —
their mood was quite the reverse of larky.
But question her if you dare!
Perhaps you've had your share.
Such things, alas, aren't rare!

GAVIN EWART

The Lovesleep

In an exciting world of love-bites, nipple-nipping,
unbuttoning and unzipping,
kisses that are
the highest kind of communication,
the lovers experience their timeless elation;

perhaps they reach those peaks where, like a bomb exploding,
the angels sing, encoding
ecstasies that
our language can never really deal with —
its nouns and its adjectives that no one can feel with;

but when the woman lies in the man's arms — soft, sleeping,
in perfect trust and keeping
faith, you might say,
that is the truest peace and disarming —
no one can sleep in the arms of an enemy, however charming.

GAVIN EWART

The Water Poems

The simple current
    is a wraith
secretive, singular
    and cherished
        against my breast.

A pitch night
    boat crossing
        avoids
my hot candle
        wax.

I am punchdrunk
    with tenderness;
fighting upstream
    with even crazier
        trout.

DOROTHY PORTER

books

THE GODS IN OCCUPIED TERRITORY

Graham Rowlands

Rae Desmond Jones: *Shakti* (Makar Press, $3.50 paperback; $8 hardbound).
Stephen K. Kelen: *The Gods Ash Their Cigarettes* (Makar Press, Gargoyle Poets' subscripton).
Eric Beach: *In Occupied Territory* (Saturday Centre, $2.50).

When Jones published his second collection, *The Mad Vibe*, he said: "What can you do after that?" The answer has been to largely eliminate the "i". This does not mean that he writes less Jonesian poems — in the main, anyway. The need to objectify his art is understandable given that some people found it impossible to believe that he was writing about his own life and the likely exhaustion of his range of experiences, no matter how multi-dimensional. He has greatly developed his previous use of myth and culture heroes. Fortunately he has not totally dispensed with the "i" as it is to be hoped that he will not abandon his accumulative climaxes to his well-made, paraphraseable, meaningful, non-avant-garde and excellent poems.

Jones' poems are not riddled with references to Greco-Roman mythology reworked for the modern reader. Nor do they actually believe in any religion. The poet explores areas of life that myth, faith and allegory have *also* embodied and institutionalized. "The Mermaid" 's men kneel before they start skinning her. "The Appointment" 's woman wants to be killed and is duly stoned, sprayed with gold and worshipped. A schoolgirl participates emotionally in the crucifixion of a cockroach by ants in "The Communicant". The poet tries to get rid of a woman and she unleashes a plague of bees at him — Old Testament morality. In the title poem, delicious sex is followed by an image of "huge pillars/ of light burned the ancient/ corpse of god". The connection is left to the reader. "The Buddha" is complex: the fat Asian in a racing car, previously cramped by sitting cross legged, now bored at the steering wheel, giggles as he crashes, inhabiting us all as man and machine — the pistons of the engine masturbating. Nirvana as the stillness of driving racing cars is a fascinating comment on commuters. In "The Snails" a woman snaps a snail and the effect is of the violation of a sacrament. Only in "The Scald" and "Wait for Me" does this resonant area of Jones' art trail off into (for me) unintelligible mysticism. For the rest, he both creates his myths *and* analyses them.

So pre-occupied with religious phenomena is the poet that he feels constrained to baldly disclaim myth at the end of the simple descriptive "The Goat". Abstraction is a new direction; it is not, however, always successful. The first part of "Age" is a statement of aging problems. The second part is almost all imagery: an old man and a harbour. The division works well. "Flak" is excellent — the furthest Jones has gone from the "i". It speculates about the making of a film on Allied bombing during the Second World War. It is so Brechtian that there is even a comment about the reel change. No statement can be taken at face value. With the culture-heroes poems — "Stirling Moss", "James Dean", "Jungle Juice" and "The El Paso Restaurant" — the anonymous, omnipotent author intrudes. Although it is appealing that Jones is both sympathetic and dismissive, there is a tendency to "pop" media studies. Amusing but easy. Moreover, the poems are basically parody rather than satire and consequently limited. "James Dean" 's "mandala" of the wheel climaxes vivid image sequences but not before he has become the "pissweak reflection & creator of a generation/ now gone to parenthood & the suburbs." And John Wayne has to

be the "Archetypal cocksucker". Jones can do better than that.

And he does — with and without using the "i". "The Dictator" is excellent. He wants to be shot because his life is meaningless unless oppressing or being oppressed. "The Accused" is about a man who goes crazy but seems more normal than what he has reacted against. Not new. Still, the narrative — Jones' forte — is magnificently worked in accumulative detail and vivid imagery. After twenty years in the Country Party he discovers fellatio, is crucified and annually at his grave teenage fans staple their arms onto the stars. Here what Jones says, goes. The same applies to what the poet was dreaming about when Chairman Mao died and the A.B.C. played "The East is Red". This was the art of *The Mad Vibe*. It is essential to respond to new directions of an artist's work. It is churlish, however, not to be able to respond to poems working the same veins when the veins are rich and, after all, the poet's own. "The Hatred" contains some of the most intense insight and feeling of both books — the deeply personal and the exploration of faith:

& a small yellow flower
in a hedge pouts at me a
swollen tongue gorged on rain &

the old men on verandas
& the wisdom that is dumb when
the body is ready

& i am sick in the hate of poetry
that is in me & wonder

if you are as empty as god
why my guts are filled with fire

II

As well as presenting several fine poems, Kelen's first book exposes a key problem in the poet's art: unity or fragmentation. Here fragmentation does not work as an artistic method. Moreover, I doubt that Kelen is fully aware of the issue. It is necessary to add, of course, that unity alone will not make a good poem.

"Words" expresses irritation with too much political talk. The way into the poem is via a hanged man and Genghis Khan's sex life while the way out is via an old crow. The excellent ending virtually stands by itself: "the bridges/ I crossed were from the future/ had not been built." The poet opts for fragmentation in "The Spheres" with its six discrete stanzas of shaggy dog stories and one liners. In the last poem the stanzas are related but the imagery is disparate. The motorbike of the future roars off out of nowhere. Less obvious, but no less disturbing, are the five stanzas of a twelve stanza poem devoted to the electronics of sound reproduction when the story is simply a man leaving Sydney for Canberra by car with a little help from his literary and musical friends. After the stereo hangup, "The Spin of the Dice" ends lyrically. In an otherwise moving and serious criticisms of the woman who will drive Frankie Avalon to suicide, her heart becomes a swimming pool full of cement and her cadillac soul has flat tyres. This unintentionally changes the poem's tone. "Air Conditioning" is so fragmented as to be utterly unintelligible.

On the other hand, Kelen's bitterness and disillusion are conveyed by eating cat's testicles in a cake while the cat bleeds to death, the limited freedom of becoming a lump of processed tuna returned to the sea after a lifetime of boring labour, a challenge to all pretence that life has meaning via a pink lake and bottled pink lake water and the discovery of a beautiful bird machine-gunned in a putrid gutter, spat on, bleeding, but also smiling. These and other poems are partially or wholly surreal while being coherent and integrated. This combination of qualities conjures up "Merlin" to explain his disappearance with great wit and at great cost to Walt Disney.

Kelen's social observation is cutting in "Toyota Corolla" which conveys compulsion to be keen on football and generally satirizes Australia, is perceptive in "Koki Market" but banal in "The Caravan Park" — for all the clarity and order. Finally, "The Firecracker" is an excellent tour de force that plays on the word "obvious" to show the difficulty of avoiding the obvious. It succeeds rather too well for this volume that shows more range than polish.

III

Beach's art is most evocative when it relates to nature and when it approaches or topples over into obscurity. As with some of Bob Dylan's work, a poem can be acknowledged as unparaphraseable and yet retain a hold on the reader. As with Hart Crane or the other Dylan — Thomas — the obscurity of montage, however, can at times become exasperating. Beach has other kinds of poems: the simple songs which it would be unfair to assess as poetry, statement poems, narratives, portraits. Most of these are not

successful — although sometimes the poet achieves a sound amalgam of the genres.

In this, his third collection, Beach is at ease with nature. This is not to say that he has only mastered the mood lyric for he can also express societal issues via nature. In "Mutant" people and cosmos, thought and feeling are juxtaposed metaphysically. In "Nature Poem" the poet merges with nature in an attempt to find identity and meaning. In "I Ching" this merging is the most vivid stanza. "Through the Trees" dramatises a more ambivalent attitude to nature. "Sailor" is a very beautiful, old-fashioned love, age, despair lyric starting:

> Pull it back/ pull hard/
> the slow arm draws the bow
> of its own arrow —

ending:

> The world round, we row the heart's sinking.

Throughout these poems Beach achieves some stunning images and phrases despite their often casual positioning: the days surviving the seasons; listening to the wind for the trees; a heron unzipping the horizon and shadows as leaves of the sun.

Nature is present, if not prominent, in other effective poems. It is difficult to know what to say about "Donkeyman II", "Kachina Doll", "Four Dead Horses", "God Department", "Bird Cage", "Green Hills", "Ibis", "The Still in the Can", "Ugly Gully" and "Coming Down" except that all are carefully worked, evocative, surreal pieces that can be read and re-read. They are deliberately ambiguous, their "meaning" being the quest of many of rainy day. The reader is not being conned; but challenged.

Such obvious ability causes Beach problems in the writing of other kinds of poems. Whereas the "Ten Tiger Poems" from his second book were a dramatic presentation of psycho-sexual relations, the heterosexual poems here are flat and banal: "Background", "Put My Coat On", "Cheese & Spaghetti", "The List". The odd line of surrealism is gratuitous. The statements of Beach in Brisbane, Beach in Carlton, Beach in Australia, Beach employed or unemployed are devoid of almost any poetic quality and the platitudinous dogmatism of the title poem is almost the worst poem in the collection. "Epitaph" and "Spine" are so trivial that they should have found their way into one of Les Murray's good waste-paper baskets. It is wrong, however, of a reviewer to suggest that an artist should stick to his fortés. In fact Beach achieves a hard-hitting political statement with "Jonah" and two vivid portraits: an old ballerina who dances down the fallen steps of applause and G. M. Hopkins. Since a major new Australian poet such as Rae Desmond Jones can lapse when writing about public figures, Eric Beach has done well to succeed with Hopkins.

SWAG — *continued*

The Naomi Mitchison story in the last issue was offered to us while she was in Australia as a guest of Overland. Naomi has been a gracious hostess to many Australian writers, but had never visited this country. Her visit was made possible only through the generosity of the Literature Board, the Lockie bequest, and private donors. While in Australia, she travelled the length and breadth of the country, took part in Writers' Week at the Adelaide Festival, and contributed to the Melbourne Herald, which made it possible for her to visit Aboriginal communities in Queensland and the Northern Territory.

Readers and writers interested in science fiction may be glad to know that the third Australian science fiction writers' workshop will be held in January next year. One publishing writer will preside at each of two five-day sessions. Entrance is on the basis of a short story of up to 5000 words, to be judged by George Turner and Robert Sheckley. Further information can be obtained from Petrina Smith, 34 Ivy Street, Chippendale, NSW, 2008.

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