

of implementing systems. Organisations such as the new Union Research Centre on Office Technology (URCOT) which will give advice on the design, selection and implementation of office technologies in Australia will find this book provides a gateway to large scale research projects on office automation in Europe.

Mairéad Brown

University of Technology, Sydney.

Continuum: An Australian Journal of the Media, The Media of Publishing, Volume 4, Number 1, 1990 *edited by Albert Moran*

(Communication Studies, Murdoch University), pp. 228, subscription \$25.00, ISSN 1030-4312.

Continuum has adopted the editorial strategy of commissioning guest editors to develop an issue around a specific area of the media. Previous issues have dealt with topics such as 'Film, TV and the Popular', 'Asian Cinema' and 'Space, Meaning, Politics'. This awkwardly titled issue is edited by Albert Moran, senior lecturer in the Division of Humanities at Griffith University.

In their preface, general editors Tom O'Regan and Brian Shoesmith introduce the subject as 'the medium of publishing' which somehow sounds better. They explain that the editor had put this issue together to enliven and help direct research into the publishing, marketing and selling of print in Australia.

The reader will find here little on the coffee table book, the cook book, 'how to' books including computing books. There is nothing on 'the desk-top publishing' revolution and the new 'concept bookshops' like Fremantle's and Paddington's New Edition. There is nothing on the turnover strategies, street orientations and market positioning of book chains. Also untouched in these pages is the book created from the film (why is the literary imagination in these days incapable of addressing this 'copying' in reverse?) — and the phenomenon of small and ephemeral publications (p. 5).

So what will the reader find? Of the 224 pages, 108 are devoted to book publishing, the remainder to three articles on pay-TV and broadcasting regulation, and reviews and correspondence on policy, theory and film. The 'non-publishing' articles are interesting and timely in the current debate and appropriate to *An Australian Journal of the Media*, but their inclusion in this issue seems to indicate a paucity of interest by contributors, or readers, in researching and discussing publishing as part of the media. (The next issue finds 14 articles all related to television). And as part of the section headed Publishing, Denis Cryle elaborates a theme from his history of the press in colonial Queensland suggesting that the developing ownership of newspapers by investment companies in the 19th century did not seem to prevent a healthy variety of editorial opinion and direction.

In his introduction to the journal, Moran writes that the present issue examines the Australian print industry — most particularly book publishing — and the remaining seven contributions are related to that. Moran goes on to say though that:

Although some articles explore questions of authorship, text, genre, discourse and historical development, these articles would not be at home in the more conservative literary journals *Southerly* and *Australian Literary Studies*. For the articles in this issue engage with those elements typically excluded from literary analysis such as

industry, finance, ideology, and policy — in short the institutional context of print.

Here the textual is only allowed equal footing with these other concerns (p. 7).

Not quite true. Three of the pieces are to do with Popular Romance, and the articles by Ann Curthoys and John Docker on the works of Mills & Boon author, Edwina Shore, and Rita Felski on Stephen King's *Misery* would be more at home in a literary or cultural journal — perhaps not *Southerly* — than one claiming to deal with the "industry, finance, ideology and policy" of publishing. And one would hardly expect to find a sentence such as this from Felski in a journal involved with communication:

The kitsch object does not enable an emancipatory beauratification of art (Benjamin), precisely because it conceals its own technical reproducibility, cloaking it in a nostalgic and mystificatory appeal to the aesthetic — and by implication, ideological — values of the past (p. 58).

The Penguin New Literary History of Australia edited by Laurie Hergenhan, which doubled as the bicentennial issue of *Australian Literary Studies*, contains chapters on publishing which are very aware of publishing as an industry, and a chapter in Hergenhan on 'Marketing the Literary Imagination' was co-authored by Richard Nile, whose 'Cartels, Capitalism and the Australian Booktrade' is included in this issue of *Continuum*.

Richard Nile, currently teaching Australian Studies at the University of London, writes in a very different style from that of the Felski sample above. His is all 'ripped off', 'realisation slowly dawning', 'a mud-slinging match', 'darn his cotton socks' and 'the boy had gone a bit native'. His approach to history is as relaxed as his literary style when he claims on his third page:

Nothing substantial has changed in Australia since the PSA findings and the Bowen legislation, save that the cartel operations have become more hard edged and small and middle range Australian publishers have defaulted one after the other in the face of the rejigged domination. Only the buyout of Allen and Unwin by Australians seems to be a step in the desired direction. The PSA recommendations and the legislation have now been absorbed and accommodated by the transnationals and the London book publishers and distributors are back doing a roaring business in Australia. The proposed great reforms have petered out to a phutt (p. 73).

Fair enough? The only flaw in this confident analysis of cause and effect is that (at August 1991) the legislation is yet to be enacted.

But in Richard Nile's defence, he is not about the present. "This essay tells the story of previous failed attempts to reform the beast in Australia" (p. 75). Unfortunately, because of the author's garrulous style, it is hard to work out exactly what the beast is. Nile is helpful on his subject of the history of the publishing of Australian fiction, but his purple prose makes it hard to take him seriously.

Taking him seriously becomes impossible as he balances his opening on the effects of unpassed legislation with a concluding page which thunders:

In Australia, as elsewhere, capitalism triumphed between the covers in the guise of Penguins. In the 1950s and 1960s the number of British companies which established operations in Australia also increased dramatically. Among the largest was the Penguin printing works at Ringwood which by 1960 employed more workers than the entire international Penguin operation only twenty years earlier (p. 90).

One can only guess at the origin of this little fantasy — possibly it's a misunderstanding of Jack Morpurgo's *Allen Lane: King Penguin*: "Before Allen died [7 July 1970] the number of employees in Australia was greater than the number which had administered the world-wide Penguin business in the halcyon days after the war". But Penguin, who were at Mitcham and later at Ringwood, have never had their own printery either in Australia or, for that matter, in the

UK. Brian Stonier, Geoff Dutton and Max Harris only began developing an Australian Penguin list in 1961. Curious. It would be a pity if the burgeoning reputation of *Continuum*, aggravated by the lack of published information available to students of the Australian book trade, gave authority to these unfortunate oversights.

Authority for the journal is revived by the Glen Lewis contribution "It's Academic: Imperialism and the Australian Tertiary Book Industry". Here, in measured tones, Lewis raises important issues about tertiary publishing which affect Australia, but are not unique to us. His essay argues "that a condition of neo-colonial dependence still characterises academic publishing" citing the dominance of the Australian tertiary market by overseas books. (In this context Lewis refers to Lorimer's 1983 claim in *Media Information Australia (MIA)* that USA multinational pressures produced an inferior brand of Canadian textbook. I understood Lorimer to be referring more to reading materials for primary school students.)

Lewis considers the Humanities-Social Sciences-Communication markets and suggests that "the positioning of Australian academic publishing in the wider, global Anglo-American publishing marketplace contributes to a subordinate place for Australian scholarship". He provides a valuable comparison of tertiary publishing in the UK and USA and is aware that the current push by companies to 'go global' probably makes more commercial sense in educational publishing than in trade.

The effect of takeovers and disinterested investment on the publishing industry does weight the always precarious balance between commerce and culture in favour of commerce, and because of the size of the Australian market, Australia is affected more than the major English language producers. While Lewis argues that this is "part of a modern continuation of neo-colonial relationships which remain unresolved in Australian society", I feel it has as much to do with the sort of economic rationalism which has allowed Australia to sell two of its University Presses, ANU and Sydney, to foreign interests.

Lewis does refer in passing to the rise of the photocopier as one of the reasons given for decreasing prospects in academic publishing. The Australian market for most repetition manufactured products is only marginally viable and the effect all teachers have in restricting publishing initiatives by transnational, local commercial or university press publishers through excessive photocopying of hand-outs has as dramatic an effect on the potential for publishing as CFCs have on the ozone layer.

Moran himself provides the remaining three contributions — one is an article "Inside Publishing: The Environments of the Publishing House" based on a series of interviews and there are two transcripts of interviews. One is with Mills & Boon author, 'Emma Darcy', (by now one could feel that Romantic Fiction is over-represented). The other is with E.L. Wheelwright on the writing and publishing of non-fiction.

The interviews are useful in giving insights into two very different kinds of writing and publishing processes, and apart from both being well constructed and reported, their differences illustrate the enormous disparity in the ranges of the products of the publishing industry — from *The Bride of Diamonds* to *Industrialisation in Malaysia*.

Moran is a skilful interviewer and that with 'Emma Darcy' gives an insight both into a specialist genre and how co-operative authorship can work.

The interview with Wheelwright on non-fiction is excellent as a humane and knowing explanation of how the acquisition process works in this area. Ted Wheelwright discusses his dealings with publishers who included Andrew Fabinyi at Cheshire, Lloyd O'Neil at Lansdowne, John Hooker and Brian Johns at Penguin, Louise Sweetland at Oxford University Press (OUP) and John Iremonger at Allen and Unwin and Melbourne University Press (MUP), and acknowledges the contribution a 'really good editor' — in this case Carla Taines at Penguin — can make. Here is authority informed by understanding.

The third Moran piece, "Inside Publishing: Environments of the Publishing House" is based on a series of interviews conducted with people working in trade book publishing in 1986/7. Unfortunately the context of the industry in which the author places the extracts from interviews leaves the reader, at times, less than confident.

On the first page, in introducing the Australian Book Publishers Association, the author describes their subscriptions as "set on the basis of the overall volume of a publisher or company". Overall volume here is a disconcerting synonym for turnover. He also describes the membership of that Association as "currently . . . over 50 members". Depending on whether current here refers to the time of interview or of publication of the article, membership of the ABPA was 140 in March 1987 and 134 in February 1991.

Through the article confidence is also challenged by "Lloyd O'Neil" [O'Neil], "Jackie Youll" [Yowell], "under the name Emily Rodder (her grandmother's name)" [Rodda], "*The Macquarie Australian Dictionary*" [The Macquarie Dictionary], "Penguin bought Nelson Australia" [Penguin acquired Nelson's Trade list. Nelson are still part of Thomson and alive and well in South Melbourne], "*My Grandma Lived in Gooliguulch*" [Gooligulch] and Lonely Planet was founded by "Tony Wheeler and his wife Wendy" [Maureen].

Moran's section heads are Publishers and the ABPA, Publishers and Authors, Books from Elsewhere, Acquisitions, Commerce or Culture, Multinationals, Small Indigenous Companies and Making the Figures Work. It is a useful introductory description to the publishing industry in Australia, particularly through the comments that Moran has garnered from participants. However, the level of analysis represented by

the extent to which a publisher has a responsive and efficient distributing mechanism will determine such things as its size, financial assets, the extent of specialisation and expertise among its staff, its ability to attract and hold authors and, of course, its ability to reach its readers (p. 143),

shows a level of sophistication in discussing book publishing as a media industry quite different from that required in serious discussion of the newspaper, television, radio or film industries. And in the professional practice of publishing, one would probably hope for greater rigour in the editorial structure of an issue of a journal on this subject, and certainly demand more authorial care in its accuracy.

John Curtain

Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology (RMIT)