Technofear

Video is the cultural form of the age.
Technology is the age's great preoccupation.
Together they have produced a new genre,
reports McKenzie Wark.

Most of us consider home video to be an escape from politics and the workaday world. Yet even that most escapist of movie genres or styles, science fiction, is very much connected to problems of work and power. Indeed, escapist movies 'work' precisely by providing imaginary solutions to very real problems.

Science fiction movies come in a number of types, but the ones which are most interesting and popular are the ones I would call 'tech noir'—black technology stories. While movies of this genre borrow from a number of other stock movie genres including the mystery, gothic horror and cop dramas, their common trait is that they all deal with the problem of 'technofear'.

Technofear is a common malaise these days. While earlier science fiction used to assume that technology was good for you as long as it was kept out of bad hands, contemporary science fiction has to deal with a deep-seated paranoia about technology which is undoubtedly occurring and is linked to environmental concerns. It goes further and asks a more challenging question: is it possible to distinguish the human from the inhuman? If technology is something to be feared, is there a sense of the 'human' any more which is not fatally compromised by technology?

Tech Noir movies frame the problem of technofear by means of stories about 'undecideable' cases—things which are not quite human and not quite technological. The definition of both then hinges on a story which 'decides' one way or another, often using a kind of 'android' figure.

In the movie *Robocop*, the central character is a cop who is injured in a shoot-out with the bad guys. They will later turn out to be in the pay of the corporation who made him and they run the police force as a privatised service to the city government. Robocop is essentially a man with robotic prostheses. He wins out over the bad guys by upholding the law, but he also triumphs over a rival law enforcement 'product'—a robot called Ed II which lacks any human judgment. While Robocop is mostly machine, he is acceptable in the end as an 'undecideable' being, somewhere between culture and technology because his human judgment still has control over his technical powers.

An opposite case is *The Terminator*, in which the bad, destructive machine is clothed in living human flesh. The humans who battle with the terminator are not only fighting for their lives, but fighting against the nightmare vision of the future in which technology has completely subjugated culture. The undecideable in this case has to be exterminated before it exterminates all that is human.

More complex is the classic Tech Noir film *Bladerunner*, in which the undecideables are the product of a biotechnology which can make replicas of humans called, appropriately enough, replicants. In the film, these have reached a stage where their maker, the Tyrell corporation, can endow them with memory, thus giving them the illusion that they are indeed human. Replicants are used as slave labour in the 'off world colonies'. When they escape and return to earth they are hunted down and killed by 'bladerunners' like Deckard, the central character. What makes this story interesting in the

Tech Noir genre is, firstly, the fact that Deckard falls in love with a replicant and disappears over the border with her, cementing a bond between the human and what might best be called 'posthuman' life. More disturbing still, there are suggestions in the film, suppressed in the final cut, that Deckard himself does not know if he is human or replicant—or at least whether by becoming a hunter-killer of these posthuman forms of life he is a barbaric and inhuman thing.

Bladerunner is, to date, the most challenging film in the Tech Noir genre because it raises the possibility that the difference between the human and the inhuman, between culture and technology is too far gone to be unscrambled. There can be no naive appeals to 'human nature' or a return to nature when the human is a product of the technical as much, if not more, than vice versa.

The question arises as to how this domination of the cultural by the technical came about. Tech Noir films at their best suggest an appropriate answer to this—the bad corporation. The makers of *Robocop* and the replicant are two such bad corporations, suggesting a world where corporate power has run amok, subsuming cultural values under the remorseless quest for surplus value, as it were. The film *Aliens* goes one better, suggesting that the megacorporation is responsible for an environmental recklessness which unleashes the alien on unsuspecting people—a nightmare vision of 'bad nature' let loose by capital.

Tech Noir films have also branched out from mechanical to information technologies. In *The Running Man*, computer graphic simulation is used to falsify the news, and a universal media vector pumping out trash TV keeps the restive population comatose as in *Robocop*. The theme of artificial memory resurfaces in *Total Recall*, borrowed from the novelist Philip K Dick. This film also uses the bad corporation motif, only this time in the form of a state-monopoly capitalism based on the mining industry and set on Mars.

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In the Canadian Tech Noir film *Videodrome* the possible symbiosis of the body and information technology is taken as oozily close to the limit as is possible. *Videodrome* gets off to a good start, positing the supersession of the real as we know it in video simulation, but then rapidly falls apart both in terms of narrative and plausibility. If *Bladerunner* is the limit to what Tech Noir can do and say within the limits of popular film, then *Videodrome* lies just outside that limit. *Videodrome* does more than suggest that television technology has destabilised the social picture of reality and the individual's sense of her or his body in the world, it enacts it. This makes it a scary and unrelenting ride, a little too troubling and a little too implausible to succeed as mere entertainment. *Videodrome's* 'hero', Max, ends up pledging himself to combat the evil effects of videodrome by passing into its simulated reality. If simulation has swallowed up the old world, then the only point of resistance would be within.

Contrary to usual Hollywood practice, three Tech Noir films even offer images of collective resistance to the bad corporation and its undecideable machines. In *The Terminator, Running Man* and *Total Recall* these are armed, underground resistance movements. Interestingly, they all show the resistance using technology against itself. They offer images of technology reappropriated by collective human agency. These films were made by left-liberal directors and producers but star Arnold Schwarzenegger, the personal friend of Reagan and Bush. The politics of these movies seem mostly to be that of the Hollywood liberal left rather than their reactionary star but, in any case, they signal the fact that technofear is a condition which affects both the left and the right. Both have tended to stake their image of the future on positive technological ideals, and the crisis of both left and right stems in part from a common malaise—technofear.

Tech Noir films are perhaps more interesting from the point of view of gender politics. Frequently, it is women who play active roles in the overcoming of the undecideable 'thing'. In part, this stems from the archaic image of the woman as closer to 'nature' than man. This image is

More interesting is the idea that information technology offers to those in power the possibility of controlling the past as well as the future—an Orwellian nightmare given new currency by being connected to new technology. In *Total Recall* undecideability is experienced as a schizophrenic state in which the average human-in-the-street can no longer distinguish synthetic reality from anything else or, indeed, one synthetic reality from another.

Perhaps the most chilling aspect of Tech Noir is its suggestion that the boundaries of the human body are not sacrosanct, that technology infiltrates

the individual body as much as the social body. In the great low-budget Tech Noir film *Hardware*, a voyeur watches what takes place in the apartment opposite by means of infra red vision. He witnesses not only a violent 'crime' in progress, in a clear homage to Hitchcock's *Rear Window*, but also a sex scene between the lead characters. This film offers the image of the voyeuristic act of watching sex at the movies taken to its logical conclusion—watching the internal body-states of the participants. This is a difficult scene to watch because it makes the spectator complicit with technology's violation of the body.

actively mobilised in *Alien* and *Aliens*, where the female heroine has to improvise solutions to the attack of bad nature when men and machines have failed. Here good nature (the maternal human) does battle with bad nature (the alien) which the bad corporation and its technology has unleashed. The gender politics of all these films are ambiguous to say the least, but not without interest or potential. Technofear questions the promethean values of technology, which is often regarded, both by its supporters and detractors, as masculine. Hence it is not surprising that the feminine is put forward in Tech Noir as an important agent in overcoming bad technology—to the extent that in *Hardware* the heroine, armed with a baseball bat, does battle with the bad machine while the would-be hero is too zapped out on acid to know his arse from his elbow!

Why are Tech Noir movies so popular? In part, I think, because they offer imaginary solutions to technofear. The question than is: what are the origins of technofear? I mentioned that movies are an escape from the workaday world, yet they work as an escape from it because they offer solutions to the unresolved problems that the work we do does not satisfy real human needs, does not really give us more control over our lives, and only adds a tiny sliver to the great junk pile of bureaucratic disorder which seems to hold the world in its thrall.

By working, we seem to create a vast store of 'dead labour' in the form of bricks and freeways and endless rows of filing cabinets full of unread and unreadable records. We create a vast power over ourselves. Rather than technology and its products helping us to live, it seems we live to service technology and its products. The contemporary world appears as a vast, inhuman, 'undecideable' power over and against us.

It is this aspect of social reality, this vast 'alien' world our forebears made which now makes and remakes us in its image, this is the reality at the root of technofear. In technofear, the technological products of our great modern ancestors' labour plays like a horror movie in the minds of the living. Tech Noir movies help us to imagine the dimensions of this problem. They help us to define the issues and reassure us that we are right to be worried. They project solutions into the future to show that solutions are possible. They may not have the answers, they may not even ask all the right questions—that would be too much to expect even of Hollywood's most liberal liberals. Yet they have made a popular genre which allows us to imagine what this undecideable realm of human freedom is that we have to win.

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Beads and Trinkets

Documentary filmmaking and the Left have a long history. Alastair Walton looks at their relationship.

"It's like when you go into a psychiatrist's office and you don't really tell them what you did. You lie, but even the lie you've chosen to tell is revealing. I wanted people to see that my life isn't so easy, and one step further than that is, the movie's not completely me...Because you will never know the real me. Ever."

Madonna commenting on her tour documentary, *Truth or Dare: On the Road, behind the Scenes, and in Bed with Madonna,* in Vanity Fair, April 1991.

"...the Imperium's material well-being has come to rest on its technological ability to generate and then merchandise attractively opaque forms and commodities: beads and trinkets to bemuse the natives. Everything changes. And it does not change at all."

Brian Fawcett, *Cambodia: A book for people who find television too slow.* 1986.

The recent argy bargy over the 'correctness' of Tom Zubrycki's documentary on the union movement, *Amongst Equals,* is a grand example of the struggles around the representation of 'truth' and 'history' in documentary films. *Amongst Equals* also throws up the questions, 'what are documentaries for?' And 'how is the form used to tell a story?' But rather than go over old ground with a discussion of Amongst Equals, I pondered these questions while viewing a bunch of docos at the recent Sydney Film Festival.

Watching the two weeks of continual screenings, I was principally interested in what forms the documentaries would take to express themselves. A phenomenon distinc-

tive in many of the documentaries presented was that they had one person driving the focus, line, script, and editing. There seemed to be no collective or group efforts. Sure, a team of people were responsible along the process line, but the films were dominated by the view of one. For instance, Island of Lies (Australia, 1991), by Gillian Coote, is directed, produced and scripted by her while Dennis O'Rourke was the director, producer, screenplay writer, photographer and sound recordist for The Good Woman of Bangkok and The Architecture of Doom (Sweden, 1990) was directed, produced, edited and scripted by Peter Cohen, and both Juvenile Liaison 2 (UK, 1990) and The Leader, The Driver and the Driver's Wife (UK, 1990) were directed, scripted and sound recorded by Nick Broomfield.

This multirole production reflects not only the small budget position of such projects, but the personal intensity burnt into the whole product. However, with more participants and with equal zest, a set of films (documentary and realist cinema) at last year's festival were produced by a collective in northern England, Amber Films. Each member of the group swapped roles on each project and everyone was paid equal rates, no matter what position they filled.

I am not sure whether by design or default, but a large number of this year's collection of documentaries had race as their binding theme, be it about New York's gay blacks (Paris is Burning), Nazis (Blood in the Face), immigrant workers (H-2 Worker & Good News) or black history (The Kimberley Mob and Island of Lies). Island of Lies was resourced by the Documentary Fellowship scheme. The filmmaker "follows the route of early settlers heading north out of Sydney to Fraser Island to uncover the lies and secrets of Australia's settlement".

The film attempts to move away from the traditions of direct filming (the fly on the wall approach) and cast the maker in the film. Yet, for me, Island of Lies sometimes does not meet its purpose. Gillian Coote attempts to tell the story of a landscape charged with the pain of conflict and struggles and we hear the stories from some elders, white and black. However, the questions and stories of intimidation and silence about Aboriginal history, by blacks and whites, were not always followed up. The film was given many cues to investigate these avenues and thereby round out the story, but mostly did not.

The Left and the documentary mode of film making are entwined through their history and in a world of concentrated media ownership, it is an important avenue of alternative storytelling. However, the advent of television has had the effect of creating a need for more documentaries to program while, at the same time, diminishing their power of impact. Television also dictates the form and subject by emphasising spectacle, the bizarre and the presence of a cultural hero. The ability of one-off docos to inform and attract attention is an unequal fight against the opaque beads and trinkets of A Current Affair, 60 Minutes, and the State of Origin.

The origin of the force in documentaries arises from their perceived power of Revelation, Truth, and Reality. However, these banners have been sites for inquiry and conflict within the making and viewing of documentaries ever since the coining of the term 'documentary'. John Grierson, in a review of a 1926 film in the New York Sun, first coined the term: "Of course, Moana, being a visual account of events in the daily life of a Polynesian youth and his family, has documentary value." He was a Scot who defined the documentary as "the creative treatment of actuality" and made his first doco, Drifters, in 1929 before going on to influence documentary film form and set up its institutionalisation through national film boards in the UK, Canada and Australia.

Robert J Flaherty, the director of Moana, offered a mainly visual description of unfamiliar human activities and artifacts—of exotica. In many ways, the film Paris is Burning, is a film of the urban exotic, as opposed to the other of the tundra of southern seas. The spectacle of gay, black men and boys 'voguing' at drag balls in Harlem is pure pop exotica, all the way from the popular anthropological films of the 1920s. But there is another similarity. Flaherty had little interest in analysis or explanation as his films were virtually all silent "using sound when it became available...essentially as an accompaniment to the images". Likewise, despite the fabulous talent of the subjects of Burning (who are at all times willing to talk) the film produces an essential silence, a profound sadness, within the viewer.

How can one dare to talk when the many interviewees on the screen are reaching states of complete ecstasy just listening to themselves articulate their unattainable dreams of fame and fortune? They aspire to the ultimate material fantasy—to be white, married and living in opulent comfort. Mind, this is coming from the mouths of blacks, mostly unemployed, ostracised by their homophobic communities, and rotting in ghettos built and maintained by the very class they aspire to. The paradoxes, the real and the artificial, confront us in every word spoken.

The filmmaker has told the story with interviews, simple camerawork, no voiceover and no analysis or explanations. The saturated pictures of those who created Voguing and the House of Xtravaganza are hugely entertaining. But the form of this and many of the documentaries at the festival was uninspiring. This is not to discredit the hard work of raising funds and getting the access and trust of subjects, but is it enough?

Documentary makers have a zeal for filming losers and the marginalised. Projects are undertaken to highlight wrongs, but the film and video documentary has real problems in actually empowering the subjects if films. The function of the documentary, patently, is to document problems. Answers are merely suggested, and when they are, they are hidden behind the spectacle of the exotic. Perhaps the real challenge of documentary filmmaking is to take the form further and to tackle 'hard' subjects, not simply to foster a form of Left tabloid journalism.

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External Affairs

Almost every TV soap has its resident cop.
David Nichols looks at why.

When Nick Parrish first moved into Marilyn's boarding house in *Home and Away*, she soon discovered problems with her tenant. Actually, the problem was nothing to do with Nick himself (he's a charming, if slightly cocky young man who became a police officer to spite his upper middle-class lawyer parents) but with other would-be boarders.

You see, no one wanted to live with a cop. They figured he'd be nosing in on their affairs all the time, and he drove one prospective cohabitant away immediately by suggesting she change her tyres. Marilyn asked him to move out, and felt very guilty about it; later, when she saw Nick rescue Michael from drowning, she changed her mind and took him back because "no one has a nice word to say about the police until they need them".

Though he's occasionally heroic, it would be hard to imagine Nick taking his job as seriously as Paul Berry, the *E Street* policeman who—after living through the violent deaths of first his wife Rhonda and then his fiancee Kimberley—became a sweaty, gun-toting vigilante, bursting into a TV studio, shooting himself in a moment of lucidity and ultimately being institutionalised.

Cops come in all shapes, sizes and ages on TV soaps, but (like doctors) there's at least one on almost all of them. *Neighbours* is the notable exception, but then *Neighbours* has never been big on non-domestic authority figures. Like doctors, police are, of course, the handiest of dramatic tools, useful as a vehicle for bringing in outside storylines and easily involved with all the disparate regular characters. Both also allow us at home to

delve (or be delved) into our twin fixations, health (therefore death) and crime (thus security and, of course, titillation when we see someone else get what's coming to them).

The real difference, though, is that we all know doctors and most of us trust them. How many people know a police officer, and who feels confident or carefree when the police turn up on their doorstep uninvited (for instance)? It's strange, then, to see the police on TV in such a prominent community role, enjoying so much interaction with everyday soap folk.

Police drama was the beginning of Australian TV drama—from *Homicide* through *Cop Shop* and, in a natural evolution, *Prisoner*. Of course, the police on TV are still about as realistic as any other 'type' on TV; that is, not in the least. But something as serious as the contemporary public perception of the force has led to some interesting exchanges.

Take the time on *Neighbours* when young school-leaver Ryan told his aunt Dorothy that he wasn't interested in going to university; he wanted to become a police officer, and eventually a criminologist. One of Dot's objections was the "bad image" the police had today. As it happened, Ryan rejected the whole police idea when he was badly treated in a suspected break-and-enter case; though the whole thing was a misunderstanding, he couldn't forgive. He joined the army instead.

On the very day I began writing this story, *Home and Away* gave me a perfect illustration of the 'bad image problem'. Sally Fletcher was doing a school project on a valuable member of the community; she chose Constable Nick. Nick came to pick her up for a spin in the cop car and found her adoptive mother, Pippa, in the kitchen.

Pippa: Now, Nick, I have to warn you, Sal has read everything she can on the police force.

Nick: Done a bit of research, has she?

Pippa: Oh yes, takes her work very seriously.

Nick: Well, good for her.

(Enter Sally)

Nick: G'day Sal.

Sally: Hello Nick.

Nick: Are you gonna record this?

Sally: Yeah, then I won't forget anything, is that OK?

Nick: As long as I remember not to say anything too incriminating!

Sally (speaking into recorder): This is Sally Fletcher speaking to Constable Nick Parrish. I read an article in a newspaper that said that the image of the police force has dramatically improved. How did they do that?

(Nick and Pippa look at one another.)

Pippa: Don't say I didn't warn you!

The scene ends here, which means that we never find out how the image of the police force was improved dramatically (only that it happened). But whatever small items TV news might dredge up to discredit the force, TV drama role models are almost always nothing but perfect.

A Country Practice's resident cop is Frank Gilroy—as played by Brian Wenzel, who's held down the role for the whole of *ACP*'s 10-year run. "Policemen are pivotal," he says. "A lot happens round a policeman. If I'd been playing some other part I might well have gone from the show by now. He's sustainable, it's easy to write stuff for the policeman."

ACP's police stories, like their medical stories, are put in the hands of a researcher who liaises with the police. "Any police stories are sent off to the police community relations department," says Wenzel. "They vet the scripts and check the script is accord-

ing to correct procedure...and if procedure in the script doesn't read right, they get it changed.

"The police make sure I'm always up to date with the uniform, too. The show goes out to about 30 countries now so, as far as the police here are concerned, I'm projecting an image for them. I get on well with them, too. There are a lot of clichéd things on TV. Writers will have a policeman pushing a prisoner into a cell. They don't really do that, and I'd never push a prisoner into a cell. I'd criticise people who do this, but maybe they've just seen to many movies. In one episode of *A Country Practice* I shot a man, a bad man. A police doctor said to me later that everything I did was an accurate portrayal of a policeman under those circumstances: the stress, and the guilt."

But Frank Gilroy is one of the old guard of TV police; the new breed of TV soap cop is utterly disarming. Last year saw Josephine Mitchell in a guest role in *Home and Away* as a young policewoman who quit the force after an (unseen) associate was shot in the line of duty.

Bruce Samazan's Max in *E Street* is a virginal Christian in his early twenties with a black-and-white outlook on the world and the law. Sincere and pious, Max occasionally breaks out of light comedy (when he mixes with the teenage characters in the show) to get involved in police action—which, in *E Street*, usually means someone is going to get killed. But Max is a classic character. The problem of how to make a police officer interesting is solved here by making him so good it's ridiculous. Samazan himself believes that Max is only realistic in his "young rookie" persona. "I've met quite a few rookie cops like Max," he says. "They recognise me from the show and come up to talk to me—and they're exactly the same! He's true to life in that respect."

Max has a boss, too: the 'old guard' Sergeant O'Sullivan, as played by Les Dayman. Like *ACP's* Gilroy, O'Sullivan has an unconventional woman in his life—in this case Nurse Martha (who, in an interesting twist, refuses to marry him, though they live together). He's also similarly stuffy and conservative.

These are the cops Australians like to see on their TV screens. They're stoic but human; they work long hours serving people who often don't thank them for it. The police force no doubt feels that this is a good image for them; the public definitely enjoy seeing this angle on the police in their homes every night. And if Terence or Harry in *ACP* don't always save the patient they're operating on, at least we know that the forces of law and order will always be upheld—on every soap, every night.

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Promises Unfulfilled

The Gifthorse, by Gretchen Poiner and Sue Wills; The Promise and the Price, by Clare Burton; both Allen and Unwin, 1991. Reviewed by Jan Dillows.

The Gifthorse is subtitled A Critical Look at Equal Employment in Australia and the authors make no apology for their close examination of the toothless nature of the horse's mouth. The book examines Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) legislation and practice in Australia, and places the legislation and the resulting programs into a social and economic context. This is particularly relevant to the changed context of recession-bound Australia in 1991.

Gretchen Poiner and Sue Wills have taken considerable trouble to explain the basis of concepts of equality and inequality, discrimination, affirmative action, and to demystify and re-explain EEO language. This is valuable in itself as a prevalent form of resistance to equal opportunity is professional ignorance and instant forgetting. The restatement of the rationale behind EEO programs is a refresher for those constantly involved in the mire of implementation.

Many of the shortcomings of Australian EEO legislation result from the problems of translating the American experience. The major problems both in the USA and Australia have been caused by the imposition of a legislative demand for equality which has not been matched by a change in the way society views or organises gender relations. As a result, reasonable demands for equality for women and other groups have often been circumvented by wily employers experienced at statistical manipulation.

The American approach has been intrinsically involved with the law. Discrimination cases have often been long and costly. The involvement of the US Supreme Court in making judgments which are essentially social legislation stems from a quite different tradition to that of Australia. An example of this is the Roe versus Wade case establishing abortion rights for women. Now that the US Supreme Court is moving into an increasingly conservative mode, any influences in the future will probably work against disadvantaged groups. Recently, the trend in the USA to move away from timetables and numerical goals and to put energy into comparable worth cases—in other words, a move from trying to put women into men's jobs to attempting to revalue women's work.

The adoption of many American approaches to EEO grew out of the need to do something to acknowledge the women's liberation movement. "Unable to legislate for liberation, mildly

reformist governments tried legislating for equality", argue Poiner and Wills. Thus EEO legislation is about trying to treat women and other disadvantaged groups as white Anglo-Saxon men, as long as they behave appropriately.

My main criticism of *The Gifthorse*, as with most books on EEO in Australia, is that there is a lot more evidence on what happens in the public sector than in the private sector, and the evidence is predominantly about the experience of women rather than other groups within the purview of EEO, such as Koories and the disabled. This is understandable, in that the major reforms in EEO have occurred in the public sector over a longer period of time. The bureaucracies' skills in manipulating strategies and changing the rules have been developed to a fine art form. The collection of data and the writing of annual reports by those involved in EEO may well have done something to smarten up personnel procedures and records in government departments, but it has not resulted in changing the lot of the majority of women, Koories and people with disabilities.

The chapters of *The Gifthorse* which come closest to the core of the frustrations of the last decade are "Bastards" and "Beneficiaries". The techniques of resistance are clearly and accurately outlined, and well known to any EEO practitioner—misrepresentation, obstruction, sustained disbelief and circumvention among them. The games the powerful play are so complex and devious that new players are easily confused and beaten. The sardonic list of "The fifty ways of avoiding change—a checklist for saving time and ingenuity" is terrific, and the sections on queen bees and homosocialiability (known in Victoria as cloning) are accurate without overt bitterness.

The chapter on "Beneficiaries" has an equally strong message. The real beneficiaries of EEO are generally middle class women or those from ethnic backgrounds. Even among these groups, however, the beneficiaries are comparatively small in number and must turn into mock men to be accepted. The disadvantaged groups as a mass are not greatly changed by the EEO legisla-

tion. One of the reasons for this is that the underpinning of society is woman as breeder and carer: "For beneficiaries to enjoy equal opportunity in employment certain other benefits must be made available...for women these include relief from child rearing responsibilities: for Aboriginal people the issues include health and housing."

EEO legislation by itself cannot claim to have changed patterns of employment. It is an important lesson that other government initiatives—freedom of information, occupational health and safety, and societal trends—are contributors to the success or non-success of the legislation.

Sadly, the promotion of equal employment as an issue has led to exploitation by bandwaggoners running courses in personal power and women's management without bestowing even the palliative techniques of transcendental meditation.

The Gifthorse points out that EEO has had a mixed reception. The House of Representatives standing committee on legal and constitutional affairs has had a range of responses which indicate that EEO is a good idea but not working well. One of the messages from experience so far is to diversify the tactics and place less reliance on legislation.

Clare Burton's *The Promise and the Price* has concentrated far more on the inequalities of the labour market and not just the inadequacies of the EEO legislation. Burton provides a close examination of the major equity issues in organisational practice and how current practices affect women's employment.

For me, the most valuable and interesting section of Burton's book is that which deals with gender and power in organisations. Since most work organisation was set up by men, it tends to reflect men's values. This helps to account for women's inequality in the workplace. Burton explores the proposition that men feel that women contaminate the workplace; that men do not want to do work that women may become identified with; and that men will leave jobs in which women build up numbers. "Without the masculine connotation the job ceases to be attractive to many men. Job satisfac-

tion is tied up with masculine ego satisfaction." This phenomenon is also discussed by Poiner and Wills in relation to American experiences of EEO programs. It was found that the nature of work patterns changed to meet the challenge of women's entry, i.e. if the number of women employed in an occupation category rose, the salary earnings dropped.

Not only do women make men feel uneasy in organisations, but women often want no part of an environment "where decision-making seems more to do with point-scoring than reasonable policy-making". Organisational and occupational structures need to change if there are to be real opportunities for women.

Burton's greatest value to the practitioner is her careful analysis of the nature of job design and evaluation. The chapters dealing with these areas contain invaluable checklists for ensuring that relevant skills and qualities can be included and their relative worth assessed. In this time of new skills training, award restructuring and calls for new workplace organisation, now must surely be the time to take advantage of the breaks in the normal managerial pattern to inject new and more equitable work designs and structures.

One of the conclusions feminists will draw from *The Gifthorse* and *The Promise and the Price* is that EEO legislation and programs have had an impact, but not a mass impact. There needs to be a strategic regrouping to pick a tactic or two which would help the majority of women gain more status, money and dignity in the workplace. This may well be a social interventionist program like work-based child care. Alternatively, the themes of Burton's essays seem to point to changing job design, so as to change the people in the job, which would in turn change the organisation. Whatever the solutions or strategies, the next decade needs an injection of new hope and direction. *The Gifthorse* and *The Promise and the Price* provide an excellent starting point.

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