CONTEXT

A boat chugs across a tropical sea. It is packed with people. The camera zooms in on their density, their wretchedness. Soon the boat is at rest, its Asian passengers twisting and turning in a stream of water hosed on them from above. The camera withdraws; the boat and its burden framed on one side by a naval gun barrel and on the other by the Australian flag. The commentary tells of Cambodian boat people arriving under guard in Broome, Western Australia.

A few seconds of television introduce the themes of this book. Australia, a colonial settler society, its history corroded with the suppression of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, its present being formed out of the lives of people from every part of the world, is moving into a new period of cultural and social challenges. These are not merely set by the new world order arising in the wake of the demise of the Soviet bloc. They are generated internally by a society in deepening economic crisis, and externally by a region with dynamic economies and burgeoning population, and by a world in which the movement of people now seems synonymous with conflict and violence. This conflict and violence has been characteristic of Australia's past and for many is scarcely masked by the present.

Australia is both colony and coloniser—both dominant and subordinate. Many old certainties—or myths—are dissolving under pressure and new myths are being forged to make sense of the changing future. The manufacture of myths and images and truths is growing in the major media of social communication—newspapers and magazines, television and radio. Our understanding of the relations between different segments of society, even our sense of what the groups are and how we should conceptualise social difference, is formed partly by the labels and divisions repeated and reinforced by the mass media. These social groups are linked in a web of explanation that maintains the existing social order in the face of apparent threats to cultural and moral hierarchy.

There seems to be a problem in the myth-making—the new myths appear ever more distant from Australia's multicultural and multiracial society, as though the bards are not merely unaware of the diversity around them, but urging the suppression of that diversity in favour of a safer and perhaps more monochromatic vision.

We want to ask four questions of the Australian media, and to see how many answers we can wrest from them:

- How do the media represent Australia in its cultural diversity and social difference?
- Are these representations the result of conscious manipulation and active decision-making by individuals or media groups?
- Are they the consequence, intentional or otherwise, of the way power is organised in Australian society, a power structure which in terms of class, gender, ethnicity, race and political priorities is merely replicated in the media as it is elsewhere?
- What are the characteristics, if any, of communication industries in a post-colonial society such as Australia?

As you will see, our answers to these questions (and yours may well be different) are not firm statements but rather an acknowledgment that they take us only some of the way towards understanding ethnicity, race and media. These questions go to the heart of the debates about the role of media in Australian society and whether any changes are possible in the ways the media represent our society. As the book progresses we will use these questions as levers to open up five spheres of concern—the range of meanings of 'Australia' and the points at which other meanings or experiences are quietened; the ideological work being done (by whom?) to make the nation and call up the people (Pettman 1992:5); the creation of what cultural studies call the 'Other'; defining boundaries, imposing categories, manipulating identities (Pettman 1992:4); and the possibilities of change.

The questions lead us to the political economy of the media, where the crucial dimensions are those of ownership and control. The media, even in a liberal democratic society, are said to construct social discourse to suit the interests of those who are powerful—individuals, corporations, social elites, social classes.

The questions also open other doors—into the analysis of popular culture as an arena of contest and conflict. Many of the social values communicated in the media are ideologically biased distortions of the world to suit the interests, for instance, of advertisers—the main goal of commercial media managers has been described as the creation of audiences for sale to advertisers as consumers. However, popular culture also emerges from the 'masses' who constantly subvert attempts to direct and control them. They demand an opportunity to create meanings that are relevant to their experiences. In the manufacture of popular culture the most creative and dynamic minds of the age explore, criticise and reinterpret contemporary tensions and troubles. We want to present a view that acknowledges the value of the active participation of audiences in the creation of meanings, but one that also recognises that

there are 'economic, technological and political determinations' (McGuigan 1992:6) of culture.

The celebration of popular culture generates its own criticism. The sophistication of the creative act is not sufficient to disguise the processes of power. In a post-colonial society the unresolved antagonisms of race are confounded by class and gender until the popular culture becomess a circus for the exploration and reinforcement of and occasional resistance to the more dominant, homogenising tendencies identified by media critics. For instance, *The Sun* newspaper in Britain has a huge readership, and survives on a never-ending cycle of sexism and racism: does this mean that these values are merely reflected in *The Sun* from its readership? Surely it has become imperative to place the popular desire for exploitative and oppressive cultural products in a broad structure of social hierarchies, threatened minorities, and rapid and severe social dislocation (McGuigan 1992: 181ff; Searle 1989; Gordon and Rosenberg 1989).

Considerable attention has been paid by American empiricist social scientists to the mass media treatment of minorities. As Greenberg and Brand (1993a,1993b) demonstrate, there has been a long history of analysis of the representation of minorities, and an exploration of the social implications of these patterns. They note that the electronic media have mostly been characterised by a ghetto treatment of minority characters, either by stereotyping them into subordinate roles or constricting them in minority content programs. They conclude that. . .

> . . .in both child and adult programming, the races [in their case Blacks, Hispanics and Whites] are separated more than they are brought together. Half the programs contain no minorities. . .Hispanics remain rarely visible in any programming from the networks. . .the overall numbers [of Blacks] are confounded by concentration on few shows, very little cross-race interaction, and so forth. . .Youngsters turn to TV to learn about life, to learn about people and to learn more about themselves. There is ample evidence that most characterisations of minorities stand out for them, because they are infrequent. (Greenberg and Brand 1993a:44–6)

American research remains unclear, though, about the effects of these characterisations and practices—whether minorities resent the representations they see, whether they use the narratives in fictional and factual accounts to structure their expectations and behaviour, whether they are concerned with the quality rather than the quantity of the appearances and interactions portrayed. Greenberg and Brand argue for programmatic research which is experimentally based and concentrates on social behaviour.

These programmatic approaches do not exhaust the range of academic and popular debate about the media and the construction of race and

ethnicity, which is the focus of this book. As we will see, there are many different avenues along which one can pursue knowledge and understanding about two of the most contentious and difficult social issues of this era—the role of the media in social relations, and the bases of racial and ethnic identity and conflict.

2

THE RACISM AND MEDIA PROJECT

This book has been written because we share a belief that the work that the media do on cultural products has profound effects on the nature of Australian society. The media are not separate from society, but closely implicated in its core relationships—of women with men, of classes, of ages, of race and ethnic groups. We conceive of the media as a process of producing meanings. This process consists of several conceptually distinct elements. We begin with the creators of the messages and their industrial environments: the producers. We are interested in how the creation of media products is affected by the mechanisms of production, the recruitment and socialisation of the producers, and the dynamics of moving ideas and messages into the public realm. Then we examine the messages themselves, with their often ambiguous or multiple meanings, and present both aesthetic and sociological critiques of their content. Then we examine the many audiences, consumers of media products, who are also involved in creating meanings, interacting in often unexpected ways with the media, yet indispensable in their responses to the producers. We need some sense of how audiences interpret and use what they consume.

When we began work on this project in the late 1980s, the media were involved in the 'celebration of the nation' that marked the bicentennial of European invasion and settlement. Various government agencies began to deal with the racism and violence manifest in the society that prided itself on being the most successful 'multicultural community' in the world. It was becoming apparent that the Aboriginal–coloniser relationship had not been resolved and that the deep struggle by Aboriginal people to defend and enhance their heritage was continuing against the apparent indifference if not hostility of the invaders' descendants. Aboriginal deaths in custody focused attention on the role of the culture industries—education and media—in maintaining values and attitudes that systematically undermined Aboriginal self-respect and reinforced non-Aboriginals' stereotypes and ignorance of them.

The long debate about Australia as a multicultural society was being reinvigorated by a new wave of boat people, refugees apparently using well-organised 'escape' routes to reach the north Australian coastline. Media personalities were taking a higher profile, and some were 'charged' before the Australian Broadcasting Tribunal for indulging in racial vilification. The

national broadcasters (the Australian Broadcasting Corporation—ABC—and the Special Broadcasting Service—SBS) were put under increasing pressure by community organisations to take their multicultural charters more seriously—regular meetings were held between the senior management of these bodies and groups such as the Federation of Ethnic Community Councils of Australia (FECCA). The commercial television sector was presenting racialist outbursts by public figures as 'good television' (Jakubowicz 1990: 65ff), and the print media (local, metropolitan and national) also took part in the debates on the makeup of Australian society 200 years after the invasion (itself a highly controversial term for the colonisation of Australia, at that time assumed by the dominant society to have been Terra Nullius—no-one's land).

We developed the racism and media project on which this book is based as a co-operative exercise to achieve several different but related objectives. We recognised the huge gap in our knowledge about race and media in Australia, and the major problem that this lack of information would create for people wanting to teach about the media. So we were concerned to develop a well-informed analysis of the Australian media, one that integrated structural analyses of the industry with wider cultural analyses of Australian social relations.

We were also concerned that the media industry's awareness of race and ethnicity issues was fairly limited, and that despite the public debate about race and culture the industry was not taking any responsibility for the production practices it encouraged, nor for the media products it created. Thus we sought to influence industry thinking and behaviour.

There was evidence that the regulatory mechanisms put in place over the past decade were ineffectual in influencing media practices—they neither encouraged good practice, nor really prevented poor practice. The most they did was to provide an outlet for public outrage over overt racism. In the print media this was the most that seemed possible (to the voluntary industry self-regulating Press Council). In the broadcast media the regulatory procedures were cumbersome, bureaucratic, and ultimately self-defeating (a situation not improved by the abolition of the ABT in 1992 and its replacement by a Broadcasting Authority that had no standards of its own yet depended on industry self-regulation).

We also found evidence that Aborigines and ethnic minorities were facing large-scale exclusion as media workers—they found it difficult to gain employment, and once employed, to have their experience deemed as legitimate as that of 'Anglo-Australians'. We were interested in playing some part in enhancing the capacity of minority media workers to make a more significant impact on the media. The capacity of Aboriginal and ethnic communities to influence media industry decisions about programs and content apart from their isolated behaviour as consumers also seemed an important issue to focus on. The racism and media project consisted of several elements—

- A research program which monitored broadcast and print media intensively in 1990 and 1991 and analysed a short period of radio, television and print material.
- A close analysis of issues and how they were treated in the media over a particular period (e.g. the boat people; Aboriginal/non-Aboriginal relations; the 'making' of Redfern, an inner area of Sydney with a strong Aboriginal population; the representation of the Third World; the Gulf War; sexuality and race).
- An analysis of particular broadcast programs that raised some of the issues involved (e.g. comedy; children's television; music television and Aboriginal music; drama series).
- A series of interviews with Aboriginal and ethnic minority media workers concerning their experience with the media.
- A series of interviews with 'mainstream' media workers including managers and production staff, and with staff of the Federation of Australian Commercial Telecasters (FACTS) and the Australian Association of National Advertisers (AANA).
- Participation in various media industry training projects, including those for screenwriters with the Australian Film Television and Radio School, and for the ABC.
- Submissions to government and statutory body inquiries.
- Consultancies with major government inquiries (Aboriginal Deaths in Custody, Racial Violence).
- Specific research exercises for government bodies (media content, audience perceptions, especially for the Office of Multicultural Affairs).
- A series of academic and public seminars, and participation in conferences etc.
- Student media projects on race and ethnicity, based on specific programs, stories or advertising campaigns, and examining their makers' intentions and effects.
- Participation in an international comparative research project on ethnic conflict and the media.

This book brings together much of this material, and in particular, empirical research on media content and how it reveals media practices as well as their wider social context.

The empirical material was collected from several sources to provide depth and breadth of data. In April 1990 we recorded two weeks of midday and prime-time television on five Sydney channels—2, 7, 9, 10, SBS (not midday) plus the music video programs *Rage*, *MTV* and *The Noise*, and several hours daily of five radio stations (2FC, 2BL, 2GB, 2KY and 2MMM) with Aboriginal radio from Radio Redfern and SBS's 2EA. All the major newspapers, news magazines, women's and youth magazines were collected. In May

1991 another week of Channel 9 (the channel with the highest ratings) was recorded, and newspapers for the period were also collected. The material was then coded to identify all specific references to ethnic minorities, Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders, and all instances of general claims to be speaking for or about Australia. For the work on children and television (September 1991 to March 1992) we used *The Afternoon Show* and *Couch Potato* (ABC), Agro's *Cartoon Connection* and *Saturday Disney* (Channel 7), and *Kids' Stuff* (Channel 10).

For during the racism and media project we also collected other material—regularly clipping issues in the print media or following up broadcasts of news, current affairs, drama, music and comedy material. In 1992 a research project on ethnic audiences and the media was undertaken for the Office of Multicultural Affairs. At the request of the Office we prepared a discussion group schedule and media diary which OMA used to collect material from over 60 discussion groups and 700 individual participants in all states and the Northern Territory. We then analysed the material and reported the findings to the OMA (Coupe and Jakubowicz 1993). Some of this material has also been included in a description of ethnic audience responses to and opinions about the mass media. The audience perspectives provide a valuable corrective to our own 'deconstruction' of the media texts we have used, at times demonstrating the very different interpretations that arise from people's experiences and cultural values.

These varying perspectives can be thought of as ideologies, systems of values and ideas by which experience can be interpreted and action determined. 'Ideology' has various genealogies in the social sciences. It ranges from a perspective which contrasts ideology (a self-serving, distorting framework of interpretation) to science (usually described as 'Marxist historical materialism'), through to a more flexible approach in which all perspectives are seen as ideological or partial views of reality. In each case, though, there is a sense that a deeper truth or reality lies beyond the ideology and that it is accessible through analysis.

3

AUSTRALIAN MEDIA STUDIES AND ISSUES OF RACE AND ETHNICITY

While there has been vigorous community debate in the media about issues of race and ethnicity—Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Land Rights, the 'Boat people', refugees, etc.—most academic investigation of the media has neglected the issues. Two of the more widely referenced texts that set out to provide an overview of the Australian media—Bill Bonney and Helen Wilson's *Australia's Commercial Media* (1983) and Keith Windschuttle's *Australian Media* (1988)—make little reference to the issues, even though they both explore gender and class (from different perspectives) in some detail.

Even more recent attempts to address these issues have not managed to move much further. Albert Moran's edited collection on broadcast media (Moran 1992) includes a short excerpt from an anonymous government consultant for the Special Broadcasting Authority, and makes no reference to Aborigines. John Henningham's *Issues in Australian Journalism* (1990) includes Michael Meadow's analysis of the media portrayal of Aborigines, but no discussion of ethnicity or cultural pluralism. The Tulloch and Turner collection on Australian television (1989), which is subtitled 'Programs, Pleasures and Politics', makes passing reference to cultural chauvinism by including Stuart Cunningham's discussions of the late 1980s mini-series *Cowra Breakout* and *Vietnam*, which he describes as 'major documents contributing to setting the emergent discourse of multi-culturalism on the national agenda' (Cunningham 1989:44). However, the work that television maintains on ethnicity, race and their links with nation does not feature. Moran and O'Regan's *The Australian Screen* (1989) allows a wider perspective on the constitution of the nation. Here we find dimensions of cultural difference generated by race and ethnicity in Moran's discussion of the migrant as subject in institutional documentaries, and a recognition of immigrant experiences in a discussion of Sophie Turkiewicz's work as a film director by Annette Blonski and Freda Freiberg (p. 205). In the same collection Sean Maynard offers a chapter that discusses the representation of Aboriginality and the relationship between blacks and whites in Australian cinema. He acknowledges that, as a white writer, he does not offer a full exposure of the issues, and admits to a certain romanticism (p. 235). The Cunningham and Turner (1993) collection on the media in Australia addresses cultural pluralism and racism in a limited way—through a com-

pressed summary of Jakubowicz's analysis of SBS radio (Jakubowicz 1989) and occasional references—examples in terms of mini-series, films, television. However, there is no sustained analysis of the ethnic press (not a single mention) nor any discussion of ethnic or Aboriginal audiences, except of some 'migrant girls' in an excerpt from Tulloch and Moran's study of *A Country Practice* (1986:266–71).

Government-sponsored research into media and race has been generated by the Office of Multicultural Affairs, mainly by the authors of this book and by Phillip Bell (Bell 1993), as well as by the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission (HREOC 1991, Jakubowicz 1990), and most recently by the Australian Broadcasting Authority. The former Tribunal conducted neither research nor inquiry into the issues. The 1993 project undertaken jointly by the ABA and the British Broadcasting Standards Council (Nugent et al. 1993; Bostock 1993), dealt with three issues—the frequency of representation of Aborigines and NESBs, the nature of the portrayal, and what might be done about the findings. Using a series of qualitative research clinics, a national telephone survey and an analysis of selected programs, the report concluded that audiences felt that 'television was considered to be an influential medium which should actively promote harmonious community relations between different cultural groups. . .an educative role which in turn should promote better understanding' (Nugent et al. 1993:36). The point was made that for minority groups the issue of representation (extent and type) was a significant concern—for Anglo-Australians it had a low priority and required 'numerous prompts' (p. 38). The main concern was on the exclusion of Aborigines and ethnic Australians, rather than how they were portrayed on screen—except in the case of Aborigines where there was 'some evidence of a perceived lack of positive images' (p. 39).

The response to issues of race and ethnicity in many of the more academic studies seems to have been constructed from a self-confident central point looking out towards the margins. Thus we are enveloped by resurgent cultural nationalists with their feet firmly set in Anglo-Australian tradition, seeking to understand the meaning of 'these others'—the others into whose realm they have strayed (Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders), and the non-Anglo immigrants who have wandered into the paddock after they have built the fences.

This problem of perspective emerges very clearly in a more recent study of Australian television culture which springs from the same celebratory approach to the renewed Australia (O'Regan 1993). For the first time, a serious study of television has made a significant attempt to examine the nature of the 'television service' by assessing what is described as the 'different cultural and spatial levels' and its 'minoritarian, ethnic, indigenous and 'established' Australian manifestations' (p. iv). Rather than setting up polar-

ities, as in monocultural against multicultural, O'Regan argues for television as a mosaic of sites, levels, and so on. Viewers move through these easily, he suggests, adopting different identities as they travel, dipping in and out of minoritarian and 'established' forcefields. Overall Australian television has become the 'site for competition, synergy and antagonism' (p. 105) between levels and interests and projects. In a two-chapter foray into the Special Broadcasting Service, the first of which surveys the symbolic politics of multiculturalism, and the second of which encompasses the service itself, O'Regan argues that SBS has taken on an ever-expanding role as presenter of a world view predicated on a unitary Australian interest, into which the culturally pluralist communities that make up the audience can be enrolled. Australia's fundamental tensions within ethnic fragments and between them and the wider society have been dealt with by importing images and narratives from the homeland and by the presentation of the multicultural image by ethnic Australians. The great majority of local ethnicities appear only in informational programming, leaving the fictional programming to imported material. Concluding about the politics of the scene, O'Regan claims that 'multiculturalism and SBS have always been in the business of managing ethnicity and social marginality in ways consonant with government policy. . .[although] SBS actively enlists and allows ethnic and marginal aspiration to significantly shape them' (p. 177).

Such an approach to understanding the processes of multicultural television begins from an assumption of marginality, and tries to explain how that marginality is managed in the interests of overall social harmony. In doing so it provides useful insights into the changing struggles over content and ideology. It does not, however, come to grips with the exclusion and control of cultural differences which continue to characterise the 'established Australian' media.

Such an approach reaches this impasse because it fails to comprehend two dimensions of struggle and conflict. One dimension is the daily negotiation by ethnic minorities for cultural and personal integrity and survival against elements of a culture which defines itself as 'mainstream' and 'established'; the other dimension involves the structural processes that reinforce hegemonic control within media and other social organisations against the perceived threat of the Others and their challenge to the competence and capacity of the dominant social order. Simply put, the question remains: why have the established television services remained more or less incapable of changing to allow a more multicultural service? The multicultural project at SBS television has been not so much about managing minorities (though a certain element of that explains the low level of funding and the constant problems with service delivery) but rather about internationalising the Australian middle class, in the face of a globalising communication and production environment against which that class remained resistant.

The rhetoric of cultural pluralism for ethnic communities at SBS has allowed the television industry in general to remain largely unaffected by the cultural changes wrought by migration. The 'infotainment' programming of the channel during prime time allows a stronger engagement with Australia's ethnocentrism, but why has it had such little impact on the other services targeting this same audience? Our argument is that the current media structures exist to maintain particular cultural hierarchies, and that change occurs only when these practices are challenged whenever they are produced, however stimulating and enjoyable they may be.

Australian media studies have begun to examine the issues of racism and the media, though seldom with any direct attack. They do not place social power and the role of the media in sustaining that power in a context of conflict and struggle but offer instead an endless plain of opportunities and choices. Since we need to clarify the central importance of the media in those processes of social power, we shall now examine the relationship between ideology and the media.

4

IDEOLOGY AND THE MEDIA

The construction of media content is inevitably a conflictual process, yet such conflict need not be hostile: it is often creative and expansive. New ideas challenge the old, new attempts to communicate the social mosaic to audiences find spaces already occupied. The material to which audiences have access offers milieus through which social difference and diversity can be explored, represented, contested, reproduced and modified. The mass media thrive on a variety of genres and sites, yet always try to set these in terms of the known and comfortable. Audiences are shown 'real life' in forms such as news or current affairs—these world views are also tied into conflicts scripted as sport, or drama, or comedy; as quiz shows, dance contests and cartoons, in soaps and serials. In magazines they read news reports and evaluative pieces, editorial comment and explanatory articles, comic and cartoon representations. They read recipes and advertisements, 'how to' do everything from baby care to car repair. They can pursue fantasies of body, dress, lifestyle, or analyses of major social, economic and scientific issues.

Such a melange of opportunity suggests that any simple line of argument will flounder in complex alternative. This must be partly true as the ideologies pervading the media are problematic sets of values and aspirations, strongly affected by the diversity of responses from audiences no matter what interpretations are proffered by producers, writers and editors. Ideology can serve as a shorthand term for that 'complex set of meanings and a structuralisation of the processes of production and consumption of meaning on the part of audiences' (Hodge and Tripp 1986: 23).

However, these ideologies are not 'unattached', suspended in some space in which ideas alone struggle for dominance. Ideologies have real material roots—in the economic and social structures of society. We are not, however, taking the simplistic line that all ideologies can be identified by their social contexts, but proposing that they are patterns of ideas that link individual identity and consciousness to wider social practices and forces. These wider social forces and values interact with individual rationales and perceptions in a reciprocal process of reinforcement. Ideologies can disguise material interests and can be used to confuse the general with the specific (for instance, where one group presents its interests as though these are the nation's interests).

We have at time found ourselves overwhelmed by evidence of a sharper

sense of ideology—ideology as a set of ideas deliberately constructed to advance a particular group's interests. Group interests are an important dimension in comprehending ideology at work. When we ask media workers, such as television current affairs producers, why a particular pattern of representation recurs in the media, we have to deal with two levels of analysis. For example, when the low level of Aboriginal representation in the media is explained to us by producers and editors either in terms of unavailability of 'talent' or expected hostility from audiences, we must first analyse the media's explanations of what we see; then we have to draw our own conclusions about their explanations—are they merely self-serving rationalisations? Are deep beliefs about the 'real world' being put forward? Or evidence chosen to support a predetermined position? We had one discussion with a prize-winning senior television producer, himself an immigrant from Britain, who proudly proclaimed to us that he knew nothing about Australia before he arrived. He then announced that 'ethnic people are not as good as Australian journalists, and we appoint on the basis of merit—if you want us to have more ethnics you'll need an instruction from management that we have quotas, and that we have to take them'. Clearly there is more than ignorance going on here—there are deeply entrenched hostilities and perhaps a sense of material threat engendered by the new arguments for a multicultural and non-racist media.

Since the media are organisations for the production, dissemination and consumption of meaning, how are meanings produced, disseminated and consumed? Ien Ang (1991) has spoken of meaning being increasingly produced globally but consumed locally—of large systems and corporations commodifying meaning and distributing it across the world to be interpreted, negotiated, modified, twisted, reconstructed before re-emerging intertwined with local history and culture, never the same nuance or pattern twice, always different. The local then becomes analogous to difference. Difference is produced by localising human experience, in the face of globalising processes that tend to homogenise. But how is difference possible if the production of meaning is becoming more concentrated in fewer hands, each with public and conservative political agendas?

5

POWER AND THE MEDIA: CONCENTRATION

The political economy of the media—that symbiotic interaction between the ownership and organisation of media production, the action by government (as the state in capitalist society), and the broader society—has been one of the major paradigms used to interpret media–society relations. The political economy approach assumes that the material aspects of production in the media industries affect the content (conceived of as ideology) to such an extent that everything that occurs in the media is shaped by these material aspects, to fit in with the interests of media's owners and controllers. Content, especially, is 'commodified', and the ideas and values communicated through the media are transformed by the processes of production into commodities to be exchanged in the marketplace. The two related components proposed by this political economy paradigm are (1) the ideological function designed to reinforce the values favoured by the economic and politically dominant groups; and (2) the material function of commodification with its power to reconstruct popular culture into a culture of consumption of commodities. As McQuail (1987:64) has noted in his summary of the mainly British debate from this perspective (Murdoch and Golding 1977; Curran et al. 1986), the political economy approach does allow a focus on the integration of media industries into the global economic environment. It also offers an explanation in structural terms of the systematic exclusion of lesser voices, presenting the media as an arena in which only those who are powerful enough to participate can exert any influence. All others gain access (Andy Warhol's fifteen minutes of fame in a lifetime) only when their experiences are either interesting or bizarre enough to be of material value to the more powerful, especially advertisers.

Herman and Chomsky (1988) have argued that media content, particularly news and current affairs, is heavily influenced by which corporations own and control the media and what other interests they might have. They write of the media as 'manufacturing consent', developing and communicating propaganda to sabotage revolutionary struggles against imperialism, and to validate social forces that act in the US government and multinational corporation interests in the Third World. Such a view directly challenges any claims to democratic independence and impartiality in the presentation of international and national news. According to them, the key filters on news

are the size and scope of media ownership, the power of advertisers, and the sourcing and choice of news.

Ownership and control of the media in Australia has promoted fierce debate and widespread concern over recent years. The broad structures may have changed but the net effect has been the concentration of the commercial media, particularly the press, in fewer hands, and the precarious survival of other mass media outlets (television and radio). The effects of economic boom and bust, changing legislative constraints, changing federal communications ministers in the Commonwealth government under the Australian Labor Party, and free market trends have produced a situation where two longer-term trends—concentration and globalisation—have come to dominate media practice.

The national newspaper market has effectively moved into the hands of two players. Rupert Murdoch's News Ltd in reality controls (i.e. has no competition in) all the metropolitan markets, save for Sydney and Melbourne; in early 1992 a consortium put together by Canadian publisher Conrad Black won control of the failing Fairfax newspaper group—the *Sydney Morning Herald*, the Melbourne *Age* and the national *Financial Review*. Black has rebuilt an earlier alliance with television and magazine publisher Kerry Packer. This alliance was dissolved to avoid political interference by forces who viewed Packer's involvement in the Fairfax papers as a very dangerous increase in the concentration of ownership and influence (and a potential breach of the restrictions on cross-media ownership), but Packer soon returned to the game, purchasing a significant holding in Fairfax in 1993.

The battle lines were drawn, with Murdoch trying to position his national morning paper, *The Australian*, as the voice of the conservative and technocratic elite of Australia. The *SMH* and *The Age* had been rather more liberal in their perspectives, though there was growing apprehension that they too would be driven to a more politically conservative position by Black; his purchase of the *Jerusalem Post* allegedly moved it in that direction.

In the electronic media, and television in particular, major changes in ownership have occurred as technological change has accelerated, shadowed by the possibility of cable TV, and these changes have resulted in a much more polarised broadcasting marketplace. Three commercial networks, each controlling a string of regional stations throughout the country, have had varying financial fortunes. Packer's Nine Network came through the recession of the late 1980s in strong shape: in 1987 Alan Bond bought the stations from Packer for over $800 million, but was forced to sell back to Packer in 1990 for $200 million. Only in the Northern Territory, where he was the single largest private landowner, was Packer less than successful—there the Australian Broadcasting Tribunal awarded the central Australia licence to Imparja TV, a commercial station with strong Aboriginal involvement through the Central Australian Aboriginal Media Association.

Both the other commercial networks were put into receivership, put up for sale or placed under tight financial management. Their capacity for innovation was limited, or so they argued, and their capacity to sponsor Australian material was consequentially reduced. The key role of the banks in the networks' survival strategies meant that enlarging their audiences became a fairly crucial goal—not one to be easily offset against the apparently riskier business of stressing multicultural social goals.

Until recently, television programming directors have relied on safe, familiar formats and with material that rarely challenged audiences. Claims to certitude, dependency on regular presenters (some with over 30 years in television) and a concentration on the activities of the powerful had various consequences. The 'reality' that was the concern of news and current affairs, or which formed the background narrative of script ideas for serials and soaps, remained almost uncompromisingly Anglo-Australian; or if it was 'internationalised' it catered for North American domestic audiences.

The magazine market also became increasingly competitive—indeed, as the 'broadcast' media became less satisfactory for dollar-strapped advertisers, the capacity of magazines to deliver a message to a smaller but clearly defined audience became a more attractive proposition. The integration of *The Bulletin* (a magazine in Packer's Australian Consolidated Press group) with *Newsweek*, an American magazine published by the *Washington Post* paralleled the introduction of an Australian edition of *Time* magazine. These magazines reflected a much more clinical segmentation of their audience—a move also affecting women's and teenagers' magazines such as *New Idea*, *Woman's Day*, *The Australian Women's Weekly*, *Cleo*, *Cosmopolitan*, *Dolly* and *Boyfriend*.

The national media sector—ABC, SBS—was also affected by changing economic and political pressures. With the ABC's real resources reduced, and with its argument for being the only 'national' network eroded by the government's policy of 'equalisation' and the creation of the three commercial networks, the ABC continued to move towards more cost-efficient practices. As the pressure mounted to extend its equal employment opportunity policies to a greater intake of minority groups, the ABC was forced to cut staff, and so initiatives have tended to rely on additional funds from outside organisations—the employment of Aborigines sponsored by the Department of Employment, Education and Training, or the engagement of 'ethnic' trainees sponsored and paid for by the Office of Multicultural Affairs. There is increasing evidence of the ABC's resistance to targeting the employment of ethnic minorities, or in making multicultural programs. The rationale for this resistance is the declining real resource base and the reluctance to give preferential treatment to groups previously excluded.

The Special Broadcasting Service also began a major transformation. Under new legislation it has replaced commercial sponsorship announcements on television with advertisements. The effect of this has been to put prime-

time broadcasting under some pressure to gain a significant audience, to rely heavily on English language programs between 7.30 p.m. and 9.30 p.m., and to move broadcasting in other languages to more marginal timeslots.

In radio, SBS sought to reprogram the service given to larger and well-established communities to accommodate new immigrant groups. In 1991 this created a major conflict in Sydney, with large public meetings of these communities condemning the move, and demanding that SBS not disenfranchise them—many had significant numbers of monolingual elderly. The outcome of this was a commitment by the Labor Party in its 1993 federal election manifesto to provide SBS with another radio network, thus allowing it to meet the demands of a wider number of ethnic communities.

6

POWER AND THE MEDIA: GLOBALISATION

Ownership and control obviously affect media production practices. The globalisation of production (e.g. Jacka 1992) has also put significant pressure on local media production futures. Industries are becoming organised on an international, if not global scale; the audiovisual industries in particular are taking on a form in which technology and product are becoming more closely integrated. Sony, the Japan-based hardware manufacturer now owns CBS music (the software) in the USA, thus reinforcing its control over sound technology. News Ltd, which now owns Fox cinema and television, has thus gained a global interpenetration of film, television, magazines and newspapers.

Sklair notes in his discussion of globalisation that the transnationalisation of the media is really a transnationalisation of the economic structures of society, eroding the nation state and creating a culture-ideology of consumerism (Sklair 1991: 139; Roncagliolo 1986). This culture-ideology is central to the process of 'assimilation' of immigrants into Australian society, for it is their transformation into consumers of media-advertised commodities that represents one of the key transformations of culture they often experience (Jakubowicz 1987; Coupe and Jakubowicz 1993). Immigrants often try to understand Australian society by consuming commodities presented to them as appropriate by the media. Globalisation does not necessarily lead to a homogenisation of content, but it will spread consumerism as a cultural form. This spread of consumerism is also identified by Aboriginal leaders as one of the greatest dangers facing traditional Aboriginal peoples with the coming of television to remote parts of Australia.

If economic pressures prompt a conservative surge by the media towards the uncontroversial and safe, to make audiences feel more secure and certain about their prejudices, then the opportunities for diversity diminish. For instance, the declining numbers of newspaper owners means that the international network of information sources is reduced. Similarly, the former Fairfax papers may be facing a future of declining autonomy of sources and an increased use of other Conrad Black news sources due to an economic rationalist logic that looks for the elimination of duplication of resources. The domination of the metropolitan newspaper market by News Ltd restricts the range of opinion and input available. *The Australian* and Sydney's *Telegraph Mirror* already have a track record of hostility to cultural diversity

in Australian society, let alone intellectual diversity within their own pages, so the future in that regard is less than hopeful.

Similar problems exist in other elements of the national and international news systems. Most international news for television comes from two sources—ITN and Visnews. The ABC maintains reporters in several countries, and Channel 9 has links with the USA and UK. However, the remainder of news inputs are tied to the priorities of the international agencies and their interests in the North American marketplace.

Since the Commonwealth parliament's print inquiry in 1992 failed to recommend any action to maintain if not increase diversity in the press (Bowman 1992), and since the government has replaced the Australian Broadcasting Tribunal by an even less interventionist body (The Australian Broadcasting Authority) that is far more likely to respond to commercial media interests, it appears likely that the 'free market' will be allowed to intrude further into the politics of information in Australia.

The Australian government is also coming under pressure from the international trade community, and in particular from the United States, to abandon its restrictions on overseas-produced television material, including both advertisements and television programming. Under the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade negotiations, the Australian content rules of the old ABT have been identified as potential obstacles to trade. Abandoning these rules under American pressure could well have devastating consequences for the local production industry and for its small steps towards a more open and diverse representation of Australian society.

CULTURAL CRITIQUES AND AUSTRALIAN (DIS)CONTENT

The political economy approach is important for understanding not only the media but also the processes through which ideas about society are formed and communicated. Post-modern critiques of political economy and the rise of cultural studies that concentrate on the text and argue that the structures which produce the texts are of marginal relevance, have come to prominence in recent work on the media.

Strongly influenced by French deconstructionist analyses and semiotic studies of the content of media discourses, these approaches have emphasised the ambiguity of meanings in texts, focusing on the tension between the intention of the author (or even the author as a concept) and the power of audiences or readers to discover their own meanings in the texts, drawing on their experiences and references. The texts are removed from the process of their industrial production and set in a landscape of ideas and values, without a relationship to any material interests. The subjectivity of the reader is given paramount place, with great attention paid to the discontinuities between author and audience. Subcultures are celebrated as the milieus of resistance, or as strategies for psychic survival in the face of the 'end of ideology' and the 'death of history'. Style, imbued with semiotic density, becomes the focus for exploration and analysis, a venue for the articulation of cultural identity and social difference.

The reaffirmation of subjective sensibility offers a necessary corrective to both the structural mechanism of Althusserian theories of ideology and more conspiratorial views of the capitalist/imperialist project, which removed the opportunities for subversion and adaptation by those at the receiving end of the communication blitz. However, this reaffirmation can also lead to the mass media's uncritical celebration of the popular, especially of youth subcultures which can find themselves celebrated merely as oppositional and selfconsciously subversive (McGuigan 1992).

One example of this problem in Australian media studies occurs in the debate over Australian content in Australian broadcasting (and in cinema), and thereby over the relationship between the state, media and national culture. At present the arguments seem to have reached an impasse—over whether there should be government intervention to define and defend

national culture, or more exploration of what a national culture might be in a period of increasing globalisation of communication and media production.

The first step then is to assess the arguments over whether there should be Australian content regulations for Australian cultural development. Under pressure from the United States during the Uruguay round of the GATT talks, Australian government negotiators have had to dwell with some intensity on the economic and social rationale for rules that constrain the entry into the Australian television and film marketplace of foreign-produced television material.

The Australian Broadcasting Tribunal raised this question in its Inquiry into Australian Content in 1987–8 (a sort of Bicentennial project all on its own). The Tribunal issued a background paper which canvassed some of the key dimensions of the policy guidelines; it reflected on Canadian film development policies, on funding criteria adopted by the Australian Film Commission, and on the Commonwealth Government's Department of the Arts during the period when Section 10 b(a) of the Taxation Act supported films seeking certification as 'Australian' for taxation write-off purposes. These structural supports to local production had a great deal to do with employment in the film industry and offered a spin-off in local movies, but did not specifically address the cultural content of the product—only its key personnel, and sources of funds.

The ABT was also interested in the idea of an 'Australian look', a content approach that would allow the allocation of a higher points score to fulfil local production quotas, imposed by the Tribunal on commercial broadcasters. The points system had been introduced in 1973 by the Broadcasting Control Board (precursor to the ABT) to induce greater quality and diversity in programming. However, the Board tended to become captive of the industry it was designed to regulate, and thus had to be 'freed' to operate in the wider public interest (which it was also called upon to define). John Docker, in a strong argument against Australian content regulation, has attacked the whole question of state discipline in relation to popular culture (Docker 1991). Docker is highly critical of the division between high and popular culture implicit in the ABT policy of Australian content. He argues that conservative visions of the State's role in protecting audiences from the supposedly corrosive effects of mass culture (particularly imported material) and in stimulating audiences by ensuring access to 'high quality' programs, particularly drama, have emerged from a long tradition of bourgeois distaste for the potentially oppositional tendencies in popular entertainment—the subversion of authority implicit, say, in the carnival tradition.

Public interest groups, Docker says, confront the community with a constrictive perspective on the choices they might want—the public in fact have a great deal of power to signify their interest or lack of it to commercial broadcasters. Arguments for regulation, he continues, are arguments for

elitism, which are fundamentally contemptuous of the authenticity of popular opinion and the capacity of the population at large to make choices in terms of their own needs and pleasures. It is a struggle by popular culture against repression, suppression, censorship, moralising, surveillance, and impositions (Docker 1991: 24).

Yet what are we to make of this argument when the effect of existing regulation, minimalist as it is in relation to Aborigines and ethnic minorities, and even where it is written into the charter of the ABC, has had so little effect (according to David Hill, ABC chief executive, quoted by the *Sydney Morning Herald* on 17 February 1993 as saying that 'reporting of Aboriginal affairs in the Australian media ranges from responsible to appalling and even racist')? This is particularly problematic for Docker as he ties his attack on the high culture bias of regulation to the advocacy of internationalising program flows. He suggests that there is no danger in the Americanisation of Australian television, as here again the cultural marketplace will assign value and in time resolve the conflicts through the active participation of audiences.

One is reminded of the old Marxist adage, that people make their own history, but not on terrain of their own choosing. It seems as if Docker has sought to rescue the role of the audience as subject from what he saw as the torment of structuralist imposition, only to lose a handle on that process and its context. Stuart Cunningham offers a similar critique of Docker when he suggests that Docker is being disingenuous in his presentation of commercial broadcasters as 'acutely sensitive' to popular interests, aiming to serve the carnivalesque desires of the working class, and being constantly hampered by regulatory bodies and interest groups (Cunningham 1991:29).

From another perspective, there is some strength in Terry Flew's argument that existing structures of control (despite ABT Television Program Standards (14[1]b) which attempt to recognise the Australian community's diversity of backgrounds) have not done very much to overcome the marginalisation of ethnic communities and Aborigines in television discourses (Flew 1991). Indeed, there are far more Blacks and non-Anglos in American material on Australian television than in any Australian series, a point we make below in relation to advertising on children's television, which is often made for the American market. The popularity of *The Cosby Show* and the findings of the ABA report on cultural diversity (1993) suggest that it is not necessarily Australian audiences that have a problem with these issues—rather, Australian program-makers appear to have been as reluctant as the regulatory system to offer diversity.

The strongest arguments against Australian content rules have come from the advertising sector, particularly from the Australian Association of National Advertisers (many members of which are either transnational companies or local distributors of transnational products) and from the Advertising Feder-

ation of Australia, representing agencies. The ABT listed 61 submissions in its summary of submissions (ABT 1988c), of which 24 came from the advertising industry. Their overall claim was that current practices increased the cost of production and requirements should be removed. Against their position submissions from Actors Equity, several independent production houses, and some professional associations (e.g. Writers Guild, Teachers of Media) stressed the importance of maintaining controls to protect and enhance the industry.

The Australian content debate has significant implications for the position of ethnic minorities and Aborigines in the Australian media, although the nature and extent of these implications are not obvious. The cultural marketplace does not necessarily produce cultural diversity or complexity—if a mass audience drives the provision of media product, and that audience is significantly racist, even substantial minorities may have little influence on the outcome. Furthermore, in the face of the media's assimilationist messages non-Anglo immigrants and Aborigines may be less than anxious to join a debate in which the majority values have such a residual and minor place for them. The argument that they can influence the marketplace if they so choose begs the question—if there is precious little evidence of images, issues, voices and faces with which they can identify, what is the likelihood they will demand such things? Or indeed, for the Anglophonic mass, what chance do they have of seeing or enjoying diversity if it is denied them?

The Australian content debate provides a useful avenue for exploring the value of different theoretical approaches to understanding the media, for it demonstrates that material interests are closely tied to ideologies about the national interest and how it should be advanced. However, we need the insights from cultural studies to understand media treatment of race and ethnicity, and in particular, what it means to talk of the Australian media as racist.

3

RACES AND RACISMS

Racism can be understood as the set of values and behaviours associated with groups of people in conflict over physical appearances, genealogy, or cultural differences. It contains an intellectual/ideological framework of explanation, a negative orientation towards 'the Other', and a commitment to a set of actions that put these values into practice.

While we are specifically interested in how the media represent racial conflict, it is important to understand its broader social context. Explanations for such conflict vary from the materialist to the idealist, if not metaphysical. Some researchers (e.g. Miles 1982; Wetherell and Potter 1992) have placed contemporary racism in the framework of imperialism and colonialism, as an ideology specifically generated to justify the conquest and expropriation of colonised (native) people by European metropolitan powers. They explore the processes that legitimise racism, and find in people's discourses about racial difference their evidence for the apparently unfathomable disjunctions between public tolerance and the maintenance of racist structures and behaviour (Wetherell and Potter 1992: 206ff). Since the ideology has a material basis it is unlikely to change so long as the material relations between and within societies are those of inequality and exploitation. Furthermore, if the colonised are brought into the metropolitan society as immigrant workers, their colonised, subordinate position will accompany them and will be reinforced by low status jobs, poor housing and schooling, and negative cultural stereotypes and representations.

Earlier versions of this materialist account have been criticised as being too reductionist, and insensitive to the complexity of racial and cultural attitudes and practices. One such materialist approach that sprang from the work of Stuart Hall and his colleagues at the Birmingham Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies in the decade after 1975 argues that 'Race is the modality in which class relations are experienced' (Hall 1978 quoted in Gilroy 1982). Race had its roots in an experience that preceded capitalism, and is now inextricably intertwined with inequality and oppression. Consciousness of race and class cannot be pulled apart for black people (nor for white), while gender relations permeate consciousness of difference for women and men. Black women's experience of white societies is structured by

patriarchal relations of power—race and class are experienced in gendered forms (hooks 1992).

Issues of race cannot be singled out from those of gender and class. The intersection of these dimensions of social cleavage is fundamental to our study, for the media provide the structure on which many of these intersections are worked through in symbolic form. The stage comedy *Wogs Out of Work* grew out of an ethnic (mainly Greek) working-class experience in Australia. It was created by the children of immigrants, showing the world through the perspective of the second generation. They stood some distance from the Anglo-Australian 'mainstream' culture yet their new class position (as tertiary-educated children of 'uneducated' immigrant parents) created many of the tensions over gender roles and relations from which the comedy springs.

Since we are concerned with the representations of cultural minorities and their relationships with the wider society, we have chosen 'race' and 'racism' as shorthand terms for extremely complex and ambiguous processes. We have already noted that talking about cultural difference has a legitimate place in any social discourse. Yet given the difficulties with the idea of race, can we maintain the usages we have sought to establish?

'Race' has no scientific basis as a term for the relationship between skin colour, physical features and gene pool on the one hand, and social and cultural behaviour on the other. The range of genetic diversity within physiologically distinctive communities is often as great as differences between communities (Rose et al. 1985:119ff). While crude demagogic claims persist with this simplistic 'biological' connection, it is not part of contemporary social science. On the debate over sociobiology we agreee with Steven Rose and his colleagues when they note that 'any use of racial categories must take its justifications from other sources than biology' (Rose et al. 1985:127). So 'race' has primarily social meaning—the next step is to explore the range of social meanings and their implications in attempting to understand how the media interprets, represents and communicates race and races.

There are several fairly innocuous uses of the term—the most obvious being the human 'race', where broad ideas of common descent (in evolutionary models) or of creation (in more religious contexts) allow us to explore shared cultural and historical experience. It may also be used to describe apparent physical differences, but such use already verges on evaluation, ranking and hierarchical ordering against some external value set. Fuzziness also intrudes—people may speak of the white race, or the Black race, or the European race, or the Chinese race. Immediately there are problems of interpretation—does race stand for skin colour, or geographical place of birth, or nationality, or culture, or something else—some essential psychic or moral quality that can be differentiated? Here we are moving into a tougher linguistic territory fraught with potential tensions, where different appearance,

behaviour, or even geographical origin suggest impossible barriers of hostility between peoples.

In popular and policy discourses the idea of 'race' as a metaphor for culturally distinct communities is often simply used to distinguish, not to discriminate. So under what conditions does the use of 'race' move towards *racism*—where cultural or physical distinctiveness is used to explain social behaviour, and sometimes to justify discrimination, oppression or even extermination? Racism concerns the use of power by one group against another on the basis of an idea of racial differentiation. It is at issue, we believe, not simply where difference is noted but where difference is mobilised to justify the domination of one section of society by another. Thus the media are deeply implicated, through their constitution of meanings, in public discourses about social inequality. One apparently trivial example—a leading current affairs television journalist allegedly described as untrustworthy the character of the then NSW Premier Nicholas Greiner (a Hungarian-born immigrant) in relation to a 'political deal' with a former colleague—his coda for the criticism being 'never trust the Hungarian' (*Sydney Morning Herald* 15 May 1992:7). This broadcaster, three months previously, had been an active participant in a training session on multiculturalism for news and current affairs journalists where he had reiterated his hostility to racism and his support for the multicultural project. Yet he slipped easily into behaviour which, on reflection, he agreed was offensive.

We use 'race' to refer to the social processes of differentiation based on physical features and geographical origin. We use 'ethnicity' to distinguish groups in terms of cultural and community practices. Race and ethnicity are and can be used interchangeably in common parlance, with race more likely to refer to people 'of colour', and ethnicity to 'white' communities and individuals of European descent. Racism and ethnocentrism are both embedded in relations of power; racism is now more likely to be justified by a sociobiology argument about the 'natural' territoriality of races. This argument claims that ethnic groups or races 'naturally' resent each other, naturally compete and conflict, and thus 'naturally' should remain in their own spaces and not intrude into communities where their presence must naturally trigger hostility and perhaps violence (Blainey 1984; Ruxton quoted in Jakubowicz 1990). Such claims are racist because they maintain that the privileges of one group should prevail over those of another purely on the basis that cultural differences are incompatible. They also uphold the idea that cultural difference necessitates competition and therefore hostility.

We can talk of structural racism occurring where regular patterns of unequal access to power seem to recur, and to be solely associated with race or ethnic factors. For example, a mass media organisation may vigorously oppose public racism, including racist language, yet in a more covert way sustain the environment in which such behaviour survives. An organisation

may do this simply by applying professional and institutional values, such as its policy of employment on merit, or news values. These values may thereby create an employment milieu from which cultural minorities are either excluded, or in which they feel intimidated, and a news and current affairs output that speaks nearly always with the voice and from the perspective of what *The Australian* newspaper has so unselfconsciously and proudly referred to as the 'dominant race' (Editorial, *The Australian*, 28 August 1989).

'Who speaks for the subaltern?' asks Indian intellectual Gayatri Spivak, 'who can voice the worlds of the voiceless?' Spivak (1988) notes 'Clearly if you are poor, black and female you get it in three ways. . .[but in] seeking to learn to speak to (rather than listen to or speak for) the historically muted subject of the subaltern woman, the post-colonial intellectual *systematically* "unlearns" female privilege'. Spivak concludes that she cannot separate herself from her class, but she can use her analytical skills to deconstruct 'mainstream' accounts of the experience of the voiceless.

Homi Bhabha too finds in the post-colonial contemporary world—the world of migrant workers and transients, the internationalised world of 'ethnoscapes' (Appadurai 1990: 297)—the potential of cultural difference to establish new forms of meaning and strategies of identification. For Bhabha, the migrant experience is to be found where 'the 'loss' of meaning enters as a cutting edge into the representation of the fullness of the demands of the culture. . .Furthermore, migration makes the challenge of reading, into the present of a specific cultural performance, the traces of all those diverse disciplinary discourses and institutions of knowledge that constitute the conditions and contexts of culture' (Bhabha 1990:313). The contemporary world of the new settler has embedded in it the residues of all those worlds from which all migrants have come.

Our analysis focuses on these issues of power—as they appear in the texts themselves, as they position audiences, in the use of language and imagery, in the structure of arguments and narratives. We also examine them as they appear in the political economy of the media in Australia, through government regulation and controls, ownership, internationalisation and globalisation, the rights of minorities to challenge structures of communication; and in the organisational environments in which meaning is produced and disseminated. We will show that the continuous articulation of difference is one of the media's main exercises. As this process continues it has the effect of assuming and reinforcing boundaries, of justifying views of the world and understanding it in terms of race, and thereby, almost because it is so unselfconscious, in accelerating the slide from differentiation to discrimination. This process of cultural development is hedged by what JanMohamed and Lloyd have referred to as 'the pathos of hegemony [which] is frequently matched by its interested celebration of differences, but of differences in the aestheticized form of recreations' (JanMohamed and Lloyd 1987:8).

Those of us determined to combat racism and the deepening social hostilities it disguises and exposes have to deal with the media system as a whole. Cashmore has argued that racism is neither an inborn psychological constant nor simply a problem for minority groups (1987:258). Nor, as Kushnick has shown, is racism merely a matter of individual prejudice; it is more a structural feature of societies where power and social opportunity are distributed unequally to socially differentiated populations (Kushnick 1981). In developing our understanding of race, ethnicity, racism and the media, that broader social context and its forces mark out the arena with which we are concerned.

Yet while we must acknowledge that race is socially constructed and racism is also a social process interpenetrating other relations of power—class, gender, age, sexuality, disability—we also realise that ethnic identification and racial communalism are resurgent, that inequality is becoming more commonly perceived in terms of race and ethnicity, while economic pressures are interpreted as ethnic, racial or national ones. Anthony Smith suggested over ten years ago, before the urban riots in London's Brixton, while Eastern Europe and Northern Asia had only just begun to rumble once more against the Soviet Empire, midway between the Watts of 1965 and the Los Angeles of 1992, that this 'ethnic renaissance has the power to heal the rift in the alienated consciousness of marginalised men and women. . .[ministering] to the special identity needs of those groups which had become estranged from their communities' (Smith 1981: xiii).

Sixty years ago, when racism did not carry the social opprobrium that it does today, two Queensland sociobiologists of that earlier era opened a paean to 'race safety' with the following comments:

> Race safety. . .must be grounded on the experience of history and the immutable laws of evolution. Evolution pursues its relentless course amid the disorganised forces of opposition, impervious to humanitarian experiments, blind to our sufferings and contemptuous of our divided efforts to resist. The weak will be supplanted by the strong. . .(Bostock and Nye 1934: 1)