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BOOKS

Radio Across the Tasman

BROADCASTING IN AUSTRALIA, by Ian Mackay; Melbourne University Press, Australian price 25/-.

(Reviewed by K.M.H.)

IN 1950 Ian Mackay joined the steady trickle of New Zealand broadcasters who have crossed the Tasman in search of wider opportunities. A year or two later, in *Broadcasting in New Zealand*, he recorded his disillusion with the structure and control of the NZBS, and looked back nostalgically to the days when two independent services competed for the New Zealand radio audience.

Readers of his earlier book will recognise some familiar arguments in *Broadcasting in Australia*, for the author likes the competition that exists between Australian stations, and retains his dislike for broadcasting monopolies wherever they may be. But he has a larger purpose: to describe and explain the origin and characteristics of Australian broadcasting. To fulfil it he draws on a variety of written sources to supplement his personal experience. The result is clear, comprehensive and informative.

Some facets of Australian broadcasting would strike New Zealanders as unusual. One is the Broadcasting Control Board, sitting astride a public corporation (the Australian Broadcasting Commission) and a large number of privately-owned commercial stations. The Board has wide powers to lay down and enforce programme and technical standards, and to ensure, among other things, "a reasonable variety of programmes." It is not clear to this reader why a public corporation, the members of whose governing board are appointed by the Minister, should need to be supervised by a control board whose members are appointed by the same Minister; and in practice the Board concerns itself more with the commercial stations.

A second feature is the method of financing the ABC. The annual licence fee has been abolished in Australia, and replaced by annual Parliamentary appropriations. National broadcasting is thus supported by the taxpayer rather than the listener, and the resulting uncertainties are clearly brought out. The grant can and does vary from year to year, making it difficult for the ABC to plan ahead; and any number of considerations, not necessarily related to the ABC's needs, can affect its size. There is good reason for the author's view that this method of financing must corrode the independence of the ABC.

A third is that the ABC, alone among major broadcasting services anywhere, does not control its technical services. These are provided and staffed by the Postmaster-General's Department. Conflicts of loyalty do not seem to arise, at least at the producer-technician level; but as the author points out, the artistic and technical processes in broadcasting are so closely related that the division is artificial, and has no real defence.

Mr Mackay is at his best in describing and explaining contemporary practice. His conclusions are personal opinions that can only be tested by listeners familiar with the full range of Australian programmes. For this



IAN MACKAY

reason the book is not likely to have a wide appeal in New Zealand; but anybody with a special interest in how broadcasting functions in Australia will find it valuable for reference.

PERIPHERIES OF PAINTING

MEMOIRS OF ANNIGONI, by Charles Richard Cammell, Allan Wingate, English price 16/-; PICTURES IN PERIL, by H. H. Parrs, translated by Katherine Talbot; Faber and Faber, English price 25/-, Illustrated.

ANNIGONI is an important artist to-day if only because he has provoked so much controversy between artists and critics. Where he is allowed to speak for himself in this book we find wisdom and value, even if we disagree with some of his conclusions. Unfortunately, he writes little of the book himself, though how a work by another hand can be entitled "memoirs" must remain a literary mystery, for Mr Cammell makes no attempt at "ghost" writing; he thrusts himself irritatingly forward all through the work. He tells Annigoni's story, but in so doing interprets the man himself, his work, and, worst of all and impertinently, his soul. All this in nauseatingly sentimental fashion, frequently revealing no more than the banal and the obvious, and often in a hotchpotch of poeticised prose: "In conversation his mind not seldom reveals itself"; and a few pages later, "At this new crisis in his artistic development his Guardian Spirit came once more to his aid; always for Annigoni was found the friend in need, always occurred for him the right meeting at the right moment."

It was not easy to read Mr Cammell's own personal musings and moralising on beauty, pacifism, faith, esoteric mysticism and a hundred other Cammell characteristics; further, it was devastatingly prejudicial to his subject, whom he admires and respects.

Pictures in Peril is also disappointing, and it is difficult to guess at what sort of reading public it is aimed. The writer appears to be well-informed; he has collected (with careful scholarly details) stories of pictures and works of art which have been damaged, stolen or irretrievably lost; he skips about the centuries and the nations presenting each as a sort of thriller but written with the dignified reserve of a museum curator. The result is a muddle. Much of the material is of value, for instance,



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