Refractions: (tele)vision and the (trans)formation and (trans)mission of the culture of landscape

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THE MANNER IN WHICH LANDSCAPES are technologically transmitted and taken up elsewhere is often treated as an unproblematic, literal transfer of artefacts and philosophies. But interpreting any vestige of culture taken from television requires recognising selections and transformations taking place in the act of reception. Traditional notions of centres and margins are refuted when the televisual is properly acknowledged, explicated here through Heidegger's presentation of technology as a mode of revealing. Within the televisual landscape, infotainment programmes promote a required level of expertise for structuring and maintaining the domestic garden, and are explored here through Gadamer's consideration of the role of the 'expert'. Playing with the idea of refraction, as it might stand for the transformative character of transmission and reception through television of the culture of landscape, I recognise that television too has its landscape and is itself a culture.

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WHEN WE TALK NOW about setting up a web of dialogue that will bridge the Pacific, it is usually unstated, perhaps even unrecognised, that the technology used to set it up will not be exclusive to nations in the Pacific region, but available to certain socioeconomic groups worldwide.[1] The new poor are now seen as those who are information-poor, those who cannot receive, or cannot act on what is shared through the endless transmission of image and text, increasingly via Internet but particularly through video and television, which otherwise structures their lives.

The bounds of reception have created a new geopolitics, one which appears to be simultaneously limitless and personal. Our understanding of hegemonic structures and the discourse of the dominant nation, once implicit in the wider discourses of cultural imperialism, have now been changed irrevocably by the notion of 'the world conceived and grasped as picture' (Heidegger 1977a, p.129). Today the hegemonies are of companies, tellingly referred to as 'multinationals'. The spaces in which our interactions take place are indicated in simple form by the presence of the machine—the television set and the video—'the most visible outgrowth of the essence of modern technology' (Heidegger 1977a, p.116). Heidegger (1977a, p.130) goes on to provide an historical context for this bringing to conception of the world:

> The world picture does not change from an earlier medieval one into a modern one, but rather the fact that the world becomes picture at all is what distinguishes the essence of the modern age.[2]

The culture of landscape, the constant reference and recourse to landscapes large and small in our daily lives, has developed from the desire, even the need, to capture, picture and reproduce the source of humanity's sustenance, pleasures and myths. Although it has been said that 'Metaphors of location appear to transcend culture' (Tuan 1993, p.171), it may be that the appeal to our traditional

notions of location and, by extension, landscape (*our* world conceived as picture) can lead to an understanding of the location of television (as) culture within our own ambit. Alongside and overlapping the geopolitical language of 'American culture' or 'Australian culture' there is now 'television culture', which exemplifies the pictorial capturing of a multi-culture and its transformation within a mono-technology, through the 'picturing function of metaphorical meaning' (Ricoeur 1977, p.142).

We all are inevitably involved in the televisual, whether we watch television or not: the world around us, our lifeworld and its landscape, is conformed to be picture, by people who only know the world as picture. We edit this world to suit our view, to fit our framework. We construct our mediated reproduction of another pictured landscape. Through our thinking and our productive power we give privilege (often unwittingly) to *our* culture, *our* use of an artefact, *our* practice and, through the media, proceed to project this picture out there for others to receive. We are the media and the message, the transmitters and transformers of 'culture'; we are the culture itself and of its landscape.

A metaphor from the technologies of light

To attempt to understand the relationships between the cultures of nations, particularly as played out through the understanding of landscape, and the cultural activity of modern technologies such as television, I propose to bring into play (play with) the metaphor of refraction.[3] There is certainly much to be gained from re-examining 'traditional' metaphors by which, through their migration, we have articulated new worlds. However, a new metaphor may offer a new way of perceiving and comprehending the action associated with cultural transmission and the transformation of cultures which can be drawn from such an encounter.

Speaking of the character of the relationship between modern art and life, Richard Shiff (1977, p.106) has chosen 'not to speak of metaphor as a "leap" but rather as a bridge enabling passage from one world to another', wishing to 'emphasise the (fundamental) sense of continuity and gradual change'. Importantly, the change signalled by refraction maintains the ideas of passage, of continuity, of transmission—although, as will be shown, the value of the metaphor is heightened because through it the location of the sources of Shiff's 'gradual change' can be recognised both in the technologies of television itself and in the other cultural landscapes it touches.

In coming to understand how refraction may stand as metaphor, it is useful to juxtapose two positions taken towards Aristotle's proposal that 'to make good metaphors is to contemplate similarities or . . . to have an insight into likeness' (Ricoeur 1977, p.143). Ricoeur suggests that 'it is in the work of resemblance that a pictorial or iconic moment is implied', whereas Harries (1977, p.71) notes the challenge in the notion that 'metaphor joins dissimilars not so much to let us perceive in them some previously hidden similarity but to create something altogether new'. That a similarity of appearance does not equate with an agreed reading or meaning is crucial here. Dissimilarity retains the possibility of identity in the face of an increasingly global view, a positive position for 'misreading' that is due not to the supposedly treacherous nature of metaphor but simply, in my proposal, to a lack of recognition of the activity of television.

The notion of 'dissimilars' can change our ideas of what is given out and what is received in the televisual environment. It invites the question, 'How could we be seduced into believing that what we see is what is transmitted?' Thus we might consider in what ways those things which we see as similar are a series of visual metaphors for our understanding of what we 'know' is a dissimilar landscape.

The refractive travelling of light refers us to a conceptual landscape both distant and to hand. In an effort to make the unknowable familiar, there has been a linguistic, often metaphoric, location and diminution (dis-stancing) of paths and destinations—the 'shrinking world', the 'global village', the 'information superhighway'.[4] Technologies of light have given us the *tele* and *trans* of television; the language of beaming in a message, of the light of the screen, even blinding us by the light whose source is almost beyond our comprehension.

Put simply, refraction is the deflection of (usually) a ray of light, an action which diverts what is being transmitted from its previous course in passing obliquely out of one medium into another of different density, or in traversing a medium not of uniform density (*Concise Oxford dictionary*). The course set for the beaming of light is turned out of its directed line, not by the issuing culture, but within the ambit of the location of reception. Because refraction relies on and is part of the certain activity of light, it is a suitable metaphor for the method by which televisual material is transmitted and received. Refraction becomes a metaphor for a characteristic of migration, of movement, of crossing, of changes brought about by a collision of oral and visual language and of cultural practice. By reading 'medium' as culture (national and/or ethnographic) and density as that which gives culture its character, the activity of refraction as the culture of television (the televisual) is shown both to bridge and to bind cultures together, whilst allowing them to maintain a distinct 'density'. The overall character of the televisual environment is thus made up of cultural microcosms; the televisual itself and those 'traditional' cultures, such as landscape, within its ambit.

Occasionally refraction may involve a recoiling, or a rebounding, even a breaking open or breaking up, of transmission. The politics of the unacceptable view, or prospect, may appear to prevail, as a geopolitical intervention throws back or impairs the aesthetics of a particular vision. Additionally, the moment of non-receipt of a message, that is, a moment when a landscape is coded in such as way as to be unintelligible (without recognised metaphor) is always a possibility. A terrestrial refraction may take the landscape out of scale, abandoning the moment of recognition (receptive activity) in a presentation of an inchoate gigantism, a referent only partially grasped (Heidegger 1977a; Stewart 1993).

The apparatus for refracting light, traditionally a refracting telescope in which the rays of light are converged to a focus by an object glass, recalls similarities to the television set, in bringing closer an image defined by light. To Heidegger, 'apparatus' refers to the frame (*Ge-stell*) activated 'to give the meaning of "enframing"—an assembling, ordering, a revealing—the mode of being of technology and thus the technological disclosure of things' (Malor 1993, p.69, referring to Heidegger 1977b).[5] The moment of refraction is as much

a disclosure of the world conceived as picture (the televisual world) as it is the location of television. But the action of the television set is only the partial location of television in its mechanical presence as apparatus, and the technics of its production:

> The camera eye, camera technique, editing and mixing images and sound transform 'the world' into picture and we watch this picture which appears to be, but never is, the world we are *in*. (Fry 1993, p.30)

Television is here, there, and everywhere.

So refraction occurs when image, text, idea, sound, word, is transmitted or delivered in some way that removes it from its 'home' culture and introduces it into another arena that is similar socioeconomically, but of a 'different density'. The refraction does not take place simply or only at the point when the audience views the introduced artefact; instead it happens when the decision is made that the introduction will occur. Already a deflection takes place: the aim of the programmer is informed by local cultural selectivity, not by the selectivity which led to the original production of the programme structured along certain value lines inherent in the culture of television production. Additionally, the programmer acts within the culture of the nation or environment. The moment of refraction is thus also the transforming moment of a language of landscape and location.

Television—or, Landscape revealed

Refraction performs almost as a double act, or metaphor, for the form of transmission, in that the splitting of meaning is integral, even inevitable, to the collection, transmission and transformation of the landscape. A series of refractions can give privilege, from certain angles, to landscape as an aesthetic construction, as cultural metaphor, and as framed televisually, that is, television's landscape(s). Clearly, landscape as it is seen 'on television' can be understood in two ways: first, as it presents to us those parts of a world which we have come to accept to a large degree as *the/our world*; secondly, as a landscape of, not the United States, Australia or Japan, but a televisual world.

The physical size of Earth makes it impossible for us to know its landscapes in any real sense. However, the ubiquity and selectivity of the televisual have allowed us to assemble a series of symbols from the landscape (rapidly developing into visual metaphors) in order to have a concept of the world ordered in much the same way as a domestic garden catalogue—rocks, water, bamboo and stone lanterns signal Japan (and, increasingly, China); foundation plantings and endless lawn represent the United States; paling fences, concrete paths and the central specimen shrub are Australia. Of course, all these 'features' are interchangeable in the physical world, and thus reside even more firmly within the televisual landscape, a televisual-nation-building. Palm trees, box hedges and native grasses have for some years now been synonymous with the landscape design of western commercial property developments, in particular; they exist outside any national landscape, but are immediately meaningful on television.

Television touches on our physical landscape whilst retaining a terrain of its own. To truly activate the metaphor of cultural refraction, the idea of television

as a (moving) amorphous, web-like entity must replace the notion that any particular geopolitical entity is an immovable but radiating centre. Jim Collins (1995, p.135) has noted there is a suggestion 'that new forms of generic hybridity have indeed begun to reflect the "imaginative landscape of the latter decades of the 20th century"', but that this is 'a landscape whose contours are defined by patterns of circulation and exchange rather than being just sites of production'.[6] A site of production denotes a centre—a centre we can no longer accept as a geopolitical entity but one which, in the physical form of the television set, stands for the fragmented world of televisual representation.

The concept of cultural diffusion, particularly as used in geo-histories and anthropology, could be a suitable explanatory metaphor should television be accepted simply as a mode by which aspects of a culture are unproblematically transferred (McNeill 1988; Hugill and Dickson 1988). But diffusion theory relies on the notion of a centre resonant with pre-television imperialisms, a geopolitical centre of production from which 'culture' is dispersed widely. Interestingly, diffusion can also be a metaphor of light; however, unlike the refracted beam, a diffused light loses concentration as it travels rather than changing character at its point(s) of reception. Likewise diffusion's secondary characteristic, the interpenetration of substances (matter, culture), concentrates on the weakening of a receptive culture, rather than on modes of cultural transmission such as television.

The landscape from which we draw a televisually inscribed resonance of visual culture is already in a constant state of mediation, a series of overlapping, evolving, sometimes seemingly isolated mediations. These mediations can be personal and at the same time draw on a certain set of deliberately created social stereotypes. The technology of transmitting vision is the technology which also frames the view, and in that enframing reveals the landscape.

Landscape revealed, represented and refracted leads from space to place, from the apparently meaningless to the meaningful. Landscape received, as discussed below, is also a site for further activity, a site of expertise (active knowing) revealed through technology. Such an involvement with the spaces of landscape creates that landscape's character for us, the active viewers, because 'When space feels thoroughly familiar to us it becomes place' (Tuan 1976, cited in Casey 1993, p.28).

Tuan's statement would seem perfectly 'at home' within and with the televisual landscape, a landscape which would 'act as the natural repository for the bodies that belong to it' (Casey 1993, p.324). However, as a site seemingly without location (that is, beyond any identification by the presenter), the televisual landscape and its relationships to space and place are appropriately dis-placed in the usual discussions of landscape. There is always the problem of erasing all sense of space and location when collecting together (totalising) the fragments that form the environment of information technologies (particularly television). This problem was most tellingly brought to notice in Collins' (1995, pp.38–39) critique of Michael Sorkin's notion of the 'ageographical' from *Variations on a theme park* (1992): 'a master-narrative which must totalise at all costs, a totalisation scenario that fails to recognise how categories of cultural difference might affect the meanings generated by any landscape'.[7] Some evocations, however, do have immediate resonance, such as Casey's (1993, p.25) declaration that:

> A landscape seems to exceed the usual parameters of place by continuing without apparent end; nothing contains it, while it contains everything, including discrete places, in its environing embrace.

The ubiquity of the televisual, with all its potential to be called up in fragments, is present here—although, of course, unable to be totalised. Nameable but unnamed, it can become familiar to us.

Apparently, Casey (1993) has reservations about what he sees as Lyotard's (1989) collapsing of any distinctions between physical and psychological place. For Heidegger (1977a), however, the notion of the world as picture implicated both image and conception. Televisual's world picture—the televisual landscapes and the landscapes of television—in its revealing is domesticated, made consumable, made fit or apt. Those images and conceptions are 'held' in readiness within a receptive culture:

> The televisual enframes, and in its enframing the televisual world picture itself enframes; in such doubling the essences of technology and culture fuse. Like a landscape the televisual stands before us as 'just ready for the taking'.
> (Fry 1993, p.26)

That which is revealed through technology (television) is that which can be recognised, considered and brought within one's own sphere of knowledge. It is making something of information, making a place in and of the landscape. To the linking of *techne* and *episteme* as 'names for knowing in the widest sense', it is now possible to add Heidegger's (1977b, p.13) affirmation, 'They mean to be entirely at home in something, to understand and be expert in it'.

Information, expertise and the televisual landscape

Televisual distance can be social or economic. For the information-poor, what there is to be taken can only, at best, be a hint or a promise of what may be revealed through television. So what is it that the information-poor may be missing out on? Over and above the obvious access to entertainment media, one answer could be, a whole new world of decision making; another could be, access to a wider-than-ever gamut of expertise.

Distance in the televisual community can also be a dis-stance of reception. But again, refracted, the visuals and sound are transmitted, are sent to cross or to transcend a certain space and time, only to have their intended meanings deflected beyond the control of the cybernetic transfer of data. Data are neither information nor entertainment but require intervention and representation by experts.

As Gadamer (1981, p.73) has observed, 'The modern technology of information has made available possibilities that make necessary the selection of information to a heretofore unimaginable extent'. On television, with the rise of the 'infotainment' phenomenon, there is a greater need for our personal expertise to respond to the promises of the television experts (presenters and 'stars'), and their associated products. The televisual can be seen to extend far beyond television itself any time one sits down to watch a gardening show or do-it-yourself (DIY) programme.[8] The technologies which both encourage and allow this need for expertise have become part of an industry for the transmission of cultures.

What can be expected from an infotainment programme, what is the expectation of the audience, of the producers and advertisers? What use is made of such programmes, and what is the character of the interface of advertisers, producers, programmes and audience? Answers to these questions could range in their focus from bald economics to the pleasurable impossibility of the satiation of desire. Of course, the possession of, or access to, late twentieth century communications technology does not necessarily give a positive status to either the new decision-making or the expected acquisition of expertise. Viewing a show in which you are pulled into the magazine-like world of infotainment, moved from idle watching, to taking in, to considering action, takes you through a choreography of desire—although you must supply or facilitate your own final movement.

On Australian television, national shows such as *Burke's backyard*, *Our house*, *Better homes and gardens* and *Gardening Australia* allow viewers to consider and interrelate with their personal landscapes through the medium of television. By taking in—selecting—televisual landscapes, they are translating a certain language on to the ground, so to speak. But this language has already been polished by the local translation service, sometimes subtly but often overtly, when Australian presenters visit overseas locations, or talk about local use of exotic plants and transplanted design. Although the landscape as revealed through technology is refracted in the course of its transmission, the receiver collects together the refractive parts which come to notice, selects from the already selective catalogue, without considering the action of refraction, of formation of a particular landscape and the manner of its transmission. Finally, and fatally, the viewer will take the televisual landscape away from the television set and use it, as apparatus, to frame (close off) landscape beyond the living room.

It is not often that someone watches an infotainment programme deliberately to locate an answer to a problem concerning the landscape of the garden and DIY. However, Gadamer's discussion (1967/1992, p.185) of 'the suitable means to a given end' and the recourse to experts, can give some understanding of the relationship between viewer and expert embedded in these programmes. The search for 'the suitable means for a given end' always takes a dual form, first through 'learnable knowledge', the acquisition of 'a particular specialised activity'—that is, 'expertise' (linking *techne* and *episteme*)—and, secondly, through 'the choice of the practical means for a given end'—that is, a choice made without recourse to experts (Gadamer 1967/1992, p.185). Thus the expert, dispensing his 'learnable knowledge', 'is one who is listened to. He does not . . . take the place of the actual decision-maker' (Gadamer 1967/1992, p.182). With television, the decision rests with the viewer, who must sit in judgment of the expert. Additionally, and characteristically, the viewer may hear out the expert and not take on, or accept, the expert advice offered in the name of entertainment and advertising. The viewer may have recourse to their own expertise, discover or put into action their own 'suitable means for a given end', often employing ideas from the expert's catalogue in new ways, an indication of refractive reception.

'Television' could be said to stand for a representation (rather than simply presenting an image) of what purports to be available. The intervention, or

placing, of people (the producer, the writer, the audience) in this representation acts to mediate the scene, to 'media-ise' what is picture (Heidegger 1977a). Refraction may occur many times in the life of a televised image or show. A series of mediations may take place, from producer, to audience, to secondary client, to audience again. These mediations also reflect onto the state of later productions, and again mediation by secondary or local refraction takes place. The image may remain technologically sound but the transmitted televised representation of cultural concepts is deflected rather than absorbed at points of reception because television characteristically does not stop, any more than it requires an audience to guarantee its ubiquity. Images and sound do arrive, but pass on, momentarily telescoped into view whilst continuing a prismatically proscribed journey across screens and cultures. The deflection of cultures characteristic of refraction may be read as a change in projection, or as occurring because that act of deflection brings to notice (reveals), however briefly, the technology with which the image is embedded. But it is at the point of reception that the deflection of a culture may be most clearly articulated through purposeful and responsive action by using a refractive artefact.

As a magazine approach to television, infotainment extends interaction with its audience to the printed page through publications which enshrine the experts' advice and allow a continuing revisiting of the mental landscape of the programme and the physical landscapes it represented. Once in text, there is a strong corroboration of what has been presented visually and orally on a programme. The audience has access to a 'fact sheet' (available by post) or other associated publications. To obtain a fact sheet or publication could be seen as 'purposeful action', as taking an interest beyond the immediate entertainment value of a programme. However, it is more likely that the programme has been carried away from the television set, such that this action is taken with only the programme in view.

The pervasiveness of this type of programme can be seen in many ways. Infotainment as a genre has been enshrined in the American series *Home improvement*. This sit-com, based on a mythical DIY show, 'Tool time', has screened in east coast Australia since 1992, consistently rating in the top 10.[9] In terms of ratings, then, there would seem to be no need to carry this show beyond the television set—although a national tour by one of its stars (as expert), organised as a series of appearances at a chain of hardware stores, had weekend DIY-ers queuing to have their electric drills autographed.

Notably, there is no 'real life' equivalent to *Home improvement* in Sydney-based television.[10] Locally produced *Better homes and gardens*, however, ranks next to *Home improvement* in the television ratings. In this show, as in a number of local programmes, there is a significant home-workshop component, although the landscape remains a dominant reference, and the direct subject of many segments. Developed out of the magazine of the same name, which itself was the re-creation of an overseas edition, *Better homes and gardens* both publicises the magazine and uses it for its own ends: instead of relying on a fact sheet or phone info-lines to provide the audience with written DIY data, the show refers to its catalyst, the magazine. With a mutual presentation of advertising and support, the show performs as a complete information service.

Unlike fact sheets, which are de-personalised and removed from the 'personality' who originally presented a particular segment, the magazine retains some audience contact with the 'personality' or expert, through visuals rather than by-lines.

Cosily based in what appears to be (and often is) the two presenters' own home and garden, *Better homes and gardens* acts as a site where overseas ideas and their translation into an Australian setting may be registered.[11] With the double refraction of the televisual, it presents the translated, transmitted and transformed for local consumption; a rear terrace mimics American clapboard and paving, murmurs 'Cape Cod', but with window boxes and pots planted with Australian natives; a cool climate cottage garden, promoted for its 'old American' style ('colonial Australia' is always, misleadingly, assumed to have a warm climate, presumably warmer than Britain), nestles under the eucalypts which go almost unnoticed in their localness. The catalogue approach ensures that the presentation of any landscape is through its marketable components rather than its essential character; water, bamboo and stone lanterns may signal Japan but the landscape through which they are presented is refracted in prism-like form, so that they are available simultaneously at multiple sites in and out of television. This landscape conforms, in fact, to a televisual cultural standard for a particular landscape, rather than for an American, New Zealand, or Australian one.

Pacific cyberspace

The Pacific bridge, a place of crossing, a landscape of community and communication, is also always a space of transformation for garden, city and wilderness. A place considered in the context of its everyday culture can turn around ideas to say something about the televisual transmission of landscape across the Pacific. The Pacific cultural web can be imag(in)ed as a sort of cyberspace, where all communications of control are in turn in the thrall of machines. In this cyberspace—the matter linking the garden, wilderness and city—there is a landscape to be claimed, and to be made over with reference to certain cultural guidelines, from an eclectic reading of the action of the televisual.

The idea of centre is again an issue. Refuting it involves the notion that the west coast of the United States, the traditional source of television, can both resonate and refract, as can east coast Australia, and other Pacific nations. The site where a televisual image is produced physically is no longer a centre, nor is it the site of the end of meaning. It is always necessary to consider inbuilt change, time, points of view, angles of cultural refraction. In cautioning against losing sight of the uncentred whilst also highlighting the impossibility of 'keeping an eye' on everything, Tony Fry (1993, pp.30–31) has written:

> In the (televisual) picture we see not one object, through one frame, in one field of focus or at one moment, but rather we see everything as the picture is geographically, chronologically and culturally fractured and reassembled—we see in terms of what passes before us, multiple times, places, cultural perspectives . . . But at the same time as it apparently expands our world of vision it closes off much of our sight.

Television has become a place in and through which we operate, disseminating and receiving, assembling and disassembling cultural images. We are already some way towards bridging the Pacific: there is a dialogue there but, like any form of visual communication, it cannot be complete in its telling when dragged into another (physical) location, and one cannot be content with technological travel, where all one really learns is the interface. Although face to face dialogue is also inevitably incomplete, there is at least one position which sees its role as an essential cultural qualifier:

> It has never been conclusively argued that the various visual means of human expression, often called 'visual language', have a potential for reasoned communications as precise as that of verbal language . . . (Shiff 1977, p.107)

That is, do not expect to be lulled by direct cultural translation of the spoken word, let alone the televisual presentation of a culture centred around, and being taken in by, the characteristics of its medium of presentation. By considering the varied productions of, receptions of and reactions to a televisual landscape, by pondering localised idiosyncrasies of translation, a picture of shared and individuated cultures can emerge. The difference encouraged by employing the cultural metaphor of refraction can produce a fresh discussion, the metaphor 'a model for changing our way of looking at things, of perceiving the world' (Ricoeur 1977, p.150), rather than that formed in the comfort of earlier shared imperialisms.

The ability to continually select from and reframe our world conceived as picture in moments of reception of other refracted cultures would seem to ensure that it will always be possible to investigate the differences which underlie the many apparent similarities to be found in the landscapes of the Pacific, breaking down and explicating the codes of pink flamingoes, lanterns, and the vestigial misquotations from 'good design'. The televisual is a landscape which has its own language of understanding; recognising it is crucial to comprehending what a media-based Pacific cultural studies could become.

NOTES

[1] This paper was originally produced for the conference, Rewriting the Pacific (UC Davis and Berkeley, 1995). It is specifically directed at the themes of the 'Landscape' seminar of that conference, 'Garden wilderness, city—technologies of land and light', which suggested the metaphor of refraction. More generally, it is linked to the concerns of the conference—the promotion of a Pacific cultural studies.

[2] Heidegger was probably one of the first twentieth-century philosophers to understand and to discuss modern media as an extension of the tradition of technology in its widest, and original, sense. His writing is complex but his terminology precise. At the risk of appearing intellectually precious, although hopefully not obscurantist, Heidegger's terms are retained as originally translated. Further explanation appears throughout the notes.

[3] As a metaphor proposed to stand for the character of televisual transmission and reception of Pacific cultures, refraction could also be used for any mechanically (re)produced image whose development and capture relies on light, for example, stills, advertising photography, television promotions in the print media. Similarly, particular aspects of culture, such as dress and music, can be interrogated through this metaphor. Landscape is, however, always the most ubiquitous cultural presence in any imaging.

4 My use of 'dis-stancing', as well as the use of 'distant' and 'to hand' in the previous sentence, refer directly to Dreyfus' (1991) reading of spatiality in Heidegger's (1962) *Being and time*. Put simply (an almost impossible task), Dreyfus interprets 'to hand' (*zur Hand*) as 'availableness' (*Zurhandenheit*). Making something available requires a nearness that is not calculated by measuring distance, but by calculating its ability to be used or to be of everyday concern. To make that which is distant familiar (or available) would be to 'dis-stance' it, a linguistic play employed by Dreyfus to carry the meaning of Heidegger's splitting of *Entfernung* (distance) to give a sense of the overcoming of distance (*Ent-fernung*), hence 'dis-stance', the negating of a stance or position. 'Distant' remains a potentially measurable remoteness (Dreyfus 1991, citing Heidegger 1962).

5 Heidegger also points out that 'technology' stems from the Greek *Technikon*, meaning that which belongs to *techne*, which refers to the activity and skill of the craftworker and the artist as well as to the arts of the mind. Technology therefore embodies the bringing-forth (revealing) of both ideas and their representation. Historically the word *techne* was linked to *episteme*, science/knowledge (Heidegger 1977b).

6 Collins bases his discussion on the results of reciprocal borrowing of images and ideas which occurs between Asian and American film makers, creating an eclectic new culture similar to that which can be read as a Pacific televisual landscape. It is unclear from the text who Collins is quoting regarding 'imaginative landscapes . . .'.

7 Sorkin, in his introduction (1992, pp.xi–xiii), talks about both the city and television as 'erasing difference' and 'eradicating genuine particularity'. In choosing to describe rather than investigate the new city, I suggest, Sorkin himself contributes to that sense of erasure through not considering what might contain television, or perform the action of the city grid.

8 I concentrate on this group of programmes as, along with documentary and advertising (to which they are related), they play most consistently with the conception and imaging of landscape, perpetuating its culture. Infotainment programmes could be defined as those that centre on 'lifestyle' through single or combined magazine-style productions on subjects such as house, garden, general DIY, food, pets, holiday and travel, and money.

9 Information on *Home improvement* and *Better homes and gardens* supplied by John Ginswick, Network Research, The Seven Network, Sydney.

10 *Home improvement* reflects the DIY ethos of the United States, as perpetuated in a range of popular forms from Dagwood Bumstead's basement workshop in the comic strip *Blondie*, through to the professionalism of American television's DIY blockbuster series *This old house*. I thank Professor Roland Marchand for drawing my attention to the culture of *This old house*.

11 The location of *Better homes and gardens* in the presenters' home, together with its lifestyle themes, situates it as a somewhat down-market, antipodean, take on *Martha Stewart living*.

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