

1 Television: Easy Come, Easy Go by Andrew Marwood

Television comes to us too easily, and for a programme to remain with us, to be memorable enough to leave something behind, it has to have an almost impossible distinction. Almost impossible and almost undefinable. What is surprising is the number of items which do. Intelligence has something to do with it. What gave distinction to TW3 was the application of a mocking intelligence to the political, industrial and social circumstances of our time: that it was not primarily the talents of the performers is shown by the low level of the programmes in which several have appeared separately since. But as well as an intelligence of the intellect there is needed also something one can only call style, an intelligence of the imaginative faculties, whether it is the personal style of an individual – Robert Robinson presiding astringently over *Points of View*, Barbara Ward fencing confidently with Lord Boothby and John Freeman, her endearments growing more superlative the deeper she disagreed, ‘dear Bob,’ ‘dearest Bob,’ ‘darling Bob,’ an enchantment for ear, eye and mind – or the style evolved by a team.

Occasional programmes are lifted above mere competence in this way. (Not that I am decrying competence in an area where the only alternative to BBC1 is Anglia Television. It’s the memorability I am interested in.) *The World of Andy Capp* seemed to be true, as reporting and as far as it went; a world where the sheer toughness of the men’s jobs, mainly mining, had spilled over into the home and the pub and created a society where the sexes remained separate as far as possible, a society which is epitomised in the famous cartoon, but which is being rapidly modified by money and education: very good reporting, but as a programme it was the intelligent use of the cartoons to summarize and push out from, which gave it that extra distinction. Something similar happened with *Monty: Portrait of a Soldier*; the life was very competently told indeed, but what one will remember was the light, dry, tight voice of the soldier himself – just not quite identical with the *Beyond the Fringe* parody of the army-officer voice, using language just not quite identical with Mr Waugh’s Brigadier Ritchie-Hook. A saviour we were once glad of; a god of battles judging from the Sinai of his retirement. Frightening.

Perhaps it was the imagination of the cartoonist, the personality of the field-marshal, both drawn from outside the studio, which were responsible for these successes. For distinction born in the studio itself, distinction proper to the medium, some award should go to the team which produced *Diary of a Young Man*. It caused some murmuring over the moral laxity of its protagonists, but this was – so to speak – given in the material the authors were using, and no murmur stands a chance of being heard unless it also implies sympathy and comprehension: *Diary of a Young Man* could help murmurers to comprehend. It had some lapses too, like the confusion of the

Italian cowmen and the Scottish beatniks in the last episode, where the confusion killed a promising fantasy. But in general it had a visual style which was memorable enough in itself and which fused perfectly with the language and the incident – Joe, in his diary extracts talking the language of contemporary idealisms, in the incidents desperately and undefeately trying to live them. It left a taste, not of honey, but not of wormwood either, and it left in one's memory a character and a number of scenes which can be recalled at will – Joe and 'the girl called Fred' arguing suicide and the meaning of life, joined agonizingly by their gripping hands, he on the embankment, she in the Thames: dawn and the marchers' freedom song drawing nearer along the skyline – scenes which one may even find oneself remembering without conscious effort. *Diary of a Young Man* certainly was memorable.

2 Miró at the Tate by Peregrine Walker

The comparison, of course, is with Picasso, but Spanish origins and a superficial likeness of evolution are not enough to make Miró fit into any category other than that of his own profoundly personal vision. The recent retrospective exhibition of his work at the Tate Gallery was evidence enough of the sheer achievement of fifty years of painting – and latterly of sculpture as well. From the careful and loving detail of his early pictures, such as *The Farm*, which Ernest Hemingway owned and preferred to any painting that exists, to the slender calligraphs that seem to eliminate all but the essential line and basic colour of things, Miró's art has retained a wonderful integrity: he can protest or charm, be as gay as the summer sky or as sad as the aftermath of a storm, but always he is ready to be surprised by the sheer infinity of created good.

That is why his pictures seem so perfectly displayed when, as in the house of his friend José Luis Sert at Harvard, they are balanced with Catalan primitive paintings. However unlike they may seem at first – the blobs of arbitrary colour revolving in an airborne geometry and the grave scenes of saints in a rustic and settled calm – yet they alike reveal, at many centuries' distance in time, an acceptance, and indeed an interpretation, of reality that is sane and very salutary. The world of stars and of birds as they fly, of the lines and masses that map the structure of all that is made, is not only observed but somehow conveyed at a universal level of intelligibility. He is not at all bound by the idioms he uses; indeed he can seem to mock them lest they should assume too great a power. He has himself said that his aim is 'to come closer through my painting to the great public who have always been in my thoughts'. And his constant awareness of the basic realities – even when in his surrealist period he seems to spurn them – evokes a response that is instinctive and loving. He is close to the pattern of things all the time. His mythology is eternal.