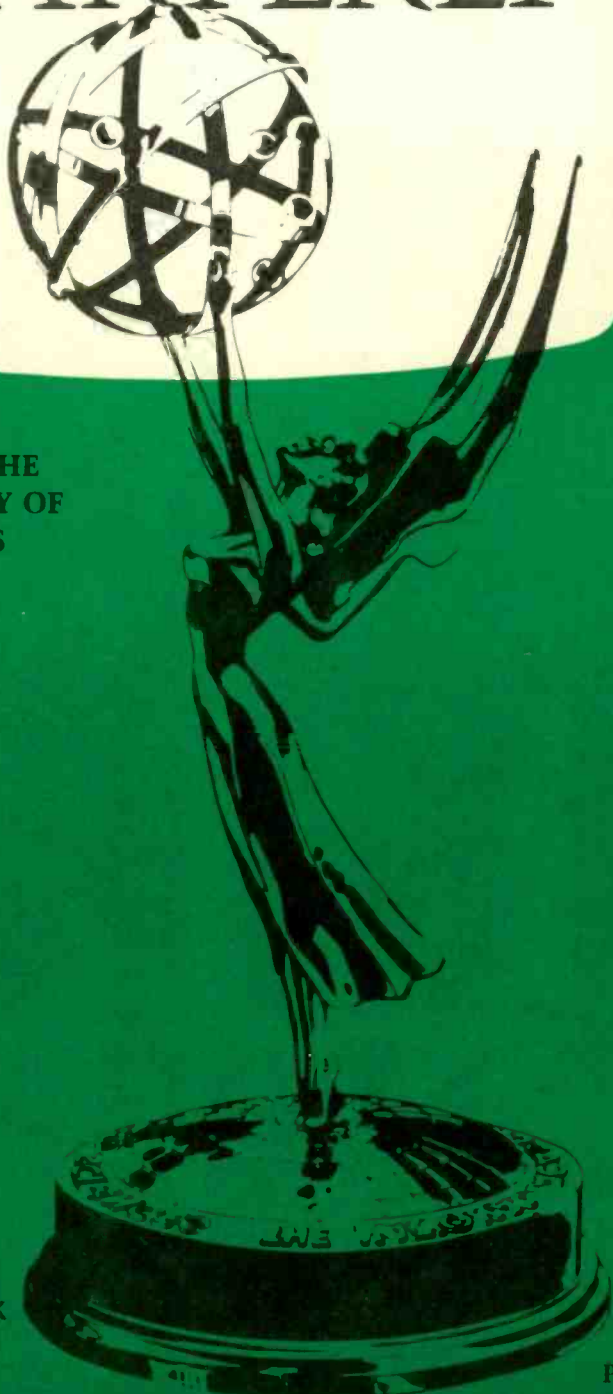


VOLUME XVI • NUMBER II • SUMMER 1979

TELEVISION QUARTERLY

THE JOURNAL OF THE
NATIONAL ACADEMY OF
TELEVISION ARTS
AND SCIENCES

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TELEVISION QUARTERLY

is published quarterly by The National Academy of Television Arts and Sciences, 110 West 57th. Street, New York, New York, 10019 (212) 765-2450

Members of the National Academy of Television Arts and Sciences receive TELEVISION QUARTERLY as part of membership services. Inquiry regarding membership should be directed to the office of The National Academy of Television Arts and Sciences.

BUSINESS ADVERTISING OFFICES: Television Quarterly, 110 West 57th. Street, New York, New York 10019 (212) 765-2450. Advertising placement and other business arrangements should be made with the New York office of The National Academy of Television Arts and Sciences.

EDITORIAL OFFICE: Television Quarterly, NATAS, 110 West 57th. Street, New York, New York 10019 (212) 765-2450

The subscription rates for non-members, libraries and others is \$8.00 a year and \$2.50 a copy in the United States, \$10.00 a year and \$3.00 a copy in all other countries. Special Student Subscription \$6.00. Subscription orders should be sent to TELEVISION QUARTERLY, The National Academy of Television Arts and Sciences, 110 West 57th. Street, New York, New York 10019 Att: Trudy Wilson

The opinions expressed herein are solely those of the contributing authors and do not necessarily represent those of The National Academy of Television Arts and Sciences or the members of the Editorial Board of Television Quarterly.

Design and Printing:
Chapman's Phototypesetting
1135 E. Truslow
Fullerton, California 92631

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*"A man's reach
should exceed his grasp."*

Robert Browning

The need to surpass oneself, to strive always for that elusive thing called excellence, is felt in broadcasting, too.

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But despite this success, he cannot rest content.



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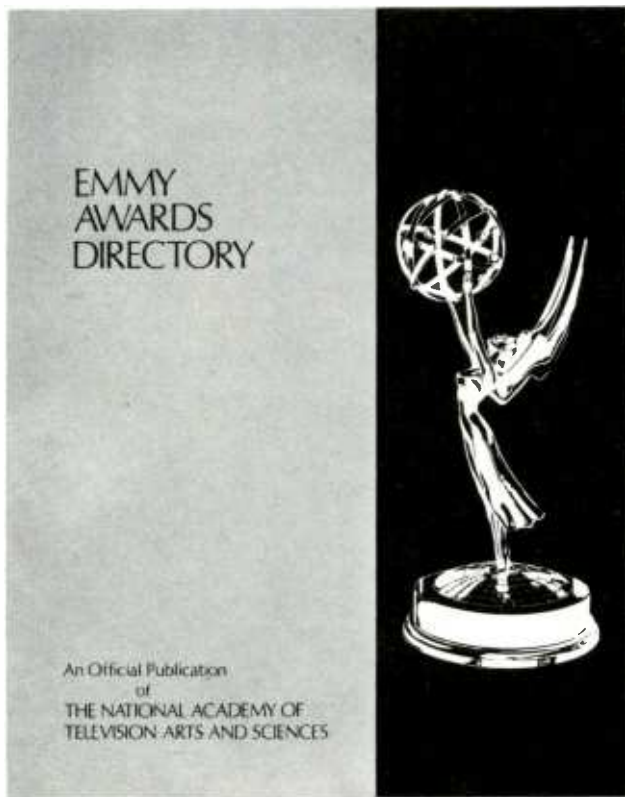
TELEVISION QUARTERLY

VOL. XVI

NO. II

CONTENTS

Dilemma of the Tube <i>Sterling Quinlan</i>	7
The Search for Solutions <i>Geoffrey Cowan</i>	21
Americans at Leisure— Living to Look or Looking to Live? <i>Harriet Van Horne</i>	31
'Star Trek' in Retrospect— A Celebration of the Alien <i>Karin Blair</i>	39
Using TV Scripts in the Classroom <i>Peggy Herz</i>	49
Television—The Perfect Scapegoat <i>Eda LeShan</i>	55
The Televised Past <i>Eric Foner</i>	59
Religion on the Tube <i>Richard J. Shmaruk</i>	67
Television: Tomorrow's History Book? <i>Clayton Jones</i>	75



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Dilemma of the Tube

By STERLING QUINLAN

Perhaps it is because we are not at war. Maybe it is because our democratic system of government has become so complex we can no longer be cohesive as a nation unless we are at war. Whatever the reasons the truth is that Americans have seldom been in such a mood as they are in today.

We are divided. Quarrelsome. Suspicious. It is a querulous mood verging on the ugly. Bitterness, rage, and frustration permeate the atmosphere. There is a sense of helplessness more than hopelessness. Anger more than despair, as though the game plan had broken down, the rules had been tossed out, and the referee had disappeared. It is a feeling of no longer being masters of our national fate or our personal destinies.

We are mired in a quicksand of the spirit. There is a fungus on the American soul. Past precepts of family, honor, institutions, and values have been discarded. It seems impossible to form a consensus on anything. The Presidency has become too big a job for any one person. Bureaucracy reigns supreme in the land. We perceive dimly that our own greed will never permit us to win the battle of inflation. There is a bitterness between generations which is a skeleton in our national closet, a secret we are too embarrassed to talk about.

In such a mood we need victims. The ideal scapegoat for our frustration and rage is, of course, television. As the mountains of rhetoric pile up, television has become blamed for nearly all of the ills of mankind. Name a problem, a disease or a condition and you can be sure that there are some people who are convinced that television caused it.

Such a situation, looked at rationally, is so profoundly absurd as to be amusing. But television—meaning the television industry—is not laughing. Its members have developed a case of profit-induced self guilt. Next to the oil industry, broadcast profits are the highest of all, in terms of profit ratios. This quite naturally causes embarrassment and induces a very real sense of paranoia. To make enormous profits, and especially to be so visible in making them, is definitely not “in” these days.

As the cacophony of dissent and accusations grows more shrill, the television industry finds itself like the little boy who cried out in protest against a beating he could not understand; when it was over he said to himself: “It was such a good beating I must have done something very bad!”

When a network (ABC) hears itself castigated as "the sleaziest, most exploitative outfit ever to operate in what probably is America's sleaziest, most exploitative industry," it is bound to cause pain.

When the same critic adds: "We're already beginning to pay for the propagation of such bullheaded attitudes. And the price is bound to escalate as a generation of young people raised on those priceless falsehoods grows into adulthood," it sends industry leaders running for the Maalox bottle.

When the same critic concludes, "the tyranny of youth will have cleared its final hurdle—and a promising mass-audience tool will have surrendered itself to the basest instincts of an increasingly hedonistic and thoughtless subculture," it is bound to have the effect of increasing the industry's already acute jitters.

The finger-pointing can get personal, the protests violent. Gerald Gransville Bishop, of California, pumped 17 shots into his television set. When the police came, Bishop said he had no regrets. "I killed it! Haven't you ever wanted to kill your TV set?"

Television tubes have been punched out, sets have been dropped out windows, and set afire. Tight security has become standard procedure at television stations and networks. Some station managers have been beaten up because of editorials they have spoken on the air. Managers, for the most part, now take a low, not high, profile in their communities. Network executives have been threatened at stockholder meetings. Citizen groups like the National PTA, Action For Children's Television, the National Citizens Committee, and many others, know the pressure points of the industry—and use them.

Television criticism has become so strident and vindictive that Richard Schickel of the *New York Times* says it has assumed proportions of a threat to the national ecology.

"The brightly glowing box in the corner of the living room is perceived by those who write books and Sunday newspaper articles about it as a sort of smoking chimney, spilling God knows what brain-damaging poisons not only into the immediate sociopolitical environment, but also, it is predicted, loosing agents whose damage may not become apparent to us for decades to come."

Schickel makes the point about how bad the situation has become, but he does not agree with the critics. Put simply, he suggests that television may be no worse for us than Captain Billy's Whiz Bang.

Panaceas to negate the "monster" of the tube are springing up everywhere. Groups are boycotting advertisers, going on periodic "TV Fasts," or banning the tube entirely. Any day we can expect to see "TV Addicts Anonymous" in which angry viewers will sit around and discuss how they have licked the problem of their television addiction. One journalist in *Newsweek* soberly suggested that the government create a real family

hour by banning all television broadcasting for sixty to ninety minutes each night. "By using the quiet of the family hour to discuss our problems we might get to know each other better, and to like each other better."

John Camper, a former Chicago television critic, had a quick answer to that. "The opposite would happen. Family members would begin to hate each other more than ever before." One of the few good things Camper could say about television was that, "it keeps members of a family from bugging each other."

And so the debate rolls on . . . And the public continues to watch.

If you want behavioral studies to prove your bias or prejudice there are scores to choose from. The most specious of all are those that question whether television has *any* motivational effect on viewers—this is in the face of the fact that television is supported by advertising budgets that increase each year because clients and their agencies report glowingly how effectively television sells products and services!

There are defenders, of course, out there amongst those millions who are caught up in a frenzied love-hate relationship with the tube. The old and infirm love it with scarcely any criticism. Children accept it uncompromisingly. If television is a hypnotic drug reducing children to robot-like acceptance of the status quo, and obeisance to the corporate ikons, Jeff Greenfield wonders why "the first generation of television viewers tuned into the most raucous, dissident, anti-corporate generation this national has ever known."

And, he points out, if television was supposed to turn us into armchair spectators, why does it exist now, "side by side with an unprecedented explosion of physical fitness?"

If television is the latest step in the modern world's separation of man and his sensory gifts, it puzzles Greenfield that our nation is experiencing a widespread rediscovery of everything from backpacking to natural food.

He admits that one can argue that television showed us the Viet Nam war and domestic violence, "but that kind of argument really confuses the messenger with the message."

No one can deny that television has changed the way we live. It has undoubtedly contributed to a sharp decline in reading skills among students, but how does that equate with the fact that more books and magazines are sold today than ever before? Or that most of the books, and many of the magazines, are as trashy as the programs we love to criticize?

Time has a way of making the past loom larger than the present. Neil Hickey, in *TV Guide*, laments the loss of anthology dramas and other traditional forms of adult television fare that used to fill the screen. "The staple now is featherweight comedy and pulp action-adventure fiction, mitigated at intervals by mini-series and other pre-emptive material of uncertain quality overlaid with heavy-handed gobs of sex as extra-added enticement."

But was television really all that good in the good old days? Aram Bakshian, Jr., writing in the *Wall Street Journal*, does not think it was. "Nostalgia fans revel in the memory of Sid Caesar's *Your Show Of Shows*, *Playhouse 90*, and Ed Murrow's *See It Now*, but they forget the arid hours that were characteristic of early television—the plastic newscasts of John Cameron Swayze, the anaesthetizing antics of Jerry Lester, the drab foreign 'B' films and westerns, the horribly amateurish local programs which consisted of a blowsy hostess or moth-eaten host plugging local tradesmen in between one-reel featurettes provided by the travel, hardware, auto, food, or other publicity-hungry industry."

"The impossible dream of an enlightened mass medium," writes Mr. Bakshian, "spoon-feeding culture and proper political and social ideas to a captive national audience, continues to haunt many critics of television. They remain wed to the notion that if only people like them ran television they could remake society in their own image."

What all these polemics fail to deal with, however, is the fact that the television industry is in a dilemma which has no solution.

That dilemma revolves around the system—a system that requires the networks (and stations as well) to reach the largest number of people at all times so that it can sell the greatest number of products and services for advertisers.

Some call it the "LCD Machine," and liken it to a racing car at the Indy 500. The mechanic at Indy who fine-tunes the carburetor of his machine a mite better than his competitors usually wins the race, provided that other factors are equal, such as the quality of the driver, and the benign blessing of Lady Luck.

In television the network that fine-tunes its mass audience to the LCD factor—*lowest common denominator*—wins the mass numbers rating race for that year. Fred Silverman is the master mechanic who has achieved singular fame for fine-tuning the carburetors of both CBS and ABC, although he now declares that the time has come to go in a somewhat different direction.

There are many skeptics who insist that Silverman can not go in a different direction. The system will not permit it. The system cannot be changed. The system is inextricably bound by its own rigid dynamics.

The median age of Americans today is 29.4 years. Of 200 million Americans, 35% are under 21. Another 29% comprise the 21–39 age group. Those middle aged (40–64) make up for 25% of the population, and the elderly (over 65) account for 11% of our population.

Television perceives that the biggest spenders in the U.S. today are those between 18–34 years of age. Advertisers pay \$13 per thousand homes to reach this group, and only \$6 per thousand homes for those over 50, although the latter group watches more television.

(continued on page 12)

MCA TV

Thus the real target group for those mechanics who fine-tune the "LCD Machine" are those who grew up between 1955–1965. They are now in their mid-thirties. They were weaned on, as Gary Deeb points out, "the early gutbucket rock of Elvis Presley, Fats Domino, and Jerry Lee Lewis; or the later refinements of the Beatles, the Beach Boys, and the Bee Gees; or the acid rock of the Woodstock generation."

"The first politician you cared for," writes Gary Deeb, "was John F. Kennedy, because he was young, handsome, and witty. Chances are you were against the Viet Nam war. And now that you've attained adulthood and ideally have become a responsible citizen and conspicuous consumer, the television moguls need you. As a scruffy kid you meant nothing to them; today, however, you represent money in their pocketbooks."

The grownup rock and roll generation is unquestionably the networks' program target, which, of course, explains why so many of television's so-called prime time hits are so mindlessly banal.

But that makes its own scathing statement about just *who* and *what* we are as a nation today!

Adding to the frustration is the fact that a growing number *within* the system would like to extricate themselves from it. Aaron Spelling, a producer who has made millions from the system, asks: "How in hell do we stop this network mania?" He is referring to ratings, of course.

Norman Lear, another eminently successful producer, calls it, "the most destructive force in television today."

Even station managers are joining the protest. Alan Bell, a manager in Philadelphia, declares: "They can't maintain this kind of ratings war. If they stopped worrying about who is number one, and started building some better programming, we'd all be better off."

Fred Silverman, whose actions will be watched more closely than any other television leader, admits it has become a "competitive frenzy" and vows he can do something about it.

Networks have become as hypersensitive about the system as their critics. They know that Americans want something other than the "LCD Machine," and ironically, all of them are concentrating their diversification efforts on publishing, a field in which Americans have welcomed the almost inexhaustively wide range of reading choices that now exist.

But the fact remains the system *cannot* be changed. There will be attempts made to tamper with it, but the essential fundamentals will remain the same.

To add to the dilemma of the tube the networks know that, in the next decade, and certainly by the end of the century, their system will be subject to massive pressures of change in a technological sense. A Pandora's Box of new techniques and inventions will turn the tube into an in-home information and service center. We already have super screen sizes, video cassette recorders, video disc players, video games, cable, and pay television over the air as well as by cable.

Cable today, feeding up to 75 channels, reaches about 15% of the nation's 73 million television homes. A television program beamed from a "superstation" via satellite can reach 282 cable systems. Pay TV cable has 1½ million subscribers on 604 of 4,000 cable systems, and by 1980 will reach 3–4 million subscribers.

As early as 1982 cable penetration may reach some 30% of the nation's television homes and that is the "magic number" at which cable will "explode" and make a national impact—just as black and white television, color did when this percentage was reached. By then there will be an estimated one million video cassette recorders at work in U.S. homes, and 1,000 satellite receiving stations.

It is already technically feasible to interface one's home television set with a computer, making it possible to read and receive information from banks, stores, doctors' offices and libraries. An experiment in Columbus, Ohio, called QUBE presently enables subscribers to take part in opinion polls, rate performers on talent, vote on local issues, and other merchandise.

"Superstations" like WTCG, Atlanta, use a satellite to extend their normal signals to 2.3 million cable homes, with an increase to 3.4 million homes projected for 1979. Other major market stations are also becoming "superstations": WOR-TV, New York; WGN-TV, Chicago; KTVU, Oakland, and KTTV, Los Angeles. There will be others.

There is little doubt that the television set of today is beginning a new era: from passive entertainer it will soon become a visual information system for many purposes, of which entertainment as we know it today will be only one small part.

Small part? Not everyone agrees on that. Many think that, despite the onslaught of some truly awesome technical developments, the present network dominated "LCD" system will continue to be "the only game in town" at least till the end of this century.

Merrill Panitt, editorial director of *TV Guide*, flatly declares that "there is not going to be any revolution in the foreseeable future."

There will be an "erosion of audience," he admits. This process, in fact, has already begun, but it will be "gradual" and not devastating to the networks' economy.

FCC Commissioner, Joseph R. Fogarty, is less sanguine. He thinks that the development of fiber optics, broadband programming, and satellite-aided "superstations" could make over-the-air broadcasting "extinct."

Erik Barnouw, a respected chronicler of the broadcast business, thinks that the present system will expand to the extent that it will one day rule every facet of our lives.

"There's grave danger television will eventually take over most everything—education, business, entertainment, and even politics. If that happens people will lose their ability to cope with real life. A child's education will come from a television screen, and adults will conduct business

face-to-face from their homes. The business office as we know it will be obsolete."

But all these points—the dilemma of the industry, its inability to extricate itself from the system, new threats to the system—are irrelevant to the real questions we should be asking—*why* television is the way it is today.

Three classic questions are usually debated at cocktail parties where television is always discussed:

(1) Should television be the leading edge in societal influence? (Which begs the further question: who is to play God and determine what that "leading edge" should be? Your leading edge might be entirely different from mine.)

(2) Or should television be a trailing edge?

(3) Or should television be no edge at all, but merely a reflecting mirror of our society?

With this come additional questions: are we responsible for the kind of television we get, or is television responsible for turning us into mediocre zombies? Where should the responsibility be placed? And what can be done about it?

We get closer to the truth, it seems, when we begin asking the fundamental question, which is:

Who are we?

Regrettable as it may be, the time has come when we must point the finger at ourselves, for the incontrovertible truth is: *We are what we do.*

We are what we *think*. What we *drink*. What we *eat*. What we *wear*. And what we *read*.

And certainly, when it comes to the tube, *we are what we watch!*

As a nation, it is generally agreed that, yes, we are turning inward. It's about time. It's not a pleasant experience to ask ourselves questions like: are we becoming another *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*? Have we become the most hedonistic, gratification-seeking society since Rome?

As Americans, we have never been very good at looking into our own souls. We experience discomfiture when others look too deeply into our eyes. Perhaps that is why so many of us wear those one-way sunglasses.

We do not like to think that television may simply be a reflection of who we are—and who we are *not*. It disturbs us to think that, if there are superior creatures from outer space, and if they came to our planet to investigate us, all they would have to do is rent a room at any Holiday Inn and watch U.S. television for 48 hours! In that short span they would learn everything they need to know about Americans, circa late 20th century.

Perhaps this exercise of introspection will do more to change television than anything else. To call the present "LCD" system imperfect is beside the point. Of course it is imperfect. Our system of government is also

imperfect because it is untidy and fragile. Surely we will bring it down one day, just as surely as man has brought down all systems that he creates—not because our systems are imperfect, but because, let's face it, we are a mean-spirited species much more adept at destroying than building. The media may be harbingers of our fate, but they do not cause it. No single medium, even one as powerful as television, can change us from what we essentially are.

Thus we will push, like lemmings to the sea, to whatever fate awaits us. And television will provide us with a giant looking glass as we move in the direction we inexorably must.

But that is *all* that television will do, because in the final analysis, we are nothing more, nothing less than what we watch.

If the networks are locked into the present LCD system, as this author believes they are, they must then struggle with a problem which they *can* solve—and that is the problem of seeking new and broader dimensions of leadership beyond the hard facts of profits and dividends.

How refreshing it would be if one, or all, of the three networks would say something like:

We know we are locked into an imperfect system. We know, for us, there is no escape. But you can escape! We don't expect all of you to watch us all of the time. Indeed, we hope you will not. We know we cannot be all things to all people, so take us for what we are—no more, no less.

We recognize that there is another system out there, an alternative system called public broadcasting. We also know that this system represents for us the greatest safety valve we could possibly have. We encourage you to watch this system because it can give you things we cannot give.

What remarkable candor that would be! Because public broadcasting *is* the greatest safety valve the networks have. It *is* a hedge against punitive legislation that may result one day if an angry public gets the support of a responsive Congress and causes drastic changes in the present system.

Here, it seems, lies the networks' greatest opportunity to express "new dimensions of leadership"—not the polite acceptance and tokens of support they have grudgingly given in the past.

As for us, the viewers, 220 million of us who rave and rant over what we see on the tube, it is time for us to concede that yes, unfortunately, *we are* what we watch.

Having accepted this rather dismal premise we will then descend a scale lower in our self-esteem. But only for a time. Having once passed that threshold, the time will come when we can ascend again, because it is a peculiar trait of man that he can transcend himself. He can move

from the low of an ignoble plateau to the heights of a noble one. It does not happen often, and the movement is usually cyclical and distressingly short-lived. But the potential is there, and it would be inspiring to see Americans begin another cycle upwards to renewed dignity, higher self-esteem, and honor.

The preceding article is an excerpt from a new book, Inside ABC, published by Hastings House; copyrighted © 1979 by Sterling Quinlan.

Sterling Quinlan was vice-president and general manager of ABC's Chicago station for eleven of his seventeen years with the network. He is the author of three novels—Jugger, Merger and Muldoon Was Here—as well as a notable non-fiction work, The Hundred Million Dollar Lunch.

QUOTE . . . UNQUOTE

“Television is film nowadays. One of the things that’s been going on during the past 20 years is a battle to death between film in public on a large screen and film at home on a small one. For the stage to enter this particular battle by appropriating any part of its rivals’ equipment or effect is a suicidal business: power—money and access to the mass audience—are on the opponents’ side.”

*—Journey to the Center of the Theatre
By Walter Kerr (Knopf, 1979)*

* * *

“Literate television doesn’t automatically have to be elitist television. Adolescent television has only just begun to catch up to its mature audience. Television producers have remained frozen in their conviction that the audience has the attention span—and mental apparatus—of an amoeba. The notion that viewers must be continually attracted with bright objects, visual dazzle and loud noise has never made sense for millions of intelligent older adults who grew up on books and radio. It is equally nonsensical when applied to a younger generation that has grown up in the era of paperbacks and television.”

*—“Let’s Hear It for Talking Heads”
By Edwin Diamond, Sunday New York Times.*

Noel Coward.
Mary Martin.
George Bernard Shaw.
Richard Burton.
Wm. Shakespeare.
Richard Harris.
Peter Ustinov.
Greer Garson.
Alec Guinness.
Arthur Miller.
George C. Scott.

For 28 years, we've been
keeping some awfully good
company.



Another View of Public TV

* * *

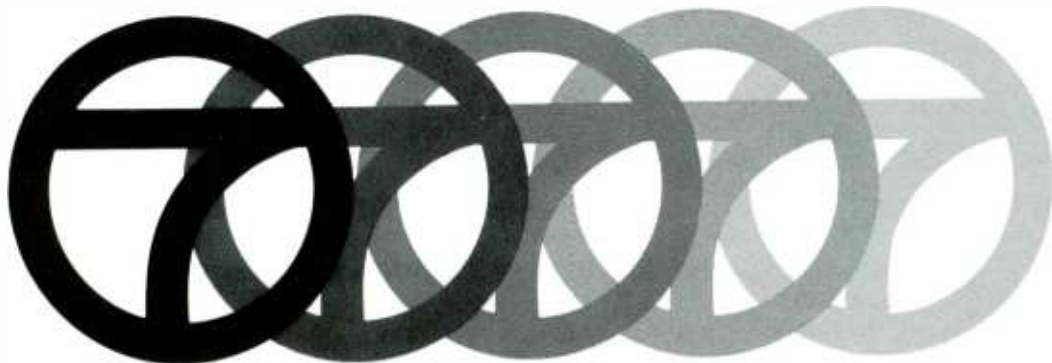
"Do not minorities appear on public TV? They surely do, and public TV seems aware that the minorities include many fine people. (A good many of the fine people exist, in the public TV world, chiefly to sing, dance and have their math and English improved by animated cartoon.) Is not a scrupulous political even-handedness maintained on public TV? It surely is. One knows that for every political position, morally bankrupt or no, a respectably attired spokesperson can and should be found, lest the show of value-neutrality (as on the MacNeil-Lehrer in-depth newscast) fail to go on and on. . . .

"Lots of class, in a word, in this quarter of the tube. Much embryonic snootiness. If public TV were our only means of communication, we (and it) would long ago have drowned in a sea of mayonnaise. From the very first, indeed, the makers of what we've come to know as public TV have behaved as though their prime duty was to coat the land with a film of what can best be described as distinguished philistinism. . . .

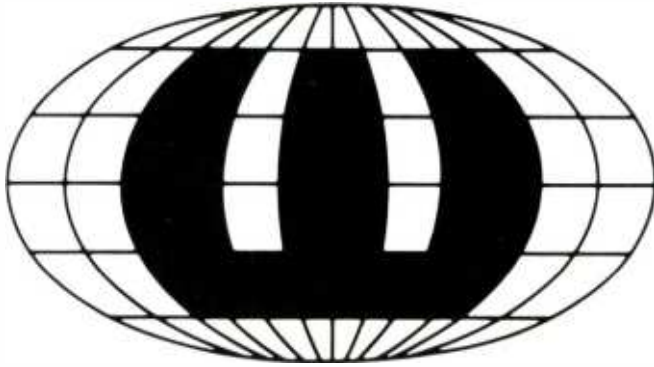
"But we're in no sense dealing with a plot. If public TV is what it is because it's not free to be anything else, the reason lies neither in an effort by the top 500 corporations to sell upper-class values to a mass audience, nor in more general forces such as elitism, Anglophilia and the like. The reason lies—to judge from the results of my inquiry into how the medium works—in the peculiar politics of public TV's address to creativity itself."

—*"The Trouble With Public Television"*

by Benjamin DeMott
The Atlantic, February, 1979



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The Search for Solutions

By GEOFFREY COWAN

Television will inevitably continue to produce clashes between those who are concerned about the moral and behavioral impact of the most powerful medium in history and those who want to watch or produce contemporary and meaningful comedy and drama. Many people, particularly those with strong religious convictions, understandably want to shield their children from programs that use offensive language or portray premarital sex as “cool” and guilt-free; but there is merit too in the desire of those who want entertainment television to deal honestly with the problems that exist in an era of changing mores.

The case for television’s sexual freedom is perhaps less compelling when judged by the content of *Three’s Company*, which exploits sexual innuendo much as police shows exploit violence, than when it involves more issue-oriented and dramatically satisfying material, such as the abortion episodes of *Maude*. But from the standpoint of public policy the issue really is the same: Should the rights of those who don’t want a program to be aired be allowed to prevail over those of people who do?

The nature of television makes the question especially difficult to resolve. A pluralistic society can easily tolerate a diverse range of books, magazines and movies, because each individual can choose to purchase those he wants and to ignore those he finds offensive. But television does not permit such diversity. What broadcasters decide to air goes directly into almost every American home.

The ideal solution for those who want their children protected from excessive exposure to televised sex and violence would of course be parental supervision. But, realistically, sentry duty during each day- and nighttime hour is impractical. Parents who are away from home or, though at home, are busy making dinner, reading, or engaging in adult conversation, use television as a child’s companion or baby-sitter.

“Parents in our view have—and should retain—the primary responsibility for their children’s well being,” the FCC noted in its report on the Family Hour. However, the commission went on to point out that “this traditional and revered principle, like other examples which could be cited, has been adversely affected by the corrosive processes of technological and social change in twentieth-century American life.”

Perhaps at some point technology itself will help to restore what it has helped corrode. Satellites and cable television are already capable of increasing the diversity of available programming, and video-tape devices, still priced too high (at about \$800) for most families, may one day help

viewers to select programs they truly want to watch, and to view them at times of their own choosing.

It may even be possible to develop devices similar to safety caps on aspirin bottles or locks on automobile ignitions which would enable parents better to control their children's television viewing. The House Communications Subcommittee, in its 1977 report on televised sex and violence, proposed that the FCC examine the feasibility of requiring manufacturers to install such devices—ranging from a simple “lock” on the on-off button to a more complex daily or weekly program selector such as that contained in the Selectavision video-recording device recently put on the market by RCA. Combined with a careful use of *TV Guide*, or of a rating system similar to the one used by the movie industry, such devices would enable parents to make careful, and enforceable, decisions about the shows that their children watch.

Effective parental supervision, however, does not end with simply choosing the programs a child may watch. Several studies have demonstrated that a program that might harm, frighten, or confuse a child watching alone can be converted into a constructive experience by attentive parents. By their mere presence parents can provide security, as they do when reading a terrifying fairy tale; and by discussing sophisticated or even morally objectionable shows with a child, parents can provide their children with an understanding of their own moral beliefs.

But even effective parental supervision cannot fully satisfy those who find little on television that they want to watch, or want their children to watch. Right now the only solution for that sector of society is to watch less or no television.

To a large extent the sameness and exploitiveness of television—to which so many viewers have a legitimate objection—is a function of the industry's curious economic structure. Unlike other media, such as books and movies—whose revenue comes entirely from consumers—or magazines and newspapers—which derive their income from consumers as well as advertisers—television relies solely on advertising for its revenue. Since the vast majority of companies that advertise on television want to reach an 18- to 49-year-old urban audience, there is little incentive to develop programming that appeals primarily to people who are older than forty-nine, younger than eighteen, or who live in rural areas. If middle-aged or elderly people in small-town or rural America feel that television ignores their tastes, and offers little that is nourishing for the community's children, they are right. In effect, they have been disenfranchised by television economics, which dictates that all prime-time programs appeal to the largest possible number of demographically proper viewers.

It is instructive to compare television to newspapers, which have an economic incentive to appeal to special interests; they carry features such as gardening news, stock listings, and book reviews, largely because

(continued on page 24)



each feature has its own paying customers and specialized advertisers. Those who read a paper because of one or more features they like are not apt to be concerned about articles or columns they don't like, since boring or offensive material in a newspaper can easily be skipped.

There is, however, no commercial incentive for television to put on shows that appeal to people with minority tastes, even when an interested sponsor can be found. The over-all ratings race is too intense to give way to such programming on a regular basis. Moreover, networks know that ratings are largely a function of what broadcasters call "continuity." People who are watching a station when one show ends tend to remain turned to that channel as the next one begins. By putting on a program that appeals to minority tastes, a broadcaster risks losing ratings for the rest of the night.

As a result, networks try at all times to achieve the largest possible demographically proper audience. To do this they assume that viewers will watch what NBC programming chief Paul Klein labeled the Least Objectionable Program, or L.O.P. Rather than trying to develop shows that some people will find exceptionally appealing but that may offend or bore others, too often television deliberately strives for mediocrity.

Theoretically, there is nothing sacrosanct about the American system of advertiser-supported television. Most other countries rely, at least in part, on other sources of revenue, such as a license fee or set tax for those who own television sets. The annual license fee in England is currently about \$38 for each color television set, and \$16 for black-and-white. If Americans paid a license fee or set tax equivalent to England's—which is far less than most Americans pay for their daily newspaper—it would produce about \$2.2 billion in revenue, or more than twice as much money as the three networks combined currently spend on the production of all prime-time television programming.

But while it would be technically simple to establish a system that relied less heavily on advertising, the opposition from Advertisers and the broadcasting industry—which routinely opposes any reforms that threaten to disrupt the immensely profitable status quo—would almost certainly make such a proposal politically unacceptable, as would the argument that, besides depriving Americans of "free TV," financing based on a government-imposed set tax would increase government control of the media and, conceivably, produce programming that was "elitist" or "dull."

In reality of course the present system is not precisely "free," since the costs of advertising are passed along to consumers. Moreover, it ought to be possible to fashion a diverse rather than elitist system in which the government would be at least as far removed from control as is the BBC in England. Nevertheless, any political debate on the subject would almost certainly be won by the involved industries, which would have vast opinion-shaping resources at their disposal.

Although a fundamental change in the commercial system is probably politically unrealistic, greater diversity can also be achieved, particularly for the benefit of children, through more modest regulatory reforms. No commercial network, for example, presently carries a single regularly scheduled afternoon or evening program specifically designed for younger audiences. Under the circumstances it would seem both appropriate and constitutional for the government to require broadcasters to achieve the kind of programming diversity that would otherwise be absent from commercial television.

As groups like Action for Children's Television have suggested, the FCC could require each broadcaster to air a minimum number of hours of late-afternoon and prime-time programming specifically produced for younger audiences, in much the same way it now requires stations to air a minimum amount of news and public-affairs programming. A new rule, which might be supplemented by a ruling from the Justice Department's Anti-Trust Division designed to enable the networks to coordinate their efforts, could be designed to assure that there would be at least one network children's show available each afternoon between the hours of 4:00 and 7:00 P.M. and each night between the hours of 7:00 and 9:00 P.M.

Presumably the programs produced pursuant to such a rule would resemble the high-quality afternoon children's television specials, such as the ABC *Afterschool Special* and NBC's *Special Treat*, which the networks currently air. These shows, and their prime-time counterparts such as CBS's presentation of *The Grinch Who Stole Christmas*, *Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer*, and the *Charlie Brown* and *Fat Albert* specials, have, interestingly, proved to be more popular than their "adult" competition.

Indeed, during the first week of April 1977, four such specials, all on CBS, were in the top twelve shows in the Nielsen survey, and they helped CBS win its first ratings week since the week of December 25–January 2, another holiday week in which CBS's ratings were boosted by children's specials. As a headline in *Daily Variety* noted after CBS benefited from its Halloween specials the following fall, "*Charlie Brown* and *Fat Albert* haul CBS out of the Nielsen cellar." Yet such shows are not aired on a regular basis, apparently because of the "inferior" demographic composition of the audience.

There is a second method by which the government could insure a greatly increased volume of children's programming, which would undoubtedly be even more strenuously resisted by the entire commercial television industry.

In essence, the government could create a noncommercial Children's Television Network, which would utilize channels now assigned to commercial users. Instead of granting each station a license to broadcast twenty-four hours each day, as it now does, the FCC could renew licenses

for only twenty-two or twenty-three hours per day. The other hour or two of frequency use—perhaps between 4:00 and 5:00 P.M.—could be granted to a different licensee, such as the local school board or PTA. The newly created licensees could then band together into a new Children's Television Network, which, with the aid of government or private grants, would commission or produce programming specially designed for children.

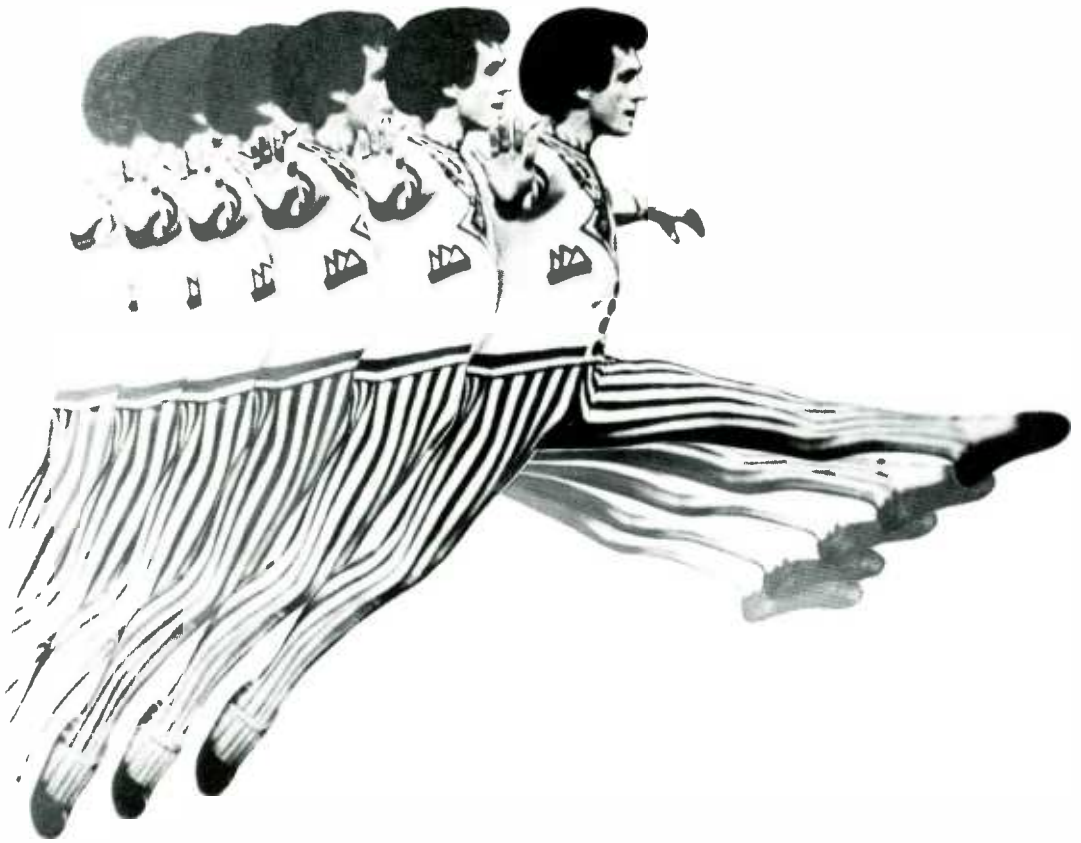
There are, indeed, any number of methods by which the government could constitutionally achieve diversity by assuring the availability of generally non-violent and non-sexual programming that is not only suitable, but is actually designed for younger audiences. But broadcasters strenuously, and generally successfully, oppose any far-reaching regulatory proposals that threaten to affect the economics of the industry.

When the House Communications Subcommittee included a proposal for mandatory children's programming in a 1977 draft report on violence on television, members were subjected to intense broadcaster pressure. Industry lobbyists—led by CBS's Bill Leonard, a respected former reporter and news executive who replaced Richard Jencks as CBS's Washington vice-president—objected to several aspects of the draft report, including: the suggestion that the networks themselves are primarily responsible for television violence; the conclusion that television violence produces real-world crime, and that some restructuring of the industry might be in order; and the suggestions for regulatory reform, including the proposals regarding mandatory children's programming.

The preceding article is an excerpt from "See No Evil," published by Simon and Schuster. Copyright © 1979 by Geoffrey Cowan.

Geoffrey Cowan is an attorney specializing in communications law. He was graduated from Harvard College and the Yale Law School. In 1969 he was co-founder of the Center for Law and Social Policy in Washington. He is currently on the faculty of the UCLA Law School.

Mr. Cowan is the son of the late Louis G. Cowan, television packager and one-time president of CBS.



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Cincinnati, Ch. 19, WXIX-TV
Kansas City, Ch. 9, KMBC-TV

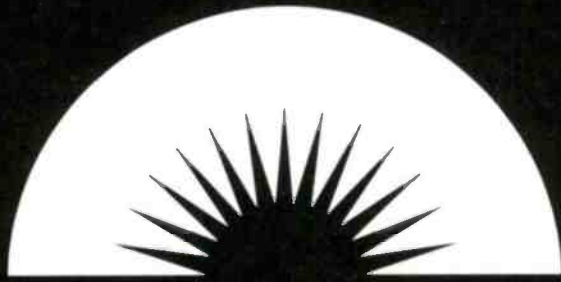
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Americans at Leisure— Living to Look or Looking to Live?

By HARRIET VAN HORNE

Rarely does a television program turn its attention to the uses and abuses of the medium. For obvious reasons the medium has eschewed self-criticism, perhaps fearful of giving the home screen the same cool-eyed scrutiny it gives other institutions. This is regrettable, considering that television is regarded by sociologists as having had greater impact on the way we live than have such inventions as movable type and the automobile.

Attention must be paid, therefore, to a television documentary made last year in Minneapolis. Jim Hayden of WCCO-TV, a CBS affiliate, persuaded five Minnesota families to give up television for one month (for \$500), and then recount for the cameras precisely how a cold, mute TV set altered the pattern of their lives.

So enormous were the changes and so painful the "cold turkey" withdrawal that *Bill Moyers Journal* repeated Hayden's documentary this past spring over the Public Broadcasting System.

Small children in the chosen families were asked if they would rather give up television or their fathers. Most of them replied they'd sooner give up Daddy. Whether this is a comment on the excellence of television or on the shortcomings of the American father no one is prepared to say. But it's a finding that speaks eloquently about the state of American "togetherness."

Besides the remarks of the five families producer Hayden solicited the views of psychologists, sociologists and teachers.

Since the full transcript of this fascinating program runs long and suffers noticeably when presented in an "edited version," *Television Quarterly* is instead offering some significant excerpts. Taken as a whole they suggest that our lives have been permanently altered—for better or for worse—by the invention some still call the boob-tube.

A few years ago program planners were fearful that the public's fascination with the black box was wearing off. Current figures suggest the contrary. Consider this: Average time spent with TV is six hours, ten minutes a day for adults, 30 hours a week for children. If you and your family are watching less, remember that thousands of others are watching more.

Inevitably, the WCCO documentary weighed carefully the effect of violence. "If you're an average viewer you'll witness 19,000 acts of violence this year," said Dave Moore. "Are we leading the young to expect, even crave a kind of violence they will probably never encounter in real life—unless they stir it up themselves?"

One answer came from Dr. Andrew Collins, associate professor at the Institute for Child Development, University of Minnesota. The evidence establishing a link between heavy TV watching and anti-social behavior among children "is almost unequivocal," stated Dr. Collins.

Another expert, Dr. George Gerbner, dean of the Annenberg School of Communications, University of Pennsylvania, agreed. Roughly half the characters in TV plays and films commit acts of violence, he has computed. Six percent kill some one, three percent get killed.

Violence, in Dr. Gerbner's view, makes some people more violent and all people more anxious.

The families deprived on their "TV fix" for a month reported early irritation and a sense of loss—"as if there had been a death in the family." Later they discovered that they were spending more time in conversation, in reading, games and "going out." One woman, Patricia Belde, said her month of non-viewing was directly responsible for her pregnancy.

"The most lasting result is that I become more aware of my children and the fact that I was shutting them out," said Clyde Mobley.

Gary Kraft said that before the TV set went dead he was forever asking his wife, "Leave me alone," so that he could focus full attention on the TV screen. Now he believes that giving up TV for a month was a salutary experience. Still, it was good to have the set warm and alive again. "It's kind of like a crutch. If something goes wrong you can come home and just sit down and watch television and kind of blank everything else out."

The Kraft children, their father noted, now talk about their problems more freely than they used to, and they expect their father to help them with their homework.

Many of the experts testifying on this program deplored the influence of television on family conversation. Said Dr. Gerbner, "Forty five percent of American homes eat dinner with the television set on. . . . Dinner time used to be family time, (a time for) family talk. You can still talk but you are talking about something that's outside your own family, outside your own community . . . You are communing in the presence of a great corporate religion . . ."

Because the past decade has seen a steady decline in SAT tests and the basic skills of college freshmen, Hayden's documentary asked some educators if heavy viewing by children might be at fault.

Said a high school teacher, Dan Conrad: "The attention span of students lasts about as long as a regular TV program." Students, moreover, seem to need the equivalent of a commercial break every 12 minutes or so, Conrad said.

"Television," concluded the documentary, "has redefined childhood."

The program's conclusion was not a demand that everybody give up television for specified periods, such as one week or one month, to restore family equilibrium. "What is being suggested," said Moore, "is not that you stop watching television, just that you be selective, that you take what you feel is right for you and your family, and leave the rest. The danger is that as you sit there seeing and hearing a whole universe through the tube you'll forget to see or hear one another."

Scant attention was paid the question of how television might be improved. That, it was agreed, is a subject for other programs. Nicholas Johnson, chairman of the National Citizens' Communications Lobby, compared TV watching to "a drug experience . . . a lapse of reality." The medium desperately needs high quality drama, he said. His explanation of why quality drama is in short supply was fairly arresting. Class drama tends, he said, "to make the commercials look fraudulent."

Should high-minded, family oriented Americans dismiss television as trivial, repetitive, unworthy of intelligent debate?

Not at all, said Dr. Gerbner. "Television is the great universal storyteller of our time. And most of its stories, particularly fiction or drama, which I think are the most important, tell us how the invisible forces of life and society really work. You can discount the plot, but you remember what social types, what human types tend to succeed against what other types. This becomes a view of reality for most people, and they act accordingly."

Thirty days without television may have closed a communication gap in the five families chosen for the experiment, but no one chose to leave the TV dial set to OFF permanently. "It's like having an old buddy back in the house," said one deprived viewer.

Here's Dr. Gerbner again: "People say, 'You can turn it off, can't you?' This is no longer a realistic question. Even if you do, you live in a world in which nine-hundred ninety-nine out of a thousand people don't. And they make that world for you."

Concluded Bill Moyers: "Television can instruct, inform and inspire as well as distract, distort and demean. And turning it off rejects the good with the bad."

Harriet Van Horne is a syndicated columnist and former television critic. Since 1972 she has been the Editor of the Television Quarterly.

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QUOTE . . . UNQUOTE

The Politics of Communication— Ushering in the 'New TV'

In 10 years, Lionel Van Deerlin tells us, "You're not going to recognize television." In 10 years, the skeptic in me wonders, will television recognize us?

Van Deerlin is chairman of the House communications subcommittee, which last week released the second draft of its proposed amendments to the Communications Act of 1934. This bill would relieve radio and TV stations of the obligation to renew their licenses. It would eliminate the hearing process for granting new licenses, remove many restrictions on combined ownership within the media, all but do away with equal-time provisions, replace the FCC with a sharply restricted Communications Regulatory Commission, and tax stations to support the new agency.

While the networks scream about this tax, mendicants at PBS are bitter about the loss of revenue that was to have come from a surcharge on the networks. The surcharge, originally part of Van Deerlin's bill, has been dropped in the second draft. Though the rewrite seems to parrot the Carnegie Commission in its support of a National Endowment for Program Development, it sharply reduces the budget for the endowment from what Carnegie has proposed, and openly advises PBS to solicit commercials—up to 25 minutes a day.

By dismantling the FCC and doing away with its power to choose between bidders for a license, the new bill could sharply curtail minority ownership. Without open hearings and periodic reviews, there will be no way to monitor a station's public service, and the time spent on such programming will surely be converted into "entertainment."

But the real jolt in Van Deerlin's rewrite is that, in the name of *laissez faire*, it might actually diminish competition by reducing the checks on large corporations that want to invest in radio and TV. The bill is silent on the joint ownership of newspapers and broadcasting facilities in the same area, but it permits networks to own cable systems (as long as they are independently managed) and allows film studios to produce programs for the systems they own. That would make TV a lot more susceptible to consolidation than even the film industry, where owning a studio and a theatre chain is enough to rouse the Justice Department.

This rewrite could transform the cable industry into an ancillary medium owned and operated by the networks and the studios. The new bill would even permit the phone company to produce and transmit programs on its own cable lines. The thought of coming home from a hard day at the media-conglom to ponder the combined services of Time, Inc., War-

nerco, and AT&T brings an incantation to my lips: "I'm not hungry, I'll just pick."

But . . . let's look at the videotape. Under Van Deerlin's bill, cable operators will be free to offer phone service on their lines. Shouldn't I relish this prospect of perpetual choice, never knowing who produces what? How about that clash of multinational corporations in my living room, with 20-channel rating wars and pornographic videodisks—the chance to order lingerie on my Qube?

Let's face it—Ugly George is hardly the alternative to *Mork and Mindy* we hoped he'd be. Maybe it's true that not everyone should have his own TV show. The recent Supreme Court decision virtually abolishing federal regulation of cable TV (and opening the door to further challenges of public-access requirements) could mean a more selective exploration of the medium. Or it could mean rank commercialization, with open channels being used to hawk new products and advertising everywhere.

Under the proposed rewrite, it will be up to the owners to decide whether cable TV evolves into a medium of communication or a giant vegematic ad. It will be up to the owners, not the government, and certainly not the people who pay for the privilege of watching Ugly George.

The trouble with Van Deerlin's bill—and with its even more chaotic counterparts in the Senate—is that it removes restrictions without buttressing the medium's potential, and assumes that such potential can best be realized by allowing the market to make and meets its own demands.

—Richard Goldstein
Village Voice

QUOTE . . . UNQUOTE

"One of the recurring battle cries of the quality television crusade is that creative TV people should be given 'a chance to fail,' presumably as a learning experience. This implies a suspension of competitive pressures, such as the ratings. Certainly there are aspects of the system that need refinement. But perhaps there is something to be said for commercial competition, even of the maddening sort offered by *Laverne and Shirley*.

—Daniel Henninger,
Wall Street Journal

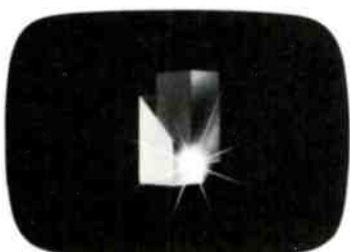
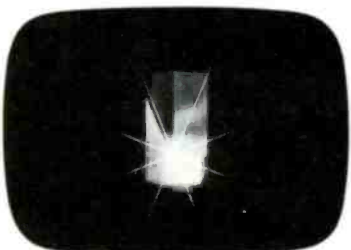
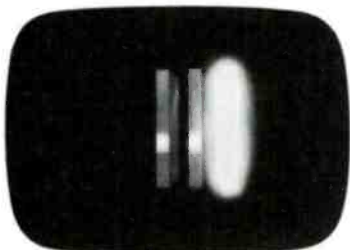
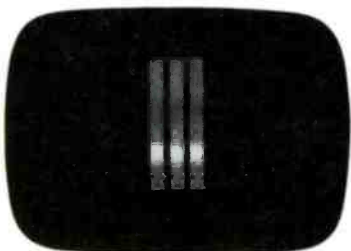
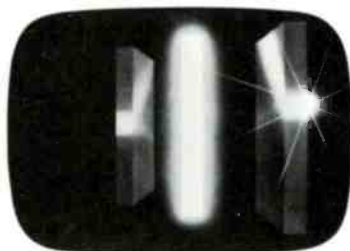
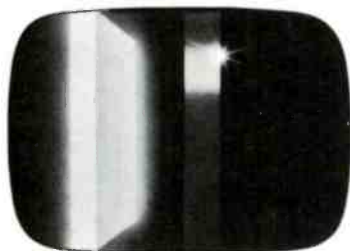
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'Star Trek' in Retrospect— A Celebration of the Alien

By KARIN BLAIR

In one way or another we are all aliens; alienness and alienation are essential human experiences which people have been pondering for centuries. How one finds and comes to know oneself depends in part on how one perceives the Other, what one is not. Thus alienness depends on an imaginary line which separates the known from the unknown, the familiar from the foreign, the "I" from the "Other." Within the world of *Star Trek* the viewer confronts an obvious alien, Mr. Spock. In addition, each adventure poses another range of alien presences encountered by the starship *Enterprise*.

Gene Roddenberry, in creating the world of the *Enterprise*, envisioned a microcosm where even an alien could find a home. Spock was not only accepted by the viewing public, he was embraced. During its second year of production in 1967–1968, the show was jokingly called "The Mr. Spock Hour." Spock's presence is essential to fulfilling the mission of the *Enterprise*: to explore new worlds, to contact new life forms, to reach out to the alien. Spock is both an image for the unknown territory of the alien and a mediator between the familiar and the foreign. In *Star Trek*, Roddenberry made a universe where known must be brought into contact with the unknown, where drama is played out on the borderline between self-definition and self-annihilation. The great enterprise at stake is dramatizing our own encounters with the unknown and hence with the alien within ourselves, as well as the alien beyond. It is an evolutionary process, like life.

Also, as in life, this process of encountering the unknown involves us with both the familiarity of the past and the foreignness of the future. One of the paradoxes encountered in any attempt to move beyond the known is that the human mind can make contact only with that which is already in some way familiar. Therefore an alien, to be comprehensible, must also have some familiar characteristics.

Spock the hybrid Vulcan-human can function as resident alien precisely because he is *half* human and can therefore dramatize the point of contact between the familiar and the foreign. Spock's foreignness, on the other hand, allows us to see—worked out in him and hence in ourselves—the relation between polarities usually seen as diametrically opposed in our human world. Just as Vulcans rarely marry humans, so intellect rarely mates easily with emotion, and moral goodness seems incompatible with overwhelming mating urges. Such oppositions be-

tween mind and body are bridged in the character of Spock who, offspring of a Vulcan father and a Terran mother, must continually overcome in himself the tension between mind and emotion, moral dedication to Kirk and the sexual heat of *pon farr*¹ under the influence of which he could kill his captain.

In the world of *Star Trek*, certain polarities are especially prominent: good and evil, female and male, young and old. In human society, cultural codes function to maintain more or less clear distinctions between such categories. However assiduously a person tries to fit the main cultural categories of the surroundings, she/he will one day find within her/himself elements that do not fit. These elements are immediately seen as undesirable and alienating, yet at the same time they provide the stimulus toward what Arthur Miller has identified as the theme of all worthwhile drama: a person's search to make a home in the outside world. The challenge is to make a world in which we can come to terms with rejected parts of ourselves—in short, to feel at home both within ourselves and in the world around us. Perhaps from this perspective we can approach an understanding of the unprecedented appeal of *Star Trek* to the television viewing public.

Here is a world where tension is no longer moralized as guilt but universalized as energy; difference is not condemned but embraced as *IDIC*: infinite diversity in infinite combinations. Life is celebrated even at the expense of peace and moral self-righteousness. The world of *Star Trek* is structured out of polarities no longer condemned for dividing some ideally unitary world but embraced for providing energy and direction for future evolution. Growth, not guilt, becomes the fruit of alienation, just as renewal rather than shame can be the result of sexual union. Home can be found not in some unrecoverable past but in the process of discovery.

The Impact of Star Trek

Although cancelled in 1969 and slated for a quiet demise as a rerun, *Star Trek* has attracted a fan following that is unique in the history of television. Overwhelming attraction, as in *pon farr*, is not always intellectually predictable.

In 1964, Gene Roddenberry began working on *Star Trek* and by 1966 the first year of production was under way. Twenty-six new episodes were filmed each season for three years. In the latter part of this period, ratings based on the viewing preferences of the sampling of "typical" American families indicated that the program was not drawing the eighteen million viewers per broadcast hour then needed to justify continuation. Production on new episodes stopped, and the show could be seen only on reruns. At this moment, professionals in the entertainment field,

1. *Pon farr* refers to the Vulcan mating urge which once every seven years overwhelms the male to the extent that he must return home and submit to the Vulcan rituals surrounding it or die.

including even Gene Roddenberry, saw the show as entertainment which would fade into obscurity.

It was only after *Star Trek* conventions began to flourish in 1971–1972, that they realized they had misjudged the program's impact. Demographic analysis of the viewing public verified earlier misjudgments; statistics revealed that in fact *Star Trek's* viewing profile had just the concentration of young couples and the soon-to-be married that advertisers sought. Since then the show's popularity has been growing in steady progression. Although science fiction has always attracted a distinctive following, *Star Trek* fans have distinguished themselves through their number and diversity and through the intensity of their commitment.

More than a million fan letters have been responsible for keeping the show on the air, first in 1968, then in reruns; some 400,000 fan letters convinced then President Ford to name the first American space shuttlecraft the *Enterprise*, a name which retains its meaning in several languages. *Star Trek* conventions continue all over the country and are frequently the scene of ritual repetition of *Star Trek* scripts by fans who have memorized all the lines.

The *Star Trek* phenomenon is unique, not only in its intensity, but also in its breadth. Some 140 domestic stations broadcast the show on more or less continuous rerun; 115 foreign stations have also broadcast it, either in translation or with subtitles.² *Star Trek* crosses national boundaries with the ease of light. The appeal of the show leaps temporal boundaries just as easily as it does national ones. There are more fans today than ever before, and among them are some who were not even born when the program began. Although the youth of many viewers is implicit in the *Star Trek* gadgetry which is aimed at them, there are Golden Age fan clubs for trekkies among the retired. Just as *Star Trek's* appeal cuts across the boundaries of age and nationality, so also it defies easy categorization by other means. The product of Hollywood in the late 1960s, *Star Trek* generates a force field which extends far beyond its origins.

The impact of this force field on viewers has been as various as the individuals involved. *Letters to Star Trek* reports that autistic children have been able to direct their energies outward in attempts to draw or talk about Spock. Adults have moved across the country and changed their professions to be involved in the world of *Star Trek*. Since we are dealing with science fiction, where futuristic technology provides the framework within which the drama occurs, some viewers feel that the program really prefigures a possible future for the world and have set about to implement comparable advances in society.

As *The Making of Star Trek*³ makes clear, the show takes great care to maintain scientific plausibility; Roddenberry and his production staff consulted research institutes to assure the verisimilitude essential to es-

2. Susan Sackett, ed., *Letters to Star Trek* (New York: Ballantine, 1977).

3. Stephen Whitfield and Gene Roddenberry, *The Making of Star Trek* (New York: Ballantine, 1968).

tablishing scientific credibility. Nonetheless, scientific interest cannot circumscribe its world even for its fans, nor can it account for the intensity of their interest. The promise of being examined on a bed modelled after those in the sick bay of the *Enterprise* (and such apparently do exist) is not enough to motivate the memorization of scripts. Nor is the scientific verisimilitude uniform throughout the show. Shock waves from explosions continue to rock the *Enterprise* for dramatic reasons even though they cannot actually exist in the virtual vacuum of outer space. In addition, the final outcome of episodes only rarely turn on scientific details of warp drive, time travel, or transporter functioning taken for their own sakes.

Another factor controlling the importance of space technology is the "Prime Directive" which forbids interference with the evolution of an alien society. In *The Enterprise Incident* the drama is between technological equals: the Romulans and the United Federation of Planets; therefore, the Prime Directive does not apply. Very often, however, the starship encounters less advanced societies and hence must restrain its technology. Space hardware is thereby placed in a moral framework. The question of whose control panel triggers the most powerful display of technology is never by itself the controlling factor.

Over the years several other explanations of the popularity of *Star Trek* have been proposed. Some have attributed the show's appeal to its play of ideas. Yet although it is popular with university audiences, its fans cannot be categorized as only intellectuals. As Gene Roddenberry explained in an interview, the show also has an audience in institutions for the mentally retarded. While various episodes do deal intellectually with most of today's pressing problems such as war, prejudice, and mechanization, for example, there must be something in the presentation which transcends ideas and can speak to viewers with lesser as well as greater mental ability.

Star Trek appeals not only to the emotionally stable but also to the disturbed: the episode entitled *The Enemy Within*, in particular, has been used as an unusually effective psychotherapeutic teaching device. In this episode Kirk, the captain of the starship, is accidentally split into two persons, one of whom, the positive Kirk, self-effacing and kind, is at odds with negative Kirk, who is anti-social and savage—his concerns are alcohol, sex, and aggression. As the plot unfolds, we see the positive Kirk becoming forgetful, indecisive, and generally unable to command; we see that he needs his negative self, which is now dying from general psychosomatic imbalance. Resolution comes once positive Kirk controls the repulsion he feels for his aggressive half and embraces his anti-social self so that, reunited, the whole Kirk can live. In short, we need both halves of ourselves even if one part seems undesirable and evil. Aggression is essential for a successful captain and an integrated human being.

(continued on page 44)



Those who prefer an emotional explanation for the show's appeal invoke "love." The fan authors of *Star Trek Lives!* are the most vocal proponents of this theory, verbalizing what the majority of viewers surely senses: that there is a notable *esprit de corps* among the actors who mutually enjoyed working with one another.

Gene Roddenberry himself acknowledges not only that the *Star Trek* cast formed an unusually cohesive group, but that such an outcome had in fact been one of his initial aims. Producing the series was for him not only an artistic and intellectual challenge, but a human one as well. He wanted to create a family feeling on both the *Enterprise* and Paramount's back lot. His success is evident, not only in what script writer D. C. Fontana describes as an absence of Hollywood "claim jumping," but in the presence of mutual appreciation of what each person could contribute to the show.

An interesting example of crew participation emerged when a prop man with a special talent for monsters, James Prohaska, who was working on the same lot as the *Star Trek* crew, made a large lumpy, rock monster and demonstrated it for Gene Roddenberry, who in turn liked the creature so much that he asked his collaborator, the late Gene Coon, to write a script for it. Thus was born the horta, and it went on to inhabit one of the most popular episodes, *The Devil in the Dark*.

The central importance of Gene Roddenberry in all dimensions of the show is hard to overemphasize. As creator of the series, he generated characters which were initially parts of himself. In addition, although the scripts were credited to specific writers with differing styles and ideas, each one was subjected to Gene Roddenberry's scrutiny and revision during the first two years, and thereafter those who had already worked with him carried on. Also, partly as a result of the supportive atmosphere he created among the crew, the characters continued to develop through the commitment the actors made to them.

The actors, and especially Leonard Nimoy, felt personally involved in maintaining integrity of character, even despite the occasionally insensitive writer or director. In short, the community on the bridge of the *Enterprise* was nourished by the continued close cooperation of its creators.

The Alien Within

Such unity on the technological, intellectual, and human levels leads one toward an explanation of *Star Trek's* appeal based on more universal factors. A broadly gauged psychological approach can allow us to see how production staff as well as viewers could be turned on to this enterprise. On the screen and behind the scenes alike, the televised and human drama creates a context where even the alien, including the alien in us all, could feel at home. The "I" and the potentially threatening "Other" need no longer be doomed to perpetual and fearful opposition.

This unknown and often threatening alien that we each have within ourselves translates into psychological terms as the *unconscious mind*, that part of ourselves which we by definition do not know and, in some cases, do not want to recognize. As we saw in *The Enemy Within*, Kirk's "other half" emerges as essential to the integrity of the captain. Kirk's temptation to claim-jump by rejecting the right of this alien to an appropriate place within his personal being is countered by Spock, the resident alien who must live with his own duality. He convinces the captain that both halves are necessary to successfully carry on function and being.

In *The Enemy Within*, we see the alien as unconsciousness in fairly traditional Freudian terms: the repressed forces of aggression and sexuality. Carl Gustav Jung, the Swiss founder of analytical psychology, distinguished himself from his mentor, Sigmund Freud, the founder of psychoanalysis, by enlarging the idea of the unconscious. To Jung, the unconscious includes not only what one does not want to know, repressed feelings of aggression and rejection based on personal childhood experiences, but also what one *cannot* know. The transcendent as well as the rejected part of human experience is part of the unconscious. Dreams as well as works of art and other creations of the imagination such as myth and even mathematics offer glimpses of this other world.

Psychic health depends on a living relationship with the unconscious. The healthy psyche must always be a function of *both* of its two components: the *immanent* world of one's individual consciousness and the *transcendent* world lying beyond the frontiers of one's knowledge.⁴ What makes the connection Jung calls *archetypes*?

Archetypes as Jung understands them are "empty and purely formal,"⁵ that is, they are analogous to the "axial system of a crystal, which as it were, performs the crystalline structure in the mother liquid, although it has no material existence of its own."⁶ Since every crystal of the same compound always takes the same shape, we conceive of the axial system as independent of any particular crystal, thereby constituting a series of rules or structures which becomes visible only after the crystal is formed. Similarly, for Jung, "A primordial [archetypal] image is determined as to its content only when it has become conscious and therefore filled out with the material of conscious experience."⁷ The content of an archetype, then, reflects individual and cultural experience which is subject to change, whereas its form reflects basic psychic structures.

Thus a basic archetypal structure must be fleshed out and made visible by a succession of different contents which have living resonance in different times and places. The danger for Jungians is to mistake the content of a particular manifestation of an archetype ("the Demeter archetype,"

4. Carl Gustav Jung, *Collected Works* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, Bollingen Series XX, 1953–1976).

5. Jung, 10:410.

6. Jung, 9(1):79.

7. Jung, 10:409.

"the Eden archetype") for the underlying pattern which manifests itself again and again in human experience. Cultural experience is subject to change, however slowly, with the result that the living archetypes of an earlier era survive only a dead mythology which no longer commands belief or offers the medium for living contact between the unconscious and conscious worlds in the psyche.

The function of archetypes then is to mediate between the realms of the conscious and the unconscious, and the archetype *par excellence* is Number. "Between them stands the great mediator, Number, whose reality is valid in both worlds, an archetype in its very essence." We are all familiar with the conscious and practical significance of number as a way of counting. As Jung points out, however, "... numbers . . . this side of the border are quantities but on the other are autonomous psychic entities, capable of making qualitative statements . . ." ⁸ In short, number bridges the familiar polarities of the quantitative versus the qualitative, intellect versus emotion, conscious versus unconscious.

The Way to Eden

In *The Way to Eden* we see a group of space hippies try to realize their dream of a return to our cultural prototype of paradise. Having stolen a space cruiser, they are apprehended by the *Enterprise* and taken aboard. Their anarchic ways anger Kirk, who as captain represents the military hierarchy of the Federation. Their somewhat bizarre unisex clothing futher sets them apart from the rest of the crew, as does their focus on play rather than work. Spock, however, is able to establish rapport with them, first of all by means of the circular hand sign signifying oneness with which they greet one another. On further contact, they discover and appreciate Spock's musical ability and find in him someone with whom they can play. Furthermore, whereas Kirk dismisses Eden as a non-existent myth, Spock is willing to search out its possible reality.

For the hippies, Eden is the goal of their search for the oneness of unconscious union with a fertile, bountiful, and all-embracing Mother Nature. Spock, appropriately for the resident alien on the *Enterprise*, feels sympathy for these young people who disobey the accepted working rules of society. By putting his research skills to work he discovers that there is a planet called Eden.

The outcome of the episode depends on Spock as mediator first of all between their ideal goal and the planet which the *Enterprise* visits. Eden, when subjected to actual investigation, is revealed to be quite other than the fabulous garden. Although on first appearance it lives up to its model—lush greenery bearing abundant fruit—on closer contact the hippies discover that the sap of the vegetation is in fact a harmful acid. They cannot leave their shuttlecraft without burning their feet, and, as the

8. Jung, 10:409-11.

leader, Sevrin, demonstrates, to eat the fruit is fatal. The Eden where there is no labor, competition, or need for order, no self-consciousness or responsibility, only appears attractive; in actuality, it proves uninhabitable.

"Paradise" comes from the Persian word *pairidaeza*, meaning not "garden" but "wall" or "enclosure." From there it made its way into the Bible as garden or orchard. As we see the final shots of the hippies huddled together within the confines of a shuttlecraft, we are invited to see that the paradise they sought is an enclosure constructed by the human mind, just as is the circle. Their dream of an undifferentiated unity without walls or distinctions is an idealization of unconsciousness and perhaps ultimately of death.

Such an idealized notion of Eden can no longer mediate between the conscious and unconscious mind, conceived as it is so exclusively in terms of unconsciousness. Thus this idealized Eden, one example of what Jungians would call the "paradise archetype," has in fact lost its archetypal function. In our time it no longer mediates but rather reiterates cultural values in stereotyped form. As such it functions to differentiate those who believe in it from the "others"; thus in human terms it alienates rather than integrates.

On the other hand, Spock, by using the circular hand sign, was not expressing a value but affirming a symbolic context within which his world can coexist with that of the hippies. The unity shared by Spock and the hippies was not based on intellectual agreement or moral judgment or even shared emotional state; rather it came from within the structure of the psyche and was based on currents and forces that are part of every human being regardless of time, place, or emotional state. Thus, through Spock, the circle could retain an archetypal function by relating a stereotype—Eden—with contemporary consciousness. In this perspective, *Star Trek* represents as much of an innovation as does Spock. It has taken historically and psychically opposed forces and placed them in a new relationship to each other. Whereas death awaits one on the planet Eden, the tree of life grows within a walled garden, and life goes on inside the walls of the *Enterprise*, within the structures of the human psyche.

The preceding article is excerpted from "Meaning in Star Trek" by Karin Blair, published by Warner Books. Copyright © 1979 by Karin Blair.

Karin Blair is a graduate of Wellesley College and has also studied at Harvard. She now teaches English at the United Nations.



How a 3-minute medical report saved 1,000 lives.

In early June, 1974, Dr. Henry Heimlich, an Ohio surgeon, developed a simple technique that could save people who were choking.

Later that year, Dr. Frank Field of WNBC-TV New York—an NBC Owned Television Station—demonstrated the Heimlich Maneuver on the air. The response was immediate—and overwhelming.

30,000 people wrote asking for details.

Police departments started including it in their training programs.

An insurance company mailed over a million reprints to its policy holders.

And hundreds of people wrote to thank us for saving their lives.

The Heimlich Maneuver was demonstrated and re-demonstrated on all five NBC Owned Television Stations. And throughout the nation, news media reported the phenomenal story of this lifesaving demonstration.

Any television station can cover the news. But we believe our responsibility goes beyond merely reporting the day's events. That is why we take the time to broadcast information vital to our viewers' needs—and, in this case, their lives.

**We'd rather
do more than
not enough**



**NBC Owned
Television
Stations**

WNBC-TV New York / WRC-TV Washington, D.C. / WKYC-TV Cleveland / WMAQ-TV Chicago / KNBC Los Angeles

Using TV Scripts in the Classroom

By PEGGY HERZ

Over the years, television has been blamed for almost every ill of our society. It has been accused of ruining our bodies, by making us fatter, lazier, and more passive than we used to be; and our minds, by turning us into nonthinking, noncommunicative, nonreading human beings.

Though I have written about television for 20 years, I could not begin to answer some of those charges. I have not kept tabs on the physical condition of the viewing public. I see more joggers and bicyclers and tennis players than ever before, but perhaps these are non-TV viewers who couldn't care less whether or not Johnny Carson is still around or which network is leading in the Nielsen ratings.

The charge that television has destroyed our ability and our desire to read is a different matter, however. I have spent these years working for an educational publisher. If television has spawned generations of young people who cannot—or will not—read, that is of major significance to everyone in our society.

Clearly, many young people have reading problems. Experts have estimated that as many as 50 percent of our country's students in grades four through twelve have some kind of reading disability. Many people single out television as "the villain" in this tragedy, and it probably does contribute to the problem. It is easier to watch TV than to read a book. The TV format, with its brief teaser and sudden plunge into dramatic action, is apt to be more enticing to nonreaders than the book format, which tends to begin with narrative background and takes longer to establish characters.

But TV alone is not responsible for the reading disabilities of our young people. Among the other possible causes cited as contributing to the reading problems of young people are:

- Visual, speech, or hearing disabilities.
- Unusual constitutional conditions, like dyslexia.
- Emotional blocks. (If reading at an early stage is associated with someone or something feared or disliked, reading becomes something to be avoided at all costs.)

Competent readers may be given materials which are too easy to read, thus, their reading skills do not improve. Or readers with disabilities may be given materials which are either (1) too difficult to read, thus com-

pounding their fear of failure and their reluctance to read; or (2) too childish in content, thus humiliating them.

Some educators point to less family stability in our society and greater mobility of students, as well as emotional upheaval, resulting from the increased divorce rate.

There are studies that have shown that students who are not expected to do well usually do *not* do well (the “self-fulfilling prophecy”), and some teachers do not expect certain kinds of students to do well in school (members of minority groups, students who are discipline problems, etc.).

Reading competence can be affected by such things as per-pupil expenditure, teacher experience and ability, classroom atmosphere and student-teacher ration, and no-fail practices.

Not enough parents set examples of reading. Some read only newspapers. In some households, even the newspaper has been replaced by morning and evening news shows on TV.

Reading no longer plays the role it did several decades ago. It is no longer the main source of entertainment—nor even of information—in the minds of many children. By the time these children reach junior or senior high school, they may suddenly realize that they can’t get *certain kinds* of information from TV when they need it (e.g. for a term paper), but by this time, they may be so far behind in reading that they don’t believe they can ever catch up—so they give up.

Reaching the Poor Reader

How are we to reach these young people with reading problems? Teachers have been asking that question for many years. One answer is apparent now, but when we first tried the idea 15 years ago, many people were skeptical and unsure of what we were doing or what we were trying to accomplish. The idea was to publish TV scripts in our classroom periodicals. The scripts would be adapted for the reading level of the magazine involved and would run a week or so before the air date of the show.

Scholastic Scope, our magazine for junior and senior high school students reading on a 4th- to 6th-grade reading level, regularly publishes adaptations of upcoming teleplays. “Students who may be termed ‘reluctant readers’ or ‘problem readers,’” says Editor Kathy Robinson, “insist upon reading aloud when the material to be read is dialogue. This is surprising when you consider that these students normally find oral reading particularly painful, because it means that their halting pace and inability to recognize certain words can be heard by everyone in the classroom. Oral reading, however, is a very useful way for teachers to diagnose the specific reading problems these students have.”

By the time *Summer of My German Solider*, *Dinky Hocker*, *Mom and Dad Can’t Hear Me*, and more than 30 other TV shows were aired last season, they had been read and discussed by millions of young people

(continued on page 52)



**The Company
That Entertains
The World**

around the country. Youngsters clamored to read the parts in class. Why? "Dialogue is usually easier to read than narrative or expository," says Ms. Robinson. "By assuming the roles of fictional characters, students often lose the inhibitions they have when they must read as themselves."

Once students read a teleplay aloud, they are encouraged to watch the program on TV. As a result, several productive things happen:

- Youngsters tune in to quality programs they might not be aware of otherwise. They come into contact with such literary classics as *Captains Courageous* and *Beauty and the Beast*. They also explore teenage problems and personal values by watching programs like *One of a Kind* (a teleplay about child abuse), a *White Shadow* episode about teenage drinking, or a *James at 15* story about cults.

- After viewing the TV shows, students often ask to reread the scripts aloud so that they can try for more and better expression. They have seen their parts played by professional actors and actresses, and want to try again themselves.

- Many ABC Afterschool Specials and NBC Special Treat shows are based on books for young readers. The increase in interest is evident by the fact that book sales climb dramatically after a book has been adapted for TV. Many of our readers read the teleplay in class, watch the show on TV, and then read the original book. Overexposure? Not at all. "Not to these kids," wrote one teacher. "It is one time in their lives when they feel important. They know what is going to happen and that only increases their interest."

No one would suggest that offering TV scripts to students will in itself solve their reading problems. There are many different, yet effective materials with which to teach reading. TV scripts are some of these "materials."

Just as *Sesame Street* uses popular television techniques to teach preschoolers some basic cognitive skills, television scripts of upcoming shows motivate both reluctant and disabled readers to read, and they build reading skills through a combination of practice and of growing self-confidence.

TV scripts have become an important part of the editorial program of all our magazines, and the demand for them seems almost unlimited. Here are recent comments from some of the teachers who have written to us:

- "Teleplays are an exceptional tool for teaching and motivating the slow reader. After reading the script and becoming part of the story, the students can then see it acted out on TV. This is excellent motivation."

- Please continue to run teleplays. Reading these is the only way that some of my students (with really difficult problems in reading) will read orally."

- "We enjoy the plays best, especially the ones which will appear on TV shortly after we read them. TV synchronization is very helpful."

A Joint Effort

Running TV scripts in our magazines has been a combined effort of many people. At first TV producers and writers didn't understand what we wanted to do. They were afraid we were selling their scripts (we aren't; our periodicals are sold only on a semester subscription, not by individual copies), or that the scripts would be performed (they are for classroom reading only).

As the years have passed, however, there has been greater and greater cooperation between the television and educational communities. Educators have worked hard to turn TV into a constructive classroom tool. TV executives, producers, writers and others have worked equally hard to foster positive relationships with the nation's schools.

TV may have changed our lives (our bodies and our minds), but whether we like it or not, young people are going to watch the medium and they are going to be influenced by what they see. Using TV scripts in the classroom motivates them to read, to discuss issues that are important to them, and to watch programs of quality. To the classroom teacher, the TV script can be an important tool for helping youngsters build reading skills and understand the world around them.

Peggy Herz is the TV editor of Scholastic Magazine, Inc.

QUOTE . . . UNQUOTE

"Television could, if we let it, electronically consolidate all of our culture—theatre, ballet, concerts, newspapers, magazines and possibly most conversation. It is a medium of eerie and disconcerting power; one college professor conducted a two year study that asked children, aged four to six: 'Which do you like better, TV or Daddy?' Forty-four percent of the kids said they preferred television."

—Lance Morrow in *Time*



ABC Television Network

Television—The Perfect Scapegoat

By EDA LeSHAN

When life is imperfect—and for most people it always is—somebody or something must be blamed. Today the blame is heaped on television. It is rich and powerful and it has us in thrall. In consequence, we blame TV for everything—crime and violence, broken homes, bad grammar and the hyperactivity and sweet-rotted teeth of our children.

All around me I see evidence of a terrible decline in social responsibility. Our cities are decaying, our schools are described as “holding bins” for children who carry knives and make their drug deals in the school yards. Libraries are closing and services to the poor and the elderly are being cut back. Congress, we hear, is responding not to the needs of the people but to the cries of rich constituents who worry about the government’s budgets.

Nobody, it seems, woories about the welfare mother’s budget, nor her inability to provide a decent life for her children. Sometimes the children drift into crime. The fault, we are told, lies with television. Too much violence on the home screen say the judges and the teachers.

Not long ago a four year old child leaped out of the window in New York. He had just seen *Superman* and was seized by a mad impulse to fly. Television was blamed for having promoted the movie, *Superman*, with film clips showing a man in flight without wings or a plane.

A juvenile murderer in Florida made judicial history a few years ago by pleading, in effect, “Television made me do it!”

During the last half century we have always found a convenient scapegoat. Life was terrible, times were hard, good people were cheated, the streets were fraught with peril all because of: the black, the Jews, the Puerto Ricans, the Mexicans, the effete intellectuals or the brazen homosexuals. Depending on your complaint and your social status, you zeroed in on one of the above groups and railed against their existence.

Now the old scapegoats are being given a rest—or at least a respite. Society has a new scapegoat now. Television. The boob-tube. For some 25 years now social researchers have made a splendid living compiling studies to show links between television and crime, television and low IQ scores, television and voter apathy, television and reading blocks.

Most persistent is the notion that exposure to TV drama bends young minds toward a life of crime. Not long ago I interviewed a 16 year old

offender, out on parole. I was searching for the roots of his character. What had turned this youth into a hard, unfeeling creature, caring nothing for his fellow creatures? In the course of a two hour taped conversation he related this anecdote:

“When I was about six years old, I was sitting in the living room watching TV when my father walked in with a knife and stabbed by Grandma. Then he went after my mother. I was scared. I ran away. I was put into a group home, and I can’t remember feeling anything from that day to this. Who cares? It’s every man or himself. I’ll fight and even kill to protect myself.”

There are dunderheads who will say, “Aha! The boy was watching television when his father came in with the knife.” Most likely, they will add, he was always watching television. It twisted his mind, left him unable to cope. Maybe he thought the stabbing was a TV solution to a problem. So goes the anti-TV rationale.

Anyone who has examined the lives of people condemned to a brutal existence in the slums recognizes that TV is not the villain in these wretched families. Often it is the only pleasure, the only window on a world of ideas, of love and compassion. Much of television is violent and stupid, yes. But there are glimpses of grace and beauty. There are stories that make a firm moral point.

It is easier to blame television than to face up to the evils of our system. We are not providing the social programs, the health care and job training that could salvage these families.

For me, *Sesame Street*, since its inception, has been the perfect metaphor of our refusal to face what is really wrong in the system. It’s all very well to have puppets singing the alphabet but what about our fire-trap schools with their hopelessly inadequate teachers? What about the agony of uprooted, alien parents who are simply unable to meet their children’s needs without firm support from the community?

It is easy—and shamefully evasive—to blame television for low reading scores and school vandalism. Though I respect the vigor and the goals of the National PTA and Action for Children’s Television (ACT), it seems to me that such groups are spending great efforts in the wrong direction. The focus should be on *educating viewers*, to arouse them to some meaningful action in behalf of the young people who will be welfare charges—or prison inmates—all their adult lives because we, their elders, are failing them. A concerned and caring public has potentially more power than the networks.

In my happier fantasies I see parents who are not afraid to say, “Candy and Coke are bad for you and we shall not keep them in the house!” Let the sponsors find products that nourish the blood and bones of children without rotting their teeth.

My fantasy also stars wise, caring parents who study the television schedule each night, equipping themselves to say, “No, you cannot

watch that program, Johnny. It's too old for you, it's violent and tasteless."

Parents have a primary function: to protect their children from harm, mental and physical.

Citizens, in a sound, working democracy, have an important function, too. That is to insist on social reforms, on health care for the poor and adequate schooling for all children. We are lax in our duty at home and disgracefully indifferent in our duty to the community.

My fantasies are irrepressible. Let us suppose that all who feel strongly that TV is debasing our way of life were to band together and promote a crash program in parent education. Let us enlist the best writers, directors and actors. Let us call in psychologists, social workers, urban planners, physicians and judges. Let us show the nation how the very poor—and their small children—are obliged to live. Let us interview them about the ways they cope, the indignities they suffer, the menacing nearness of death and crime in all their lives.

For too long we have blamed television for all that is wrong with our youngsters. Now let us use this glorious medium to get at the root of the trouble.

Eda LeShan holds a Master's Degree in child psychology. She has written 15 books on family life and was moderator of the WNET13 series, "How Do Your Children Grow?"

QUOTE . . . UNQUOTE

"Disparagement of television is second only to watching television as an American pastime. And most disparagement of television is a series of footnotes to Fred Allen who called television 'bubble gum for the eyes'. He meant that television is not nourishing.

"Most of it is unnourishing. But so is most criticism of it."

—*The Pursuit of Happiness and Other Sobering Thoughts*

By George Will

(Harper & Row)

Our Model 9000 is a winner.



We knew our Digital Noise Reducer was something special — now it appears the industry does too. We are proud to accept this coveted Emmy for Engineering Achievement on behalf of our Model 9000 Digital Noise Reducer.

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The Televised Past

By ERIC FONER

A few weeks ago, I spent three days in California attending a conference devoted to the docudrama, that blend of fact and fiction now so much in vogue on television. Among the fifty-odd participants were such TV heavyweights as David Susskind and *Roots* producer David Wolper, along with a host of writers, directors and network executives. There were also a few TV critics and a number of outside stars such as Gore Vidal (who angered his audience by announcing that he never watches television), along with four historians of rather more modest fame.

Like the rest of television programming, docudramas run the gamut from serious drama to soap opera, but most begin with the laudable intention of illuminating an aspect of the past. Some of these, like two shows re-creating the Entebbe raid, are thrown together with a haste mirrored in the shoddiness of the productions. Others, like *The Adams Chronicles* or the dramatization of Watergate, John Dean's *Blind Ambition*, are high-budget affairs, thoroughly researched and years in the making. *Collision Course: Truman and MacArthur* and *The Ordeal of Patty Hearst* typify, each in its own way, shows which deal with real people in real situations. Others, like *Holocaust*, portray fictional characters in a historical setting.

Obviously, the mingling of fact and fiction, history and drama, is nothing new. What is new is not the docudrama form itself but the insistent claims for historical authenticity that accompany it and the controversy these claims have aroused. Sharp criticism of the genre has appeared in the pages of *TV Guide*, *The New York Times*, *Saturday Review* and other publications. The docudrama form has been accused of allowing fiction to masquerade as history, of allowing writers to play fast and loose with the facts while retaining the veneer of historical authenticity. The critics are alarmed by what they perceive as distorted history reaching the huge audience commanded by television.

Not only TV critics but network executives, too, are uneasy over the recent flood of docudramas. In particular they are alarmed by a vulnerability to litigation arising from ambiguities in the law governing privacy, publicity and defamation of character. A docudrama on the Scottsboro case resulted in an unsuccessful lawsuit by one of the surviving white women in the trial. CBS settled out of court with the former wife of blacklisted newsman John Henry Faulk, who objected to her portrayal in *Fear on Trial*.

Despite quibbling by the critics and occasional lawsuits, docudramas are big business. Their ratings range from the spectacular success of *Roots* to the disaster of *King*, but most do significantly better than the average series. Moreover, television people believe that the claim of historical authenticity is especially important for promotion. Although historical fiction is a time-honored genre, networks, producers and writers all resist the notion that docudramas should be labeled and thought of in this way. The claim of truth, according to one executive, means ten extra ratings points, an important consideration at a time of the fiercest ratings war in television history.

It is interesting that many docudrama producers are ex-documentary makers who blend their respect for "reality" with an affinity for the larger audiences and freedom to invent which are afforded by the docudrama.

As one producer told the conference, "I used to film the outside of the White House and wonder what was going on in the oval office. Now I can imagine it." Thus, like the term "docudrama" itself, practitioners of the art are somewhat schizophrenic. They want the creative freedom of the artist but also the imprimatur of the historian, an air of authenticity without the full responsibility that goes along with it.

Despite these inherent problems, docudramas like *Roots* are in a class of their own when compared with what passes for prime-time TV entertainment. Historians, moreover, should be grateful that, at a time of declining enrollments in college and high school history courses, the docudrama boom reveals a broad receptivity to historical subject matter. Much of the interest in televised history is simply voyeurism, a video exposé of the secret lives of historical celebrities. But the better shows not only present compelling explorations of historical themes, they challenge the historical profession to respond creatively to the mass audience for history reflected, and stimulated, in successful docudrama.

Nonetheless, it is not surprising that many historians look askance at this particular gift horse. For the history presented is, almost inevitably, distorted. Compared to film, the medium of television seems to demand a smaller scale—close-ups, small groups, scaled-down sound—in its presentation of historical events. It is hardly surprising then that in so many docudramas, the dramatic space is reduced to a single focus: a historical personage, a famous courtroom trial, a family.

But the fact that individual action is highlighted and collective action ignored is not simply a consequence of the small screen. Even more, one suspects, it reflects the persistent hold of that peculiarly American strand of individualism on the writers.

In *Roots: The Next Generations*, for example—possibly the finest exploration of the black experience ever presented on television—political and economic forces are transformed into personal ones. Blacks are disenfranchised because a few whites stand to gain from it; black share-

(continued on page 62)

2 WCBS-TV

2 KNXT

2 WBBM-TV

10 WCAU-TV

4 KMOX-TV

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croppers get their A.A.A. benefits not by organizing a sharecroppers' union but through the intervention of Alex Haley's father. *King* made the black revolution the work of one man, *Tail Gunner Joe* made McCarthyism the product of a single somewhat deranged individual. If "the personal is political" was the slogan of the 1960s, docudramas seem to assume that the political is unfailingly personal.

Nonetheless, no one can claim that television is presenting a sugar-coated version of American history. *Roots*, both the first and second parts, was a powerful indictment of American racism. Audiences have been treated to extremely unfavorable portraits of McCarthyism (*Tail Gunner Joe* and *Fear on Trial*), a harrowing account of the detention of Japanese-Americans (*Farewell to Manzanar*), and the suppression of the American Indians (*I Will Fight No More Forever*). Several projects dealing with Vietnam are being prepared, and while NBC recently killed a proposed docudrama on the Pueblo Indians, ABC is dramatizing our home-grown holocaust, the experience of the Creeks and Cherokees in the Trail of Tears.

Although many of the assembled writers and producers at the conference insisted that there can be a docudrama without a point of view, or, in good positivist fashion, that an interpretation emerges inductively from the mass of material gathered for the production, television is, in fact, presenting a coherent vision of America's past. Recent docudramas are consolidating and validating for a mass audience the revisionist view of this country's domestic history which gained currency among historians in the 1960s, and is now broadly accepted in the academic world and increasingly incorporated into American history textbooks. This revisionist literature, a reaction against the bland "consensus" history of the 1950s and a response to the rise of black consciousness in the 1960s, portrays American history as filled with group conflict, racial injustice and threats to democratic institutions.

Television's point of view seems firmly ensconced within this revisionist consensus. Nor does it venture beyond it, either to the left or to the right. It is difficult to imagine the networks dramatizing Watergate from Richard Nixon's point of view, just as I do not expect to see a docudrama on Eugene V. Debs and the old Socialist party. Also, TV history is only selectively revisionist. If racial injustice is an acceptable subject, class conflict is not. The history of American labor is ignored in the docudrama, as is the experience of the immigrant. The fiftieth anniversary of the execution of Sacco and Vanzetti, the occasion of extensive coverage on French and Italian TV, passed unmarked by the American networks, including PBS.

Nor has television proved particularly adventurous in dealing with foreign policy. A docudrama on the Cuban missile crisis of 1962 virtually canonized John F. Kennedy, and the same approach characterized *Truman at Potsdam*.

The revisionist portrait of Roosevelt and Truman as deeply implicated in the origins of the cold war has yet to appear on the TV screen. Aside from Nixon, in fact, twentieth-century Presidents tend to be treated with kid gloves. The recently aired *Ike* did portray Winston Churchill as being more interested in confronting the Russians than in rescuing France from Nazi occupation during World War II, but it suggested that Roosevelt and Eisenhower would have none of this "politicization" of the war effort.

In *Backstairs at the White House*, a succession of modern Presidents are presented as thoroughly apolitical individuals, inoffensive and rather congenial, except for Warren Harding who, we are told, had a drinking problem and an eye for beautiful women.

Television, moreover, seems distinctly uncomfortable with historical material which does not have a finite ending. The ratings failure of *King* is widely attributed to its "depressing" denouement—the assassination and the program's suggestion that the racial problem remains with us. How much more uplifting to view *Roots*, "the triumph of an American family." Some of the emphasis on docudrama may, in fact, reflect an escape from contemporary social issues into the past. Even Watergate is almost noncontroversial seven years after the break-in; like the Vietnam War, it seems safely behind us and, thus, safe for television.

Another reflection of TV's flight from current problems, and one of the lamentable side effects of the docudrama craze, has been the virtual banishment of the documentary from network television. This is especially unfortunate since, by contrast to docudrama, the straightforward documentary has a clearly delineated structure of factual content. Its focus on issues rather than personal drama seems far better able to present the complexities of history and of current affairs.

Many current issues, however, are considered by television simply too hot to handle. First and foremost are those for which large and vocal pressure groups exist. Don't expect to see a show dealing with abortion or gun control on the air anytime soon. Or, as one reporter asked at the conference, "what have you done on the oil companies lately?" Even historians can be a pressure group, although their effectiveness has yet to be determined. The announcement that CBS is considering a production based on Jefferson's purported relationship with his slave, Sally Hemmings, has elicited a furious response from the self-appointed guardians of our third President's reputation.

Even more important than a fear of controversy in explaining the demise of the documentary are the almighty ratings, a consideration never far from the surface in any discussion of TV programming. Executives, writers and producers are unanimous in one conviction: "No one watches documentaries." (Of course, "no one," in this context, may mean 20 million people.) As Art Buchwald observed, the motto of the conference might have been, "Whether you are a producer, director, writer or historian, you have a right to make a buck."

This conclusion may be harsh, but it does point up a problem left unresolved at the docudrama conference. The writers and producers are being pulled simultaneously in three directions by the claims of drama, history and finance. If the marriage of history and drama is difficult, that of art and industry is even more so.

The fact is, however, that these docudramas *are* teaching history. My students' conception of slavery is more likely to come from *Roots*, their picture of McCarthyism from *Tail Gunner Joe*, than from the monographs I and my colleagues write. But given the present structure of the television industry, it seems unlikely that, however outstanding individual productions may be, television can fully live up to its potential for illuminating the American past.

The preceding essay appeared originally in The Nation and is reprinted here by special arrangement with that publication.

Eric Foner teaches history at City College, City University of New York. An expert on the Civil War, Dr. Foner is the author of America's Black Past and Free Soil, Free Labor, Free Men.

QUOTE . . . UNQUOTE

" . . . New electronic developments are creating a range of video delivery systems to the home. . . It is not fanciful to conceive of an opera performed live from La Scala to a *worldwide* audience paying the equivalent of \$2 a household to watch it. With a global audience of hundreds of millions of homes producing a gross of hundreds of millions of dollars for a single performance, the mind reels at the magnitude of stars and the caliber of musicians and designers who could be enlisted for the event."

—Les Brown in *The New York Times*.

* * *

"TV has become a sort of Muzak in most homes. It's something that's heard without being listened to . . . Video art can't become passive . . . It demands to be scrutinized and requires a full commitment—at least the same commitment you would make to a classical record."

—John Hanhardt
Curator of Film and Video, Whitney Museum
(Quoted in "W")



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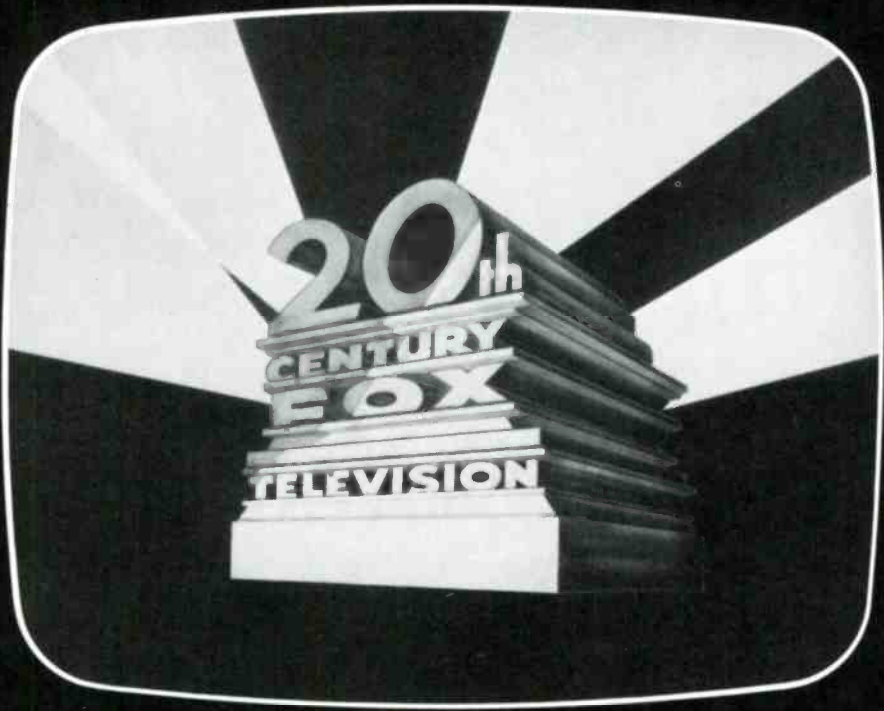
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Religion on the Tube

By RICHARD J. SHMARUK

Sex and violence are depressing enough. But what I find deeply dismaying is the manner in which religion is being exploited on television. The approach is hysterical and sometimes obscene. Some so-called religious programs are truly an abomination before the Lord.

The message of the Christian gospel is curiously muffled when wrapped in the slick packaging of the TV medium. Too much of the glitter, the tinsel, "the hype" of commercial TV is mixed into Holy Writ. This creates a hostile dimension, a show-biz aura that garbles and glosses the great writings of the Old and New Testaments.

Prayerful assemblies on TV seem to be taking their format from popular talk shows. Preachers are becoming actors, pop-psychologists, pitchmen for the Lord. Theologian Martin Marty (cq) has observed that some religious programs project a cabaret mood—"with women in long dresses with décolletage."

Guests on these sessions are frequently famous and include professional Good Folk, such as Pat Boone and Anita Bryant as well as born-again baddies, i.e., Charles Colson and Eldridge Cleaver.

Banks of telephones are provided on the set to prompt viewers who, having heard the secrets of the stars, will call in to bear their own souls before an audience of thousands.

A fiery prayer from the preacher-host, enhanced by the announcer's ejaculations of Amen! and Thank-you-Jesus causes the telephones to ring wildly. A viewer in Dubuque calls in to say his goiter is gone. A woman in Pittsburgh announces that she is no longer a Lesbian. The mother of a blind child believes TV prayers are restoring the little one's sight.

Lonely shut-ins and depressed housewives hear all these miraculous reports and begin to feel guilty. "If God is healing all these people, why isn't he helping me?," a woman may ask. Self-hypnosis, the power of TV suggestion soon takes effect. Soon the housewives are calling in to testify to unblocked sinuses and volunteering names and addresses to be typed directly into fund-raising computers.

The secret of all this, of course, is that people like to identify with what they see on TV. In the north of Italy there is a very popular show every Friday night consisting of a strip tease put on by ordinary housewives who are begging to strut their stuff before the cameras. It's kind of a bawdy Gong Show. The director of Turin International TV explained the phenomenal success of the program: "We used to have professionals stripping, but the ratings were not good. Housewives were clamoring to have a go—so we let them. It's television by the people for the people."

Some of our religious broadcasters are going after that kind of audience. And they're getting it.

The perfect irony here is that until now, churches were in the habit of accepting handouts from commercial broadcasting outlets—10 seconds for a spot announcement that "God loves you!" or 15 minutes of edification at 5:30 on a Sunday morning.

But all that is changing. Last year the Christian Broadcasting Network (CBN) spend \$20 million programming the gospel for 130 TV stations in the United States and Canada. And in another successful venture, something called PTL (*Praise The Lord Club*) is seen each week by about 20 million people in the United States and 12 countries in Latin America. By any standard, those are pretty good ratings and the commercial networks are watching them and other religious programming efforts cautiously.

Even Norman Lear has been probing the religious market lately. Shortly after his situation comedy about a priest and a nun in a storefront mission flopped, he bought the package for *The Baxters* produced in Boston on Channel 5 by Hubert Jessup, who won an Emmy for the show. There's got to be money in religion on TV.

Unfortunately, television stations were the first to become aware of this, and they've become increasingly reluctant to give away free air time for religious programs. The best time slots are now going to religious broadcasters who can pay. The result is the further commercialization of religion on TV. Producers of religious television will grab on to whatever it takes to sell their product by way of the biggest check-in-the-mail response or at least the best ratings.

Recently, the Archdiocese of Boston went over to a tasteful version of the variety-talk show format, which it now uses on Monday nights on Channel 27. In announcing the move, Fr. Francis McFarland, director of Boston's Catholic TV Center said, "It is not as slick as the Johnny Carson Show, but I think we should get 'A' for trying, and at least there are no commercials."

Meanwhile, the future of religion on television looks pretty scary. The *Praise the Lord Club* intends to produce some Christian soap operas and a religious takeoff on *Saturday Night Live*. There's not much left you can do after that.

Except maybe a pious version of *Hee Haw*—a romping revivalist's dream.

The Rev. Richard J. Shmaruk is a priest of the Archdiocese of Boston. He is a graduate of St. John's Seminary in Boston, with a Master of Arts degree in sacramental theology. He is associate pastor of St. Camillus Church, Arlington, Mass. Besides regular parish duties, he is a regular contributor to The Priest (a magazine) and to The Boston Globe and the Harvard Crimson.

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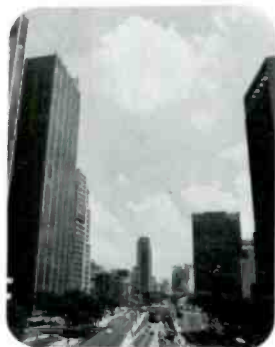
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QUOTE . . . UNQUOTE

There'll Always Be an English Critic. . . .

"As always, American television was a salutary reminder of what we are not missing. In the evening there are sometimes a few passable shows, but too much of what happens at night is like what happens during the day, and almost everything that happens during the day is like the end of the world. If only the quiz shows were the worst programmes, American daytime television would be merely disgusting. There are, however, the evangelists, any of whom is enough to make you fall to your knees praying to see a quiz show instead.

"In Chicago you get . . . Jimmy Swaggart from across the Canadian border. 'Two prostitoots off the street and they *knew!* They *knew* when they got saved. . . ."

"Jimmy, like all other TV evangelists, looks like the host of a quiz show. The quiz show hosts all look like one another. Each looks as if a team of cosmetic dentists had capped not just his teeth but his whole head. On top of the resulting edifice flourishes a wad of hair transplanted from the rear end of a living buffalo. A quiz show host is as ageless as a Chinese politician. . . ."

—Clive James
in The Observer (London)

* * *

"If we go for Shakespeare, we're elitists. And if we go for volleyball and Willie Nelson, we're Philistines."

—Lawrence Grossman,
President, PBS

* * *

"These are interesting times for talk shows.

"A few years ago the subject of politics always provided for interesting discussion on television. Three magic words—Vietnam, Watergate and Nixon—could polarize an audience. Now I have very few opportunities to get mad at guests, or for a guest to get mad at me or the audience. I miss that sheer excitement. Today, shows are a little blander.

"I hope public television doesn't become an intellectual refuge. It should be a place where viewer is exposed to higher quality shows than on commercial television. They have to be interested in ratings because of the companies that underwrite many of the programs. They must have something to show for their money."

—Dick Cavett,
Interviewed in U.S. News & World Report

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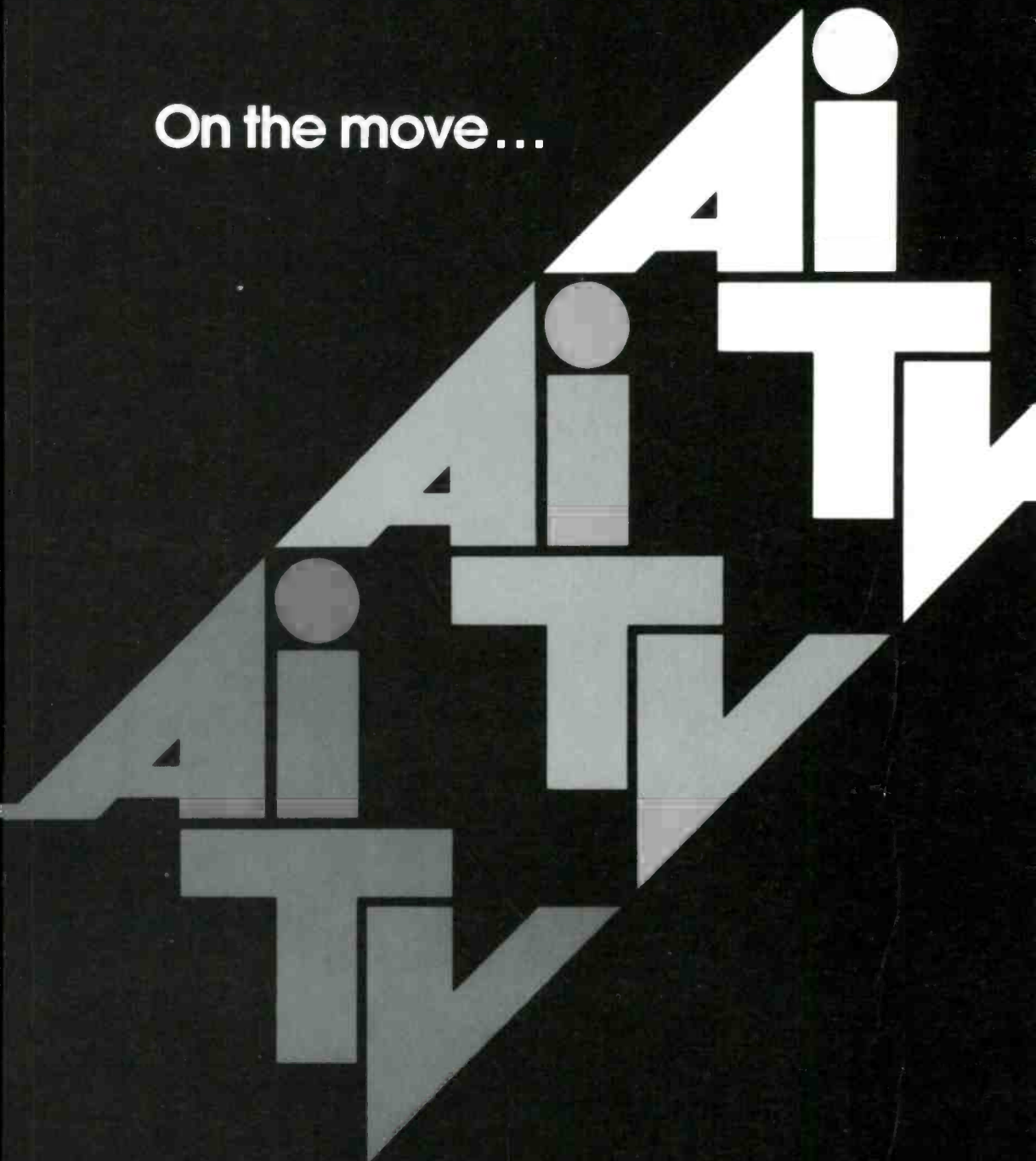
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QUOTE . . . UNQUOTE

"Children who have been taught, or conditioned, to listen passively most of the day to the warm, verbal communications coming from the TV screen, to the deep emotional appeal of the so-called TV personality, are often unable to respond to real persons because they arouse so much less feeling than the skilled actor."

—The Informed Heart by *Dr. Bruno Bettelheim*
(Knopf)

* * *

"Program piracy looms as a potential problem for broadcasters using satellites.

"An earth station can pick up and distribute programs being sent by satellite that it isn't authorized to receive. Such space age 'eavesdropping' came to light recently when an ABC sports program sent via RCA satellite was intercepted and shown by a cable TV system prior to the program's network telecast. Such violations can be either accidental or intentional. . . . In response to complaints by RCA and ABC, the FCC issues a stern reminder to earth station licensees that the practice is illegal."

—*Wall Street Journal*

* * *

"I hope the '80's will prove to be the Masterpiece Theatre decade, with a return to glamour and elegance in relations between the sexes. I thought I had passed the age for crushes but I have gone positively gaga over Alistair Cooke. In this heyday of fantasies, he is the star of mine. We are having *tea* in the Palm Court of the Plaza Hotel while a chamber orchestra plays Victor Herbert medleys and the theme from *Upstairs, Downstairs*. He is wearing a wing collar and I am wearing a smashing hat, circa 1910.

"The Masterpiece Theatre man has become a saviour for women who have no wish to frighten the horses. Would Mr. Hudson say, 'I'd like to get it on with you?'. Would Emperor Claudius say, 'Our r-r-relationship isn't v-v-viable?' I think not."

—*HE: An Irreverent Look at the American Male* by *Florence King*
(Stein & Day)

Television: Tomorrow's History Book?

By CLAYTON JONES

Now we have certain artifacts which we date from 1950 to 2008. We would like any information that you could give us on them. Very little exists. . . . At first we didn't know what this was [a videotape of Howard Cosell]. But we've developed a theory. We feel that when citizens in your society were guilty of a crime against the state, they were forced to watch this.

—A 23rd-century historian
in Woody Allen's film "Sleeper"

Granted, when it comes to TV sportscasting, some viewers today consider Howard Cosell a pain, others a pleasure. But will anyone want to watch him 200 years hence?

His shows will probably still be around then. In the last 10 years, the instant everywhere of television has become the instant history of the video age. In archives across the nation, stockpiles of television shows from 1948 onward have begun to be collected, indexed, preserved, and analyzed. Today's reruns may be tomorrow's textbooks on culture.

Want to compare *I Love Lucy* to *The Mary Tyler Moore Show*? Or care to see Dan Rather getting punched at the '68 Democratic convention? Or how about sitting through 30 years of commercials?

If so, you can just flick the switch at many of these new treasure troves of television history.

The newest among them may soon be the largest. Under the US copyright law that took effect last year, the Library of Congress will begin to preserve "the heritage of the people" seen and heard over the nation's airwaves. Fortunately, Congress left the choice of what programs to save to the library. And those decisions rest primarily with the new head of the television and radio archives, Erik Barnouw, leading historian of the broadcasting industry and a professor from Columbia University.

In 1975, before his appointment, Mr. Barnouw chaired a Ford Foundation group of scholars asked to decide which television shows would interest historians 40 years in the future.

"They wouldn't give up anything," he recalls. "They wanted the ads, the quiz shows, the promos, even the news interruptions." Eventually, however, the group decided on limits, such as only one week of daytime soap operas a year or just the premières of Saturday morning cartoons.

Representatives from seven TV archives met earlier this year to begin to coordinate their scattered collections.

"I regard the programs as works of arts, so we're a museum," says curator Mary Ahern, from one of the groups, New York City's Museum of Broadcasting. After opening in 1976, this video art showcase was mobbed. Of the 50,000 people asking to view TV oldies in two years, 35,000 had to be turned away because there were too few consoles.

The most sought-after shows at the museum are from the 1950s, many of which vanished into oblivion before videotape was introduced. Many Milton Berle hours are gone. For shows to be preserved in that early era they were filmed off TV sets. The copies are called kinescopes.

Drama classes come to the museum to see great performances, such as Lee J. Cobb in *Death of a Salesman*. Some viewers prefer early situation comedies, such as *The Goldbergs*. By adding 2,000 tapes of old shows each year, the museum hopes to build up a collection of 20,000 prize-winning programs.

Currently the largest library of commercial shows is at the University of California at Los Angeles. The latest addition: 115 Sergeant Bilko shows (*You'll Never Get Rich*) starring Phil Silvers. The eclectic collection includes almost all of *The Hallmark Hall of Fame* shows, plus Alcoa-sponsored programs such as *One Step Beyond* and those from Fourstar Production, such as *Wyatt Earp*, *Big Valley*, *The Rifleman*, and *Wanted—Dead or Alive*. Jack Benny left all his TV and radio shows for public perusal.

In the last two years, says UCLA's film archivist, Dan Einstein, requests to see shows have doubled. "People have discovered the value in television. Everybody thought it was a big joke. But you can look at shows from the '50s and see a whole social-political-cultural difference. Just look at the *Loretta Young Show*—old clothes fashions and old attitudes toward women."

Another TV archive at the University of Wisconsin consists mainly of local news shows and classic oldies from United Artists—*I Led Three Lives*, *Sea Hunt*, *Highway Patrol*, *Bat Masterson*. Although only "legitimate researchers" are allowed access to the reels, the number of requests—from London to California—is driving the staff "crazy," says archivist Susan Dalton. "We're booked 95 percent of the time," she says. "I guess television has come into its own."

Another large repository of favorites resides at the University of Georgia, which gets 700 entries a year for the coveted George Peabody Award for radio and television. But its reels from 39 years back are off limits to the public.

For news programs, the best source of video records is Vanderbilt University in Nashville. In 1968, when local insurance executive Paul Simp-

(continued on page 78)

Adding new dimensions to TV programming



WOR·TV New York
KHJ·TV Los Angeles
WNAC·TV Boston
WHBQ·TV Memphis

RKOG
TELEVISION
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son toured the major networks' news studios in New York, he was amazed to discover that evening news broadcasts were not recorded for posterity. With an initial \$4,000, he encouraged his alma mater to begin taping off the air—just in time to catch events such as the '68 Democratic convention.

Now, with a thorough index that can tell you such tidbits as when Angola was first mentioned on the evening news or how many times abortion issues were discussed in broadcasts, the Vanderbilt library can compile video "clips" by topic. Researchers pay \$30 an hour for the service.

"At first people thought we were crazy to keep all that 'stuff.' Now they realize that TV is the contemporary mass medium—with all due respect to newspapers," the library's James Pilkington says. (After trying to sue the school, CBS finally began to deposit Walter Cronkite's broadcasts at the National Archives in Washington.)

One impetus for creating TV archives, says the Library of Congress's Mr. Barnouw, was the realization that historians lacked access to the most significant shaper of public opinion regarding the Vietnam war—television footage.

"Like the printing press, television wipes out orthodoxies and spreads heresies. It is now watched from the cradle, and children spend half their waking hours before that bright object in the home," Mr. Barnouw says.

But more than news, the dramas and commercials shape new patterns of behavior, contends this author of a prize-winning trilogy of TV's evolution, especially those shows he calls *Paranoid Picture Presents*, mainly the spy and police thrillers. "Kids grow up watching the good guys beat the bad guys and think problems can be solved by being better at violence. Television creates an impatience with complexity and builds a desire to solve problems quickly."

"When [the late Indonesian President] Sukarno spoke before a group of TV executives in the 1950s, he surprised them by calling them revolutionaries. By exporting America's tastes to poor lands, they were helping the people rise up against their poverty," Mr. Barnouw says.

"What we consider junk may be formative. Shakespeare valued his poems more than his plays. And many people considered Charlie Chaplin just a vulgar little man," he says.

Researchers, too, are finding threads of significance in television beyond just the classic studies on the images of blacks or women in programs. One PhD thesis looked at the role of the private eye in TV. Another focused on the late Rod Serling, creator of *The Twilight Zone*. Others look at oil company commercials through the years. A few local historical societies have begun to retrieve local TV programs.

The new Library of Congress archives, which may not be ready until 1980 and even then will be open only to scholars, will rely on its 10,000

TV films already on file, plus possibly taping prime-time shows—commercials and all. The new copyright law gives the library the right to request tapes of programs that have been sold, lent, or rented—but such programs will have been sanitized of interruptions.

The Rubicon has been crossed, Mr. Barnouw says. Television preservation now is national policy. “No one is immune to its influence,” he adds.

Clayton Jones, aged 28, calls himself a “child of the television age.” A graduate of Principia College, Mr. Jones is currently New England Bureau Chief for the Christian Science Monitor.

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QUOTE . . . UNQUOTE

“Public television is very nearly the only serious broadcasting game in town. . . . But the system, if it is to continue providing a “marked contrast” to the commercial alternative, must be allowed to keep its primary focus on programming. As matters stand at present, public TV is wasting too much of its energies on financing. The system’s primary incentives are being redirected to the raising of money. And in that direction lies the formula for disaster.”

—John J. O’Connor
in the New York Times

* * *

“TV will not go back to the standards of the 1950’s. It is the responsibility of broadcasters not to allow a minority of conservative critics to act as censors for the majority.”

—William S. Rubens, NBC Research
Quoted in Us Magazine

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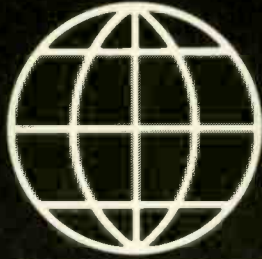
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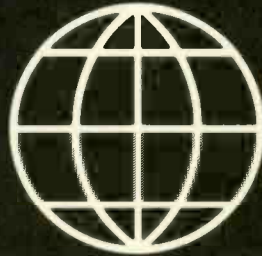
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