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THE JOURNAL OF THE
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TELEVISION ARTS
AND SCIENCES

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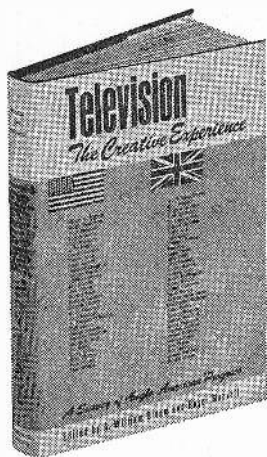
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CONTENTS

ARTICLES

The McLuhan Myth <i>Charles S. Steinberg</i>	7
Drama In Camera <i>Terence Hawkes</i>	17
Be Quiet, The Commercial's On <i>Gerald Weales</i>	23
Television, Soviet Style—1967 <i>Elmer W. Lower</i>	29
Documentary—Where's The Wonder? <i>Daniel Klugherz</i>	38
<i>In Memoriam</i> —TED YATES	46

DEPARTMENTS

Comment	54
Books in Review	58

MCLUHAN'S TUNE

Willingly or not, those who contemplate the phenomenon called television are discovering that they must write their lyrics to fit McLuhan's melodies. Politicians, educators, behavioral scientists and artists can consider his theories or ignore them, but it is inevitable that TV's critics and practitioners must take the Canadian philosopher seriously—if only to angrily declare that he cannot be taken so.

In this issue, a television network executive and trained social scientist, *Charles S. Steinberg* makes a frontal assault on the Toronto prophet and upon that cult which has built up around his work. The medium cannot truly dominate the message it transmits, argues Steinberg, and computers will never substitute for man's conscious and continuing need to define his moral position in relation to the condition of his life. Scoring McLuhan for generalization and for deprecating the contributions of serious communications research, Steinberg insists that most of McLuhan's observations about television are either useless, inaccurate, or both.

Terence Hawkes, writing from the artist's point of view, gives greater credence to McLuhan's pronouncements. In his essay, originally published in *The Listener*, one finds echoes of the McLuhan thesis that the new media should not be forced to do the work of the old. Hawkes suggests that what McLuhan has called the "implosive" effect of TV has fostered a drama which can hardly be limited to events called "plays." The unity of the Elizabethan comprehension of the world which all of TV offers, contends Hawkes, is not created by writers, programmers or producers, but by the medium itself. It is this capacity to impose a wholeness upon life which television, not its individual messages, can summon. It is precisely this quality in televised communication, Hawkes feels, that society needs most.

With less enthusiasm *Gerald Weales* supports another McLuhan thesis. Without mentioning the Canadian seer, Weales observes from his vantage point as a university teacher of dramatic literature that there is indeed some art to be found in the lowly and despised commercial. The little 60-second dramatic commercials have become the "last stronghold of the formula playwright," and the "thumbnail plays" contain characters and problems which are "no more artificial" than the longer situation dramas now being televised. The advantage of the shorter form, Weales suggests, is that the audience can effect release in less than a minute.

The views expressed by Hawkes and Weales tend to support McLuhan, and at the same time offer an interesting point for speculation. If individual dramas are subsumed by the flow of the medium, as Hawkes believes; and if the audience can find an emotional release similar to the experience of greater dramatic works, as Weales implies; than to whose greater glory does TV offer *Death of a Salesman*?

THE McLUHAN MYTH

CHARLES S. STEINBERG

As with most phenomena, it is difficult to tell how the McLuhan cult began. To his admirers, Marshall McLuhan burst upon the narrow world of communications like a colossus, flaying unmercifully the conventional wisdom of the old fogeys who teach mass media in the universities and offering the new religion of electronic technology. To his detractors — and they are increasingly vocal in and out of the academic community — McLuhan is all shadow and no substance, giving off irritating puffs of smoke rather than a hard, gem-like flame.

Harold Rosenberg's discovery of McLuhan's *Understanding Media* in *The New Yorker* is probably as responsible as anything else for the emergence of McLuhanism as the "in" thing in the current dialogue over television and other mass media. Rosenberg's

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name for it, "philosophy in a pop key," may well have been the genesis of the McLuhan cult. Certainly, McLuhan's converts have been few in the field of serious scholarship in mass communications, for most scholars in the mass media are disinclined to take him seriously.

His style and approach are neither scholarly nor logical. He has either discarded or reversed every conventional approach to the study of mass media. And it is not at all surprising that those to whom McLuhan would appeal are the devotees of pop art, high camp, rock and roll and the ritualism of the contemporary tribal dances. In a sense, McLuhan's is the popular philosophy of the age of the discotheque. Philosophy in a pop key is, after all, modern voodooism in which electric technology will ultimately extend our consciousness outward into the world around us. McLuhan has caught on, precisely because he is an amalgam of camp and voodoo, medicine man and lay divine. He is the high priest of pop.

McLuhan's thesis has the impact of a brilliantly contrived piece of advertising copy: "the medium is the message." It is alliterative, it sounds profound, it titillates the imagination. And it is categorical. Either one accepts this thesis or one rejects it out of hand. There is no room for ambivalence. To buy it is to become convert to McLuhan's pop philosophy, with McLuhan playing the piper and his disciples singing the tune. The medium is the message: this is the quintessence of McLuhan's creed as expressed in depth in *Understanding Media*.

Rosenberg has called *Understanding Media* a book about humanity, "as it has been shaped by the means used in this and earlier ages to develop information." But that is precisely what it is not. It is a book which, like all pop art, is curiously detached from humanity with the computer representing the modern golden calf. Media are amputations of our physical self and, therefore, non-human.

McLuhan's philosophy, indeed, is an alienation of humanism. It is regressive in that it stumps for a return to a tribal era. What the electric light has wrought is not progress but atavism, a turning back to a pre-literary period. The printing press was not a sign of progress, but an obstacle in the way of progress. It brought man out of the cohesiveness of his tribal period into a modern social fragmentation that has proved disastrous. What may yet save us all is the new electric technology. This will bring us forward into

a new, creative global consciousness which will ultimately envelop all of society in a pantheistic union.

Despite the fact that McLuhan's books are not conventional treatises on mass communications, one has the obligation nevertheless to approach them by using some of the conventional criteria. Of any serious work, the reader has the right to ask certain basic questions. What has the author set out to do? How convincingly does he do it? How valid are his arguments? How tenable are his conclusions? What are his recommendations?

In terms of these yardsticks, at least, McLuhan's hypothesis defies definition, not because it is brilliant and beyond criticism, but because it is repetitive to a point of dullness. It is an uneasy blend of neo-Freudian psychology, sociology and historiography. It is incredibly confusing in its citation of innumerable secondary sources, because McLuhan airily disdains to cite chapter and verse and the reader has no idea whether the idea and the authority are accurate or paraphrase.

Marshall McLuhan's "cool" world has been compared to the "other-directed" society of Reisman's *The Lonely Crowd*, but the analogy is false. Reisman's inner, outer and other directed societies have not only logical, but historical precedent. McLuhan's "hot" and "cool" media are mere labels for such media as radio or television. It is never satisfactorily explained why radio is "hot" and television "cool." They are what they are, McLuhan says, high participation or low participation media, but how they got that way is your guess as well as mine.

Nevertheless, McLuhan is a social and academic success and *Understanding Media* is a national best-seller. The success of both only serves to underscore the paucity of original thinking on the effects of mass media. Because there is no genuine scholarship, a spurious facsimile has found a receptive audience. This is particularly evident because the message is provocatively off-beat.

No paraphrase reveals the tenuousness of the McLuhan creed better than McLuhan himself. Fiction, for example, subverts fact while McLuhan tosses off some of the most politically naive convictions of our time. "It is no accident," he writes, "that Senator McCarthy lasted such a very short time when he switched to television." McLuhan would have us believe that "neither the press nor McCarthy knew what happened." This, of course, is political and journalistic nonsense. The press and the public knew very well

what happened. What happened was Joseph Welch, who peeled the hide off McCarthy in full view of millions of Americans. McLuhan either did not watch the hearings or he is abysmally ignorant of one of the most striking effects of television as a medium of mass communication.

Similarly, the statement is made that Nixon was superior to Kennedy on radio, but inferior on television, because he offered a "high definition" image on the "cool medium," while Kennedy emerged triumphant because his image had a "blurry, shaggy texture." Many political observers feel, on the contrary, that Kennedy's image was singularly clear and well defined. What is more revealing, however, is McLuhan's total rejection of what either Kennedy or Nixon had to say about the issues involved. The message is overwhelmed by the medium, and appearance obliterates reality.

Philosophically, McLuhan is a self-styled operationalist. "In operational or practical fact," he says, "the medium is the message." This is the cardinal point in the McLuhan scheme. Since the medium is the message, substance or content are not only irrelevant, but even to consider their importance is absurd. The electric light is "pure information" and best exemplifies the current automated technology which is "integral." The period of print and of machine technology, on the other hand, was fragmented. What we are witnessing is nothing less than catastrophic change — a radical metamorphosis — from a print-oriented to an electronic-oriented society. The phonetic alphabet and the printing press, which moved man out of his tribal Eden, were disastrous inventions, but there is hope that the new electric technology will return man to the sophisticated innocence of tribalism.

McLuhan's media go far beyond the conventional mass communicators, such as radio and television. Media are not only extensions of our own nervous systems, but extend literally into all phases of our society. Money is a medium, as are the wheel, clothing, the motor car, weaponry and the bicycle. These are no less media than the book. And as we move into the cool presence of the future, the world will tend to become anti-literary or even non-literary — a world in which pop art and the comic strip may well displace the conventional literary tools of book and play.

In a characteristically puzzling statement, McLuhan concludes that the paper-back book suddenly became acceptable in 1953, although "no publisher really knows why." But the fact is that every publisher knows why. The paper-back book became a best-selling

commodity because it was cheap, and readers who heretofore could not afford the rapidly increasing price of cloth-bound books were now able to buy both classic and contemporary books at a fraction of their previous cost. The why of paper-back books was discussed in depth by Kurt Enoch, who pioneered in this field, and by Irita Van Doren and a panel of critics and publishers in a forum on "The Future of Books in America," published by *The American Scholar*.

Few will dispute the fact that electric technology is having an enormous impact on modern society. What *is* disputable is McLuhan's conviction that the good or evil wrought by electronic media has no relevance to their content. They do not even function as conduits or circuits outside ourselves. They *are* ourselves. As such, the effects of technology "do not occur at the level of opinions or concepts." They simply affect patterns of perception. Print, for example, was responsible for individualism and nationalism, but this effect could never be determined by an analysis of print content. What, one then asks, *did* determine the effect of print? McLuhan unfortunately does not provide the answer, but it is clear that the print media — Thomas Paine's *Common Sense* for example — had no part in shaping society. By print media, McLuhan does not mean the great books of the Western world, but rather the medium of print itself. What the printing press issued pales by comparison to the effect of the press itself — which is another way of saying that the message is inherent in the medium and to hell with content.

The difficulty one has with this hypothesis is that it is beyond definition and beyond rational proof. One accepts or rejects it as one accepts or rejects any dogma. It is as easy to assert that the medium is the message as it is to proclaim that God is dead. Neither is supportable by scientific evidence and there is no method capable of reducing either to proof. McLuhan is in very close proximity to the religious mystic.

Similarly, the contempt for the content of mass media renders absurd all previous studies in both content and effects of mass communication. In such a sweeping generalization the contributions of Bernard Berelson, Wilbur Schramm, Paul Lazarsfeld and a host of other serious scholars are dismissed as the babbling of innocent children.

Although the publishers classify it as sociology, *Understanding Media* genuinely defies classification, except as a kind of off-beat philosophy of history. The basic themes — the medium is the mes-

sage, all media are extensions of our nervous systems — are endlessly repeated to evolve into a neo-Hegelian thesis and antithesis, out of which we arrive at a synthesis of all the senses. Or, as McLuhan coins it, a “synesthesia.” Thesis: Tribal society was integrated, functional and individualistic. Antithesis: The emergence of print de-tribalized man and fragmented society. Synthesis: The new electric technology returns man to a golden, tribal era again. Human society can look forward to a brave new world in which our nervous systems become extended into the electro-magnetic technology and “it’s but a further stage to transfer our consciousness to the computer as well.”

Now, a statement like this must either be taken rhetorically or it must be taken literally. If it is rhetorical, then McLuhan is enjoying his own private joke, while his disciples take him seriously. If he is literal in what he says, then the transference of consciousness to the computer can only mean a total abandonment of ethics and an abdication of value judgments. What we confront is a new theology in which the computer resolves — or explains away — all of the moral dilemmas of modern man. If the implications were not absurd, they would be frightening to contemplate. By this “technological extension of consciousness,” man becomes serf to the computer, which is precisely what critics like Lewis Mumford see as a real and present danger. In his return to tribalism, man would serve electric technology with the fidelity that society once worshipped the totem pole. McLuhan’s deity is the electric light and it is not electric technology which serves us, but toward which we develop “servo-mechanisms.” All of our conscious awareness, and our knowledge as well, are trapped in the entrails of the computer. The problem of free will versus determinism is, once and for all, resolved. But the price is costly. We are confronted with the spectre of what Rene Dubos has called “undisciplined technology.”

Is there an escape hatch from this dilemma? McLuhan is obviously uncomfortable with it, for he seeks a way out through art. The artist can save us, he says, but characteristically he does not say how. For art, too, does not exist either for its own sake or for society. Art is but another bulwark against the inevitable blows to our psyche. From Hans Selye, the medical expert on stress, McLuhan derives the notion that any extension of ourselves brings about a state of physiological numbness. But, as in the case of other authorities upon whom McLuhan draws, the analogy is both awkward and untenable. There are medical experts who would quarrel with his

statement that "the function of the body...is to act as a buffer against sudden varieties of stimulus in the physical and social environment." To say that art serves to lessen the numbing effect of technology is to take art out of the media category. It becomes a non-medium, a psychological barrier against the onslaught of the extension of consciousness. McLuhan's view of art is that it is, in short, not aesthetic but anaesthetic.

The reader is confronted with similar dilemmas in the case of literature, as well as the "orthodox" mass media of press, radio and television. In McLuhan's world of tomorrow, electric technology can do without literature — or literacy. This non-print oriented world "does not need words any more than the digital computer needs numbers," for literature and language will be bypassed in favor of a "general cosmic consciousness." Now, if the meaning of this kind of verbalizing is to be taken literally, it is obviously absurd. If it is meant to shock, as so much of McLuhan appears to be, then the shock is not one of recognition, but of bewilderment. What is happening is a complete consignment of all the values of Western man to a kind of nonverbal limbo, dominated by a computerized, push-button tribal society in which the medium, as message, simply exists as electric technology with no meaning beyond its own existence.

Since the medium is its own message, the literate man acts with complete detachment from emotional involvement. The non-literate individual, however, reacts with an explosive emotional charge. But how reconcile this with the great protest literature that has influenced the course of civilization by the very impact of its message to mankind? And, if radio and television threaten to make literature extinct, how account either for the proliferation of books in this television age or, for that matter, for the impact of at least some of the literature of motion pictures and television?

In the McLuhan philosophy, the answer is that print is moribund while television functions purely as elective technology and not as a conduit for program content. From a strict and literal interpretation of medium as message — and McLuhan gives no hint of poetic license or rhetoric — it does not matter whether television covers the news in depth, whether it tackles the great issues of our time or whether it presents a *Death of a Salesman* or not.

At the same time, and with characteristic paradox, McLuhan expresses the belief that television demands a "creative participant response." But response to what? The logic can only point to re-

sponse to the medium itself and not the message, in which case the response could be neither creative nor participant. Is the conventional wisdom absurd in asking that mass media extract creativity not only from the viewer, but from the purveyor of content as well? Do those who produce television programs or publish books err in their effort to juxtapose form with content? On the other hand, if content is to be ignored in favor of pure form, the consequences are appalling for our conventional way of conducting the whole business of mass communication. We need concern ourselves no longer either with the creative or moral effects of mass media. Electric technology — the message — is, like beauty, its own excuse for being.

McLuhan's presentation for this hypothesis is repeated so relentlessly that one cannot quite determine whether he is being deadly serious or perpetrating a gigantic joke. In his tilting with the conventional wisdom, he is a swinger, a cool man, an anti-establishmentarian, an advocate of flux and change. The status quo and the conventional wisdom irritate him.

But in the long run his separation of form from content and his deification of electric technology are spurious and self-defeating. Form and substance, whether in art or in life, defy dissolution. They are integral and inseparable. To split them arbitrarily is to deny either aesthetic or moral credence to either. Value judgments are "out" and electric technology is "in."

What is troublesome — and dangerous — about this philosophy is that it does not touch anywhere on the social, political or moral implications of the electric technology. Clearly, McLuhan has small regard for the ethical implications of mass media. The effect of communication for good or evil is irrelevant if the medium, rather than the content, is the message. Yet, McLuhan cites "concern with *effect*, rather than meaning" as a basic change wrought by electric technology. But effect with respect to what? We can speak of the effects of mass media in terms of the substance conveyed by print, radio or television. But what effect, other than numbness, can one expect of pure electric technology?

Even when McLuhan draws upon sex to drive home a point, he cannot escape from the consequences of the medium as message philosophy. "The open mesh silk stocking is far more sensuous than the smooth nylon," he says, "just because the eye must act as hand in filling in and keeping the image, exactly as in the mosaic of the television image." Those males who have an eye for mesh silk

stockings would quarrel with this erotic analysis, insisting that it is not the fibre of the stocking but what's in it that counts. And, as in mass media, McLuhan tends to neglect what's in it. The mesh stocking, like the electric conduit, becomes important, while the limb is relegated to limbo.

Throughout the book one comes upon opinions, offered with the no-nonsense firmness of a categorical imperative, but clearly rejected by facts. Northcote Parkinson, for example, is used as the statistical source to show that bureaucratic structures function and proliferate in inverse ratio of the work to be done. This is analyzed by McLuhan in terms of the movement of information, with total disregard of the simple fact that *Parkinson's Law* was a serio-comic commentary on the organization of 20th-century bureaucracy, and that Parkinson scarcely intended his book to be accepted as serious sociological dogma.

Although the expressed purpose of McLuhan's books is "to understand mass media," the effect is to obscure and confuse. There is no way to refute the claim that electric technology is "pure information without any content" except to dismiss this kind of thinking as semantic nonsense. The electric light is not information. Its function is to provide illumination and to convey information. It has made the communication of information easier and quicker, and perhaps more efficient. But it is not "pure information" because there is no such modality as pure information unless, in the final analysis, McLuhan is writing elaborate rhetoric rather than fact.

This constant subversion of semantics is what is both irritating and amusing about the McLuhan hypothesis. What he has structured is not a philosophic system, but a series of feints or probes. Some of these are extraordinarily provocative, but they tend to fall apart upon close examination and they bear neither the stamp of scientific truth nor moral evaluation. Who can disagree with McLuhan when he says that the electronic age has created "problems for which there is no precedent." But here again he confuses rightness of statement with rightness of reason. He has come forth with another brilliant half-truth, and it is this confusion between rhetoric and reality which is at the root of the confusion and the spuriousness of his thinking. It is not media which create problems without precedent, but the way in which media are used. It is not the medium, but the message, which causes concern.

In the McLuhan world, it's not the broadcast but the beep that matters. It is, truly, a world of all shadow and no substance. And, while it may provide a provocative bull session for campus cut-ups, it makes little sense to the responsible communicators who are concerned with the impact and effect of mass communication in a democratic society. Indeed, the final irony is that McLuhan must resort to several hundred pages of print medium to present his case against the effects of the phonetic alphabet. Marshall McLuhan envisions a brand new electric world, but his own approach to it is tribal and fragmented.

DRAMA IN CAMERA

TERENCE HAWKES

Probably more covert guilt has been aroused by television than by any other medium of communication in the history of our culture. Those who began by saying that they "wouldn't have it in the house," or later, by restricting themselves to only one channel, and later still to only two, have found themselves in a position of steady retreat; one which their guilt forces them to regard as a process of equally steady decline. A life of quiet degradation stretches comfortably ahead.

The guilt exists usually in the context of other, prior, and more worthwhile pursuits that television is presumed to overwhelm. Of these, two predominate: reading and conversation. Television is presumed to kill both, or to reduce them to a shallow and worthless level.

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To defend the medium against these charges in particular instances would not be difficult, but my concern here is to suggest that it is now time to remove the blanket and generalized charge which lies behind them: that television destroys valuable elements in our community and its way of life simply by its predominance over other media: that, although there are "some good programs," when we watch it we are in the long run betraying ourselves, our culture, our society.

Some obvious anomalies can be immediately disposed of. First, most of these charges are exactly the same as those levelled against books when print began to be widely used, and against the theater when it first began to distract Shakespeare's Londoners from their daily work. Most new media have to compete with the prejudices occasioned by the old, and much that is now said of television was, in its day, also said of radio. Second, the prejudices are those of a society committed to literacy and the skill of reading. In this connection, it might be noticed that reading and conversation are mutually exclusive activities in any case. If anything militates against conversation, a book does, and vice versa: you cannot talk and read effectively at the same time. In fact reading has, not insignificantly, many of the characteristics imputed to television, being genuinely anti-social in its effect, and destructive of communal activity; to read, one has to isolate oneself effectively. And there can be no doubt that the bulk of reading material available in the bookshops could be classified as undemanding and mindless, if not degrading, trash. Indeed, television can hardly be said to have destroyed anything of value that existed before it. It has simply filled a vacuum that was already there in most people's lives.

Nor does television kill conversation. It is, as Marshall McLuhan argues, a social medium: one which invites group participation—usually in a family group. If reading breaks up families, literally, television brings them together, in the same room, and encourages talk about itself and because of itself, rather than silent ingestion in front of the screen, although this is the popular guilt-dominated image: the stupefied viewer drugged into silence by a malevolent magic box. On the contrary, the medium encourages a kind of vocal participation which, it should be noted, formed a distinctive part of the traditional theatrical experience in Shakespeare's time (the interjected comments of the audience on a play and their "participation" in it was common enough practice for it to be included as part of plays themselves, e.g. *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *Hamlet*,

The Taming of the Shrew, and others). In effect, then "the theater" for most of the community has become television.

In most respects this represents a distinct improvement. The heart of the argument against the theater was its exclusion, in the manner of literature, from the realm of most people's experience. Drama is a communal art, and the plain fact is that the theater in modern society is just not part of the communal experience. A minority theater (a perfectly worthy thing in itself) has neither the scale nor the scope of a theater like Shakespeare's. This is not to speak of the Elizabethan theater in unduly rosy terms, or to think of it as a "people's theater", in any crude numerical sense. Only a small percentage of the population ever patronized it. Nevertheless, its audience and its plays were literally "popular;" the products of an amalgam of the elements of the culture, and an artistically honest projection of it. That theater can never be reproduced, but its true heir in our culture can only be television: the only really *national* theater our society is ever likely to have.

In the first place, the actual theatrical experience it offers is qualitatively different from that presently available in the theater itself, and, in its way, is arguably larger and more universal in potential. Indeed, it may not be impertinent here to suggest that the television coverage (in Britain) of the 1966 World Cup soccer matches provided millions of people of all kinds and levels of intelligence with their first really memorable experiences that could be called "theatrical" as well as literally national. Without being pompous, it seems reasonable to suggest that many people were moved at the time by crudely theatrical situations, to a degree that surprised and disturbed them, since they had never encountered such sensations in the "official" theater.

An important factor is that it is in no way unusual for most people to watch television: it forms part of everyday experience, and is met with everyday responses. There is little separation between art on the television set and life in the livingroom, or wherever the set is housed. Unlike the theater, its art does not require the abandonment of everyday important things like ordinary clothes, ordinary food, ordinary involvement with others, in order fully to savor it. One does not go "out" to watch television ordinarily. It forms part of real life, and merges with it in the way that drama most effectively does.

Of course, the Elizabethans who went to their theaters put on their finest clothes and made special arrangements to do so. But

the mode of that theater was different, in that it was positively theatrical and not literary. The action of the plays took place in daylight, before an audience which knew it was an audience, and whose members were not encouraged to think of what they saw as anything but a play: that is, not as a "special" or "artistic" event requiring a special artistic set of responses distinct from those of everyday, and thus separable from everyday experience; able to be discounted, as most modern theatrical experiences can be, as abnormal.

Indeed, drama in those days was not classified as art at all, and most of the audience would respond unselfconsciously to what they saw, without steeling themselves for the sort of special response which a modern audience, ironically enough, tends to accord to Shakespeare; a playwright whose standing in his own age was, as Alfred Harbage says, "that of the popular entertainer rather than the literary artist." The atmosphere of that theater was by all accounts as undemanding in one sense as that of a modern cinema. And the plays themselves, stories of palaces, kings, and princes, consisted of the stuff of everyday life in so far as the doings of kings and princes had immediate and telling effect on the life of everyone in that small society. Few plays of our own day command this immediacy, and no theater can compete with television in this respect.

Technically, too, television manages to avoid certain of the pitfalls of the theater. Its mode is far from literary and only rarely that of the film. In the theater a misleading sort of "unity" is imposed on events on the stage because of the effects of lighting, audience response, and the psychological and social pressures already described. But a similar unit of time, an evening, say, spent watching television, will have a quality of multifariousness within a much larger and more significant unity; that of the home, the known surroundings, the family or other setting in which the response to television usually takes place. An isolated pictureframe cynosure does not monopolize the attention, because the screen itself sheds light on, and draws to itself a known, because literally "inhabited," environment. Audience participation is encouraged by this, and by the fact that the members of the audience constitute a group who know each other intimately as a general rule. Such knowledge, such responses, serve to discourage the hypnotized absorption in an enveloping dream-like plot or situation, and to

stimulate, conversely, a more critical, astringent, and communal response.

In fact, as Marshall McLuhan has noticed, television has an implosive effect on a culture: a nation watching television shares experience much as a village community, and its drama is not limited to events called plays.

A unit of time spent watching television will reveal the medium's considerable inclusiveness. In direct contrast to the theater, where legitimate and music-hall modes of dramatic communication have long been artificially separated, television offers an almost Elizabethan comprehension of the world; it is the new *theatrum mundi*, the "Globe," as Shakespeare's own theater had it. For the television experience will yield not only plays as we traditionally conceive them, but also the larger area of "drama" covered by news bulletins, comedy shows, music, and other diverse activities, *in the same unit*. Agreed, the unity is imposed by the medium and its programmers, not by the writers who supply the scripts: but that is precisely the point—the *medium itself* makes for unity, for cohesion, or for disconcerting juxtaposition; that is, for the essence of the genuine dramatic experience. The play written for television gains from the surrounding events *on* the screen, whether they are congruent with it or not, and it gains similarly from the surrounding events and objects which are *not* on the screen, that is, the home background. The gain, simply, is the immense, fully dramatic and disturbing dimension of universality and inclusiveness.

Ultimately, too, television removes drama from its minority one-class audience, and places it before an audience similar to Shakespeare's in that it consists of a cross-section of the community. Its size, much dwelt on by critics, is its least significant aspect, because this is only a relative matter. The *effective* size of the television audience, that is the one involved as an element in that audience's response, is normally small, limited to the family or other group in whose company it is experienced. But, and this constitutes a major distinction, the writer and everybody involved in producing the program has to bear in mind the audience's *scope*. The finished products, like those of Shakespeare, have to have a wide appeal, and not just on that mythical level of "putting jokes in for the groundings." The good television program has a universal appeal built into it for sound artistic (and, let this be said again, these are in the case of a society's drama, going to be equally *financial*) reasons. The parallel with Shakespeare's theater is exact.

Finally, to take a broader view, television serves, as all communal art does, to confront a society with itself. That may be said to be the purpose of drama. It is a purpose which the modern theater cannot now fulfill. Indeed, perhaps no medium other than television could do so. For our society, in contrast to that of Elizabethan England, is a dispersed and diffracted one, in which unity tends to be more the invention of sociologists and cultural historians than a felt actuality. The effect of television on such a society proves at once diagnostic and remedial.

For instance, part of the experience of modern Britain, up to a few years ago, was that to live outside London and environs was to inhabit a kind of destitute limbo. Birmingham, Manchester, Cardiff, Liverpool, these were places in which nothing happened of interest to a London-centered national press, and in which nothing much could happen as far as a London-based intelligentsia was (and indeed is) concerned. Given this situation, programs as otherwise banal as *Z Cars*, *Coronation Street* and *Softly, Softly* served and serve the vital purpose of unifying and knitting together our national life; much as radio did in wartime, with its vivid welding of apparently diverse national predilections into a memorable whole.

Television's most significant quality, then, is also the one for which our society has most need. It manifests itself as the general ability to bring otherwise disparate entities together; to create unity; to impose wholeness on life.

Thus, not only does the medium bring people, regions, and even continents together in a unity of place; it can also, by various techniques, juxtapose past events with present ones, create simultaneity, and achieve an equally satisfying unity of time. And by enabling us to see disparate incidents—on other sides of the world, perhaps—happening together (this occurs in any news bulletin), it can impose the final unity of action. Television is truly unifying, truly communal, because ultimately, so far as its unities are concerned, it is truly dramatic: a worthy successor to the so-called live theater which it has so patently usurped, and totally undeserving of any projected feelings of guilt in the matter.

BE QUIET, THE COMMERCIAL'S ON

GERALD WEALES

The joke about television commercials has changed. In the old days, as a hang-over from radio, the comedian, if he took notice of the commercial at all, treated it as an interruption; the abuse that Alfred Hitchcock poured over his sponsors is a flamboyant example. The shift can be seen most easily in a comment on the commercial that Jackie Coogan made on *The Red Skelton Show* (April 5, 1966): "It gives you something to look forward to while dozing through the show."

This up-ended joke is a reflection of the new seriousness with which commercials are taken. Not their content, of course. Few critics really believe in the possibility of sounder teeth, brighter washes, sweeter-smelling armpits. It is the technique of TV ads that

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is praised, their compression, their willingness to experiment. Almost every article about Richard Lester dwells on his experience as a director of commercials, and suggests that *A Hard Day's Night* and *Help!* are, technically at least, extended commercials. David Karp, in the *New York Times Magazine*, insisted that television shows are supposed to be bad, and praised commercials and their use of *cinema vérité*. Stanley Kubrick is quoted in the *New York Times* as finding "the most imaginative film-making, stylistically," in TV commercials. Even Herbert Blau, in *The Impossible Theater*, stops to ponder the skill that goes into TV ads.

With so much going for commercials these days, I hesitate to express my interest in them. Yet, at the risk of seeming to climb on an intellectual bandwagon (in this case, one working a medicine show), I have to admit that commercials fascinate me. There are almost as many reasons for that fascination as there are varieties of commercial. I like to see character actors and comics I admire—both Hollywood old-timers and Broadway and off-Broadway regulars—at work, even when their bits are being used to peddle a product I will never buy. Some of their routines are genuinely funny, as are a number of the cartoons—advertisements designed to make me chuckle my way into the store. The musical commercials are attractive for on them one can hear snatches of old tunes (whatever the words) done fairly straight without the excess orchestration, the tricky phrasing they would have to carry on the variety shows. Dramatic musicals—like the Bold "opera" in which the two housewives sing with such sincerity about the brightness of their laundry—are as funny as Tolstoy thought grand opera was. Even the old-fashioned ads, the ones that hark back to television's early days, have a certain gruesome charm; as soon as I hear a disembodied voice ask what is good for acid indigestion, my eyes rivet on the set, waiting for the solemn non-doctor doctor to push Roloids and to prove their value with his marvelous Rube Goldberg stomach with the leaky faucet in it.

I do not want to suggest that, like Mrs. Joyboy in the movie *The Loved One*, I build my life around my favorite commercials. I can take them or leave them, but I find that I can take them a great deal more easily than I can most television shows. The comparison is unfair, of course, because of the time involved. An ad that is interesting for 60 seconds would be unbearable for a half-hour. It is not the brevity itself that saves them, but a quality which the shortness lets them sustain. What the commercials—for all their variety—

have in common is an implicit lack of seriousness. I do not mean that the men who make them and those who pay for them are not seriously intent on selling their products. The selling, however, has little to do with the actual content of the ad. The thing that is being said—that a particular hair tonic will make the girls flock around—is a kind of ritual, accepted as unlikely by everyone involved—the viewers most obviously. It is this basic premise of the commercial that is not serious; it is a game that everyone is willing to play. In presentation, however, the performers, the writers, the director go about their business with precise attention to the particular genre in question—the comic turn with the eccentric salesman, the violent or lovable cartoon, the fantasy (green giants, white knights), the pseudo-lecture (“I’m Arlene Francis. . .”), the dramatic situation. The audience repays this artistic seriousness by absorbing the content that they pretend to reject. They sing the commercials absent-mindedly; they repeat the slogans mockingly; elbow deep in dish water, they make jokes about doves in their kitchens. As with most popular art—the Western, for example—they are attracted to the myth even as they rise above it. So, doubting that their dandruff will be cured, their kissing-sweet breath bring them kisses, their housework be turned into play, they take the mythic long chance, shop the names they remember and make a joke of doing so.

Of all the ads, the dramatic commercial, the one with a simple story to tell, best walks the line between the serious and the absurd. Its plot is straightforward. The protagonist is beset by a problem (dandruff, bad coffee, rough hands, bad breath) which threatens his (more often her) love life, marriage, career, peace of mind. At the moment of crisis (the big date, the wedding, the flower show, the sales conference), someone steps in and suggests the shampoo, the coffee, the lotion, the mouthwash that will solve the problem. The good samaritan can be an outsider, even someone a little more or a little less than human. A few years ago, such good fairies—usually personifications of the product itself—were legion. Now, except for Mary Mild, the Irish-accented Mary-Poppins spin-off who pushes Ivory Liquid, and Wanda the Witch, who dispenses Hidden Magic, the breed is almost dead. Today’s dramatic commercials are in the good tradition of American realism and the daysavers are neighbors, close friends, members of the family. An occasional servant comes through—the complacent cook who assures the hysterical bride that her whipped-cream substitute tastes like the real thing—but she is a throwback to the family-retainer tradition which almost died out

because (as the commercials say) it is now so easy and so much fun to do one's own work (and so expensive not to). In any case, the basic dramatic unit is a small group—usually the family—and it is there that the problem is raised and solved.

The structure is simple. The commercial opens with a brief scene in which the problem is stated, and the solution offered and accepted, usually with reluctance. It can be done quietly, as though the sufferer is resigned to his cross, as in the Harry-and-George Head & Shoulders ad. In this one, two couples, having just finished an evening of bridge, are saying their first good-byes at the host's coat closet. There is some amiable by-play about getting the right coat which ends with Harry's sad admission that he knows his because it has the dandruff on it. His wife adds a pathetic note by moaning that he has tried everything. Then George suggests H & S, Harry says he has tried shampoos, George insists on H & S, and O.K. Harry will try it and end scene. More often, the problem is stated a little more hysterically: "George (that's a different George), I can't play at the party with these ugly hands." Occasionally, a real note of venom creeps in. My favorite is the Hidden Magic ad in which there is understandable exasperation in the husband's voice as the wife worries about her hair just as they are about to go up the steps to their anniversary party; if Wanda the Witch had not turned up just then it would have been splitsville for that couple.

Sometimes the exposition opening is done in two scenes, which lets the sufferer move from the disaster area (her home) to the supermarket where the understanding friend can make her soft-sell ("Well, I use...") against a back-drop of the wonder-working product. Even so, the problem and the suggested solution form a single unit comparable to the "before" of old-fashioned newspaper ads. There is often a bridge—the woman's hands going into the suds, the man lathering in the shower, sometimes an impersonal plug for the product—but the jump is a swift one to the final scene. This is very short, no more than two or three lines, and in it the problem has been happily resolved. As a result, good feeling spills out over family and friends. Sometimes the mood is joking (Harry thanks George "for slipping me that ace"); sometimes the delivery is tender (the Hidden Magic anniversary ad); most often, the last line is a spirited reprise of the product name ("Thanks to you and...").

The fascination of these ads is that they go for the standard responses that all problem drama works for and they do it in so

restricted a time. The characters, as in most popular drama, are usually stereotyped, but they have to be established within a line or two, which is a tricky job even though the stock types are familiar enough to the audience. The problems, taken at face value, are reasonably foolish (although there are people who worry about body odor and rough hands), but the motivation is a strong one given the conventions of the ad-world: social acceptance, the need to be assured of love. How pleasant then to have a problem presented and solved in seconds before our eyes. It is inconceivable that the breath not be sweetened, the hands not softened; the happy ending follows inevitably on the first anguished cry of the heroine. The commercial is the last stronghold of formula playwrighting.

To understand why these thumbnail plays are especially attractive at the moment, it is necessary to consider what has happened to television drama. There are three basic plays on television now: the soap opera, the put-on and the formula play. Since the first of these is continued, one problem feathering into the next, it cannot compete with the commercial because it lacks an ending, happy or otherwise. The shows that make fun of themselves, even those that are less broad than *Batman*, are so self-conscious, so intent on advertising their own sophisticated self-rejection (think of *Bonanza* when it is being funny), that they cannot compete in true lack of seriousness with the commercial. As for the formula show, the commercial's most likely competitor, it has to be faulted on two grounds, one of which is a virtue. The best shows tend these days to tell their stories obliquely, to deal in characters who are shadowy, uncertain, eccentric; there are few enough of these, what with *The Defenders* following *Naked City* into oblivion, but those that are around—even though they too work toward that inevitable happy ending—can hardly be expected to elicit the 1-2-3 response that the commercial achieves. The bulk of the formula shows want to get that response (problem, crisis, solution), but they fail by being long-winded. Most of them have simple plots that might be arresting for the length of a commercial (or even a little longer) but which have to be padded out with conversation, psychologizing, character comedy so that the show can last the required 30, 60 or—may the curses of the impatient gods fall on *The Virginian*—90 minutes. In the commercials, the problems are no more artificial, the solution no more arbitrary, the happy endings no more unlikely, but the audience has its release (I almost said catharsis) in 60 seconds.

TELEVISION JOURNALISM

As a result of civil outbursts during the longest and hottest summer to date, the relationship of riots to TV coverage of them has come under intense critical analysis. To some the medium is responsible for the smoldering resentments which precipitated such demonstrations in the first place, and to others TV coverage of riots has done nothing more than fan the flames. It is useful, in light of the kinds of charges being levelled at the medium, to consider some alternatives.

In a first-hand account of his own experiences in the Soviet Union, ABC News President **Elmer W. Lower** clearly implies that we had better stick to the devil we know. In his report of Soviet TV, prepared especially for *Television Quarterly*, Lower makes the telling observation that in Russia today, as in the past, "...a hostile demonstration that does not further government policy is not news."

DOCUMENTARY

The dilemmas posed in John Grierson's famous definition of documentary as "the creative treatment of actuality" are revived again by documentarian **Daniel Klugherz**, who argues that current TV emphasis upon "actuality" in the detached journalistic "Report" has resulted in a denial of opportunities to the creative filmmaker. Dry factual emphasis, writes Klugherz, minimizes the contribution of the true documentarian. Yet the life and work of Ted Yates, briefly honored below, may argue the opposite. A reporter first and foremost, Yates' work reminds us that John Grierson also said: "...we brought the artists along because they were fun and because we needed them, but *they were never central to our purpose.*"

TELEVISION, SOVIET STYLE — 1967

ELMER W. LOWER

December, 1963, in Moscow. Thousands of African students — outraged, angry and in mass protest at the Russians, marched on the Kremlin under the cold, watchful eyes of Soviet police. The reason for this unfriendly demonstration in a nation in which unfriendly demonstrations are not viewed kindly was the suspicious death of a Ghanaian student. This young man from Africa had been killed in a fall from a fast-moving train. He was, at the time, going to visit his Russian girlfriend, the daughter of a Soviet official. This compounded an already difficult situation, since African students rate very low in popularity in Russia.

The Ghanaian student was dead and the official explanation was that he had gotten drunk and fallen off the train. But the belief of the African students — who had felt racial prejudice in Moscow — was that their fellow-student had been pushed off the train, had been murdered. Hence the demonstration, an explosive situation, and one hell of a story for any newsman — or almost any newsman.

ELMER W. LOWER has an extensive and varied background in news operations. For six years, he was associated with *Life* magazine as a foreign correspondent. Mr. Lower moved to broadcast news in 1953 as head of the CBS Washington News Bureau. In 1959, he joined the NBC news staff, and was appointed Vice President and General Manager of NBC News in New York. Mr. Lower has been President of ABC News since August, 1963.

I was in Moscow that day, on a swing around ABC's European bureaus. Sam Jaffe, our correspondent in the Russian capital, got wind of what was going on and he and I and a very unhappy Russian cameraman working for our bureau went to the scene.

There were *no* Soviet television crews present. Under Jaffe's urging — he knows enough Russian to insult people in it — our cameraman made some film. A group of policemen came over to us and advised us that they could not guarantee our safety if we continued to shoot. "Why don't you cover Birmingham?" one asked acidly. So we packed up and went somewhere else and our cameraman made a few more sneak shots, and then it was back to the ABC office to figure out how to get the film out.

In microcosm, this incident reveals the difference between Russian and American television news coverage. We cover the story whatever the story, and if it means egg on our face, *tant pis*. In a comparable situation in Washington or New York or San Francisco, the Ghanaian demonstrators would have had trouble finding room to march because of all the newsmen on hand. We *did* cover Birmingham during racial disturbances; any one who wanted to cover Birmingham was welcome to do it, because it was news. But in the Soviet Union on that December day, and on *this* day, a hostile demonstration that does not further government policy is not news.

Soviet TV is an arm of the government, a medium of propaganda, and if the news does not serve the government it does not get shown. Since the time of Lenin, communications have been a tool. Lenin preached use of that tool "to imbue the masses of the proletariat with the ideas of Socialism and political consciousness." Stalin said communications should be used by the leadership "to convince the masses that the Party policy is right, to raise the masses to the Party level, and thus ensure their cooperation at the decisive hour."

Those dictums, of course, came before television or radio existed, but the lesson is still remembered. In 1960, S. Kaftanov, Chairman of the State Radio and Television Committee of the Council of the Ministers of the USSR, wrote that broadcasting "must profoundly and from all points of view explain the ideas of Marxism-Leninism to the Soviet people. . . must show how these ideas must be put into practical use. . . must mobilize the masses of the population for the struggle to realize the seven-year plan of the development of the Soviet national economy. . . must aid the Soviet people to become active and staunch fighters for Communism."

Today's directors keep that in mind.

I was in Russia most recently in late May and early June of this year. Soviet television had gotten much bigger. On my first trip there in 1961, I was struck by the many TV aerials along the way from the airport into Moscow. Now, six years later, that row of saplings had grown into a forest of aerials, extending far into the hinterland. I made a trip into Soviet Central Asia, visited Samarkand, Tashkent, Bukhara. In the most primitive areas, almost every adobe hut had its aerial, and I wondered at the magnetic attraction of our medium, an attraction that induces even the remotest peoples to allocate months of pay for the little box with the pictures.

There are 20 million TV sets in Russia today, and nearly five million more will be in use before the year is out. Only eight years ago, there were three million sets. Russia has 123 local TV stations transmitting 900 hours a day. In 1959, there were 40 stations. Moscow, not too many years ago, had two channels. Now there are three, including one devoted to education.

The tallest television tower in the world has just been built in Moscow, and programs are transmitted by satellite from Moscow to Vladivostok. Within a year, color TV will be available to many. Technically, Soviet TV is on the march.

What comes out of all this? Roughly, more than 85 per cent is propaganda — information on economic advances, detailed until it reels the mind; official reportage on current events; “news” reportage of the United States devoted largely to strikes; contrasts between the rich and the poor; American “aggression” in Vietnam; and successes in the Soviet factories and collective farms. In the hours devoted to entertainment, there are delightful puppet plays for children, costume dramas, ballet, concerts. But, by and large, the programming is heavy, heavy, heavy...and censored.

Back in 1960, when Mr. Khrushchev thumped the table and waved his shoe at the United Nations, the Soviet audience never saw that. They did see films of his speech, and the Soviet bloc applause that followed. They did not see a pan of those delegates of more than 80 nations who viewed the shenanigans silently or with disapproval. During the recent United Nations debate on the Mideast crisis, there was similar “selective” coverage.

Kyрил Tidmarsh, writing from Moscow for the British press, reported recently on two Russian reporters who posed as TV repairmen to learn what the viewer really thought of what they were getting. They found one young unmarried woman who had a set as a status symbol, but seldom turned it on. And a housekeeper who

kept her set on all the time, but complained that there was nothing worth watching. And a salesman who kept his set on in the hope, realized once in a while, that he'd hear pop music. And the sports fan who hurried home for his favorite contests. The prevalent complaint was that the programming was dull, dull, dull.

"Above all," Tidmarsh wrote, "people want less persuasion and more entertainment, and there is a shrewd suspicion that it is being kept from them."

In permitting coverage of the Soviet Union by foreigners, the Russians use the same touchstone as in domestic programming. If it is believed the story to be filmed will improve the Russian image, permission probably will be granted to make it. If there is some question as to whether the film will be useful, there may be one great big stall.

Brian Nolan, a gifted young producer who recently came to ABC from Canadian television, tells of his experience with the Russians. Ice hockey is big in Canada and the Soviet Union, too. Nolan opened negotiations with the Russians to shoot a story on ice hockey in the Soviet Union. "We wrote back and forth for two and a half years," Nolan recalls. "The file was still growing when I moved on to New York."

We have had some success in filming documentaries in the Soviet Union. Jules Power has gotten cooperation a number of times in doing shows for our *Discovery* program, which is especially for children seven to twelve years old. John Secondari scored both with "Comrade Student" and "The Russian Woman." Earlier this year, we had a fine hour in Desmond Smith's "Ivan Ivanovich," a filmed portrait of a Soviet family living in Rostov-on-Don. We insist on maintaining absolute control of what goes on the air here, and we do. The shows we have come up with have been both educational and entertaining.

Arrangements for shooting "Ivan Ivanovich" were made through Novosti, the Soviet News Agency in Moscow. Understandably, in the Soviet frame of reference, Novosti wanted a shooting outline in advance, but once that had been okayed the wraps were off. Rostselmash factory, the biggest combine-harvester factory in the Soviet Union, gave producer Des Smith and George Watson, our Moscow correspondent, the choice of several families to film. The family selected was our choice. In the five weeks of filming that followed, Des and his crew and the family of Vladimir Maltsev, who were featured, formed a lasting friendship.

A representative of Novosti was with our film crew at all times. But all of our color film went out of the country undeveloped and uncensored. Novosti opened factory and department store doors, provided planes and cars for travel, and was endlessly helpful in providing props and technical help. There were lots of parties and much vodka. When the film was completed, we showed it to Novosti so that they could comment on the factual accuracy of our script.

There is reciprocity, of course. As far back as 1959, when I was with NBC in Washington, the Russians asked NBC for help with their TV coverage of the Khrushchev visit to the U.S. We found technicians and equipment for the Russians, and the tab we paid was a big one, but it was worthwhile. ABC has opened the doors to visiting Russians more than once.

I believe in opening doors. At Hollybush, in Glassboro, Mr. Johnson and Mr. Kosygin didn't tell each other everything, but the meeting was useful. So, too, are professional television contacts.

About that film made in Red Square when the African students demonstrated in December, 1963. Sam Jaffe and I made elaborate plans for getting it out of the Soviet Union. As it turned out, our efforts were in vain: my luggage wasn't even checked.

The following brief overview of the development of television in Eastern Europe was first published in the magazine East Europe in late 1966, and is included here by permission of the publisher, Free Europe, Inc.

TELEVISION IN EASTERN EUROPE

The Magic Box has come to eastern Europe. Almost half the households in East Germany and Czechoslovakia now have TV sets, and the other countries are well on their way. The first two, with about 15 sets per 100 citizens, are on a par with West Germany two years ago; Poland and Hungary (6.6 per 100) are at the same level as Austria and Switzerland two years ago; while Yugoslavia, Rumania and Bulgaria (about 2 per 100) are roughly comparable with Spain and Portugal two years ago.*

Most of the sets are in the larger cities, and the broadcast coverage is correspondingly limited. The Bulgarians, for example, state that they can now reach only 15-20 per cent of the country at most, although they are aiming at a nationwide system by 1970. The head of the Polish TV network admits that both TV and radio still play a secondary role to the press in the villages. Nevertheless, producers in all of the countries are already expressing concern over the inevitable competition between television and radio programming.

In communist countries, TV is a child of the state, and one reason for its relatively quick development is its obvious effectiveness as a propaganda medium. An article in the theoretical journal of the Hungarian communists put it quite bluntly: "Television, radio and the press are the best tools for agitation and propaganda. They must always strive to inform at the right time, with the needed political decisiveness and purpose in a perseveringly Marxist spirit; they must comment on and explain the policies of our party and alert people to their tasks. . . . TV program editors should realize that they do not work for experts, but for the broad public. . . . They must always figure with the political effect on the masses." (*Tarsadalmi Szemle* [Budapest], April 1965.)

To which Politburo member Istvan Szirmai added: "Radio and television will have to put more emphasis than they have in the past on the problems of work discipline, work mores, and social responsibility. . . to take on the war against nihilism, negativism and pessimism."

This means that east European viewers get a certain minimum of socially conscious material in the form of documentaries, discussions of party decisions, and seminars on the shortcomings of collective farms or the problems of the factory crew. Along with such ideological and documentary fare, there are a lot of language courses, scientific lectures and other educational programs.

*The United States had 33 per 100 in 1963, Britain, Sweden and Canada 24, Denmark 20.

FROM SOCCER TO PERRY MASON

Yet such serious stuff by no means exhausts the schedule. There is a surprising variety of other programs, though quality is another question. On weekends there are movies, sports (often live international transmissions), concerts or popular musical revues (often live), and live drama (often from the theaters). Over the Christmas weekend in Poland, for instance, viewers had six full-length films (two American, one English, one Italian, one Danish, and one Yugoslav), two Polish serials (travel and cops-and-robbers), four stage shows adapted from Polish plays, several quiz panels, and concerts ranging from Juliette Greco to a boys' choir.

The east Europeans have turned to American producers for material to fill out their schedules (as did the west Europeans five or six years ago). NBC, CBS, and ABC have all announced substantial sales in recent months (but not to the USSR). *Perry Mason* and *The Defenders* will now be arguing their briefs in Polish; Jackie Gleason and Dr. Kildare will be dramatizing the American way of life in Czech or Slovak; Dr. Ben Casey is going to Yugoslavia; and the Rumanians will be watching *Danger Is My Business*.

Czechoslovakia has also purchased *87th Precinct*, *Wild Kingdom*, the *Dinah Shore Show*, the *Dick Powell Show*, and specials entitled "The French Revolution," "Mark Twain's America," and "An Essay on Bridges." Poland took *Playhouse 90*, "The Swinging World of Sammy Davis, Jr.," "JFK Remembered," "Casals at 88," Leonard Bernstein's *Young People's Concerts*, and a documentary on Van Gogh. Hungary and Bulgaria respectively bought specials on William Shakespeare and Ernest Hemingway, and *Expedition*. Yugoslavia has outdone them all by buying *Bonanza*, *Medic*, the *Dick Powell Show*, *Laramie*, *The Twentieth Century*, *You Are There*, *Conquest*, and *Air Power*. This list does not even begin to cover sales by other producers such as Screen Gems (movies), nor sales by European producers. Hungary, for example, frequently buys films from Swedish and Japanese networks; both Bulgaria and East Germany have broadcast a British Robin Hood series, etc.

EAST AND WEST

No country in Europe can expect to be self-sufficient in the TV field. Western Europe has its European network (to which Yugoslavia belongs), and eastern Europe has Intervisio (to which Yugoslavia does not belong). Intervisio cables link all of the capitals, including Moscow, and many provincial cities. A big event like a May Day parade in Moscow or a sports festival in Prague gets televised all over the bloc. In addition, there is growing cooperation with Eurovision: in 1962, Intervisio carried 37 Eurovision programs; but within the first half of 1964 it took 108 (while Eurovision broadcast 44 that originated in the eastern hookup). Most of these imports and exports have been cultural programs or sports events.

Representatives of the two groups met in Prague in January, 1966, but the meeting seemed to emphasize the obstacles to cooperation as much as the progress achieved. According to *Mlada Fronta* (Prague, January 21), the Eurovision representatives were reluctant to commit their members to exporting more cultural programs because of royalty problems. On a more positive note, "it was agreed that the regular exchange of news programs would continue and that all news and features should...avoid all remnants of the cold war." Some of the programs originating in the West come from the United States via the communications satellites and Eurovision. The two groups also regularly exchange documentary and feature films; and Eurovision representatives will preview Intervision films at the Prague TV Festival in March.

A great deal of the international cooperation in television works out in practice to be bilateral cooperation in programming, both among the east European countries and between individual countries, East and West. Czechoslovakia is especially active in this with its Telexport agency, set up in November, 1964; within the first three months of its existence, for example, Telexport had arranged contracts to do four films with West German TV studios and one with Austrian television. (*Vecerni Praha* [Prague], March 12, 1965.)

PROGRAMMING

A survey of program schedules shows that east European viewers get a fairly wide variety of material, depending on where they live and on what their antennas can pick up. In Poland, the ratio of entertainment programs to news and commentaries is 5:1, and about 30 per cent of the time is devoted to light entertainment such as stage shows and quizzes, 11.7 per cent to news and commentary, and 11.7 per cent to educational programs. In East Germany, 18 per cent of the hours broadcast in 1964 were movies and plays, another 18 per cent reports, news and documentaries, 13 per cent sports, 13 per cent music and dance, and 11 per cent children's shows—all in all 72 per cent of the total. In addition to this, TV owners in much of East Germany are able to tune in West German channels.

YUGOSLAVIA

In hours broadcast in 1964, Yugoslavia concentrated a full 40 per cent on political and other events, information, current themes, and "reports"—a wide category which can include news and documentaries as well as propaganda programs per se. Another 20 per cent was given to movies, 12 per cent to light and serious music, quizzes or humor shows, 10 per cent to children's programs, and 8 per cent to sports. But the Yugoslavs can also tune in on Austrian and Italian television, and Studio Zagreb actually transmits programs from the Italian and Austrian networks. Yugoslav newspapers also give schedules for the foreign broadcasts. Supposedly it would be technically easy to jam television, but none of the east European

governments seem to have found it worth the effort. Even in Albania (where there are probably no more than 500 sets), Italian and Yugoslav programs reportedly come in well.

CZECHOSLOVAKIA

Likewise, Czechs, Slovaks and Hungarians living in border regions can and do pick up West German and Austrian broadcasts. As for domestic programming, 26 per cent of the shows in Czechoslovakia in 1963 were news reports and 5 per cent were films (3:2 Czechoslovak:foreign); in terms of hours, the two categories must have been much more on a par. Another 3 per cent of the Czechoslovak programs at that time were original TV performances either in dance, music, or drama, 5 per cent were popular science, and 3 per cent were sports.

HUNGARY

When asked their preferences, Hungarian TV viewers generally give first place to news films, followed by theater, sports events, and movies in that order. Within the last two years, the Hungarian government has been especially concerned with improving its news reporting—to provide both wider coverage and more up-to-the-minute reports. In October, 1965, news editors admitted that “contacts with abroad are complicated,” but indicated that they were using 18–20 minutes of foreign material a day, including stills from London and Eurovision material. Live theater transmissions are on the rise in Hungary and now average six to eight a week-end from Budapest, the provinces, and even from abroad. In addition, about 20 per cent of the time on the air is given over to movies and short films, nearly two-thirds of which are foreign.

RUMANIA, BULGARIA

Rumania, which has only 26 hours of TV a week, allots 19 per cent of the time to music and only 12 to news. Of the remainder, 18 per cent goes to youth, the same to films, 9 per cent to theater, 8 per cent to sports, and the remainder to various programs for women, peasants, booklovers, etc. Bulgaria, which also broadcasts for 26 hours, allots 15 per cent of the time to music and 12 to news; another 22 per cent goes to documentaries, 10 per cent to languages and literature, 11 per cent to children's programs, and 8 per cent to sports.

DOCUMENTARY— WHERE'S THE WONDER?

DANIEL KLUGHERZ

Documentary film has had an uneven history on television. At the outset, in the late 40's, documentary was relegated to a subordinate role, appearing in the form of "classics" that were really more at home on a theater screen. In the 50's, documentary began to be an integral part of programming; American documentary, which had always lacked a consistent sponsor, had at last found one in television. The early 60's was a period of discovery during which *cinema vérité* infused new life into the documentary form and opened a wide range of subjects to more authentic representation. But the 60's has also burdened documentary with an unending demand for program material. New subjects are becoming harder to find and *cinema vérité*, so fresh a few years ago, seems already overused. Today the documentary seems to be drying up, both in style and in content—in danger of becoming as formulated as the network situation comedy.

DANIEL KLUGHERZ began his film and documentary career as a cameraman, writer and director for the Signal Corps. After the war, he continued his work in film and was responsible for several *Twentieth Century* shows. Since 1963, Mr. Klugherz has been associated with National Educational Television as a film producer. His credits for NET include "Marked for Failure," which was cited in the 1965 Peabody Award to NET.

Symptomatic of the current predicament is a growing tendency to confine the documentary to one form—The Report. The Report, so the announcement goes, is “produced under the supervision and control” of the news department. This type of documentary is essentially a straight-forward journalistic statement. It depends heavily upon a network correspondent, his interviews with experts, the recitation of facts and figures and, finally, a summary of the pros and cons with, perhaps, some answers.

“The Report” may be an effective means of conveying an idea through narration with pictures to illustrate. What “The Report” does not do is exploit the art of film as a means of heightening experience.

The most impressive film on the Vietnam war, the one which has had the strongest impact, drew upon the classical documentary technique. *Mills of the Gods*, produced by Beryl Fox for the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, used montage, weaving images and sounds into impressions; underscored mood with music; and moved from sequence to sequence intuitively, searching for and finding its own dramatic shape. Even the observation and analysis by the late Bernard Fall did not disturb the emotional texture of the work which aimed at showing how the war affected the civilian and the soldier. The film was subtly critical of American policy but transcended its bias by virtue of its intense personal observation. Because it was artistic, it was also powerful; one received a sharper sense of the war than from any other film report thus far. The program went behind the headlines and the expert’s analysis to give an interpretation that stirred curiosity and created wonder long after the program was over.

Tucked away within the network news departments, competing with hard news, the documentary is being given too few opportunities to explore its potential. Occasionally the creative documentarian has been allowed to play in a limited area—to produce light essays. But for the most part a news-minded attitude has dictated that documentary be pretty straight reporting.

If documentary is to be regarded as a form of news for the convenience of television organization, it is important to stress a fundamental difference between the news and documentary approach. The correspondent may cover a story in depth but he is primarily interested in gathering facts. The documentarian, after understanding the facts, spends time—hangs around, not quite knowing what

specifics may turn up. He looks for the expressive personality, the situation that catches the spirit of what he is after. As far as possible, he keeps his story from being too well-defined too early, allowing the aspects that seem true to gather up and announce their validity as film. He thinks in the language of film, finding what transmits well in picture and sound, imagining what might cut together effectively. As he observes, he considers style and content simultaneously—possible uses of voices or music, dramatic pacing and build up. These techniques need not reduce but enhance the image of reality in documentaries. They help the audience to sense the atmosphere of a foreign city more truly and dramatically than the correspondent who stands before the camera, with a view of the city behind him, and tells the audience what it ought to know.

Admittedly it is more difficult to use film style than it used to be; we spot all too quickly the self-conscious filmic touch in this era of hard news reporting. However, occasional documentaries do come along and prove how effective a freer style can be.

In the CBS program, *The Italians*, produced by Perry Wolff, there were several excellent sequences developed through montage: nine ways in which Italians say no; the parading that goes on in a small town because Italians, at least in this characterization, are devoted to show and, when the opportunity comes, to spectacle. A priceless sequence was arrived at through careful development: we had seen Italian youths dancing to rock and roll music and we had heard some baroque music to help emphasize an important facet of the Italian character and history. The rock and roll dancers came on again but this time the film maker artfully substituted a baroque selection, commenting, "They are dancing to music they don't even hear." The counterpoint, the strange bobbing about of the young dancers to the lofty ancient music, combined two eras in a highly expressive use of the medium.

The Italians was a rarity, a stylistic *tour de force*. It was presented under news department auspices, obviously barely making the grade as headline material. Today the dictates of hot news on television restricts the documentary scope to Important Subjects. The choice is limited—Vietnam, civil rights, drug addiction, air and water pollution, sexual mores, old age, and perhaps a few others on a convenient but unimaginative list. Even educational television, while exploring new styles on *NET Journal*, has hesitated about trying "small" subjects, looking intently, along with commercial networks, for issue-loaded material. With this programming demand, the docu-

mentary on both commercial and non-commercial television faces early exhaustion.

Working on a smaller canvas is one possible answer to the problem of subject matter. *Storm Signal*, produced by Jim Lipscomb, told of a husband's drug addiction and how it gradually took hold on his wife. The personalized account gave one a deeper, more vivid impression of addiction than a survey of expert opinions combined with several case histories. And there is no reason why there cannot be more experimentation of the small subject that does not seem fraught with social significance. Some years ago, *Ed and Frank*, a documentary by Dennis Mitchell of England, chose simply to portray two Americans, an artist and a salesman. By cutting back and forth between their very different lives, the types were characterized more sharply. Such seeming insignificance may not look very exciting in the listings of evening programs, but it may be the source for documentaries that entertain as well as broaden our understanding of the current, unreported, scene.

Another answer that might make any of the large subjects seems as unique and fresh as *Mills of the Gods* is to encourage the work of artist-reporters. The documentary was defined by John Grierson, father of the documentary movement in England, as "the creative interpretation of actuality." Today, the creative aspect is missing. Audiences are getting fairness and flatness; curiosity, passion and insight, expressed by a film artist—these hallmarks of documentary—are being forgotten.

Still another possibility, the personal vision of the film-maker, may be a salvation for the documentary. Compare the work of Robert Flaherty, a half century ago, with the depersonalized travelogues of his time. The Fitzpatrick machinery ground out standard short subjects, aglow with descriptions of the exotic but not with the sense of it. Superficial impressions kept the audience at a distance, as on a quick tour. Flaherty, on the other hand, is highly subjective in his accounts of Eskimos, Samoans and Aran Islanders. One doesn't have to agree with Flaherty's romantic outlook to appreciate his lively, human response and observation. Today the details in *Nanook of the North* are still vivid—the building of the igloo, the family sleeping together, the dogs outside being covered by snow—and one still reacts to the good humor and warmth of the people, whom Flaherty knew so well and was therefore able to portray so memorably. Flaherty's films have stature as documents not because they pretend to be objective but, rather, because they

reveal an artist's interaction with what he saw. The singleness of his viewpoint allows the audience to see more directly and to appreciate, as in any artist's work, a deeper truth.

Another tenet of early documentary—that the commonplace can be made as interesting as the exotic—is presently worth recalling. Under Grierson, British documentary in the 30's undertook to portray the familiar in new terms. W. H. Auden's verse accompanied a film that celebrated the routine of postal delivery in *Night Mail*. Grierson's *Drifters*, a rhythmic study of fishermen, fish, a trawler and the sea, brought audiences closer to lives that had not seemed worth their notice. Just as Flaherty reminds us of the value of a subjective approach, English documentary suggests the poetic possibilities of the medium and the challenge of subjects that are not in the headlines.

While some of the traditional documentary film values might serve as guides for today, television has evolved its own special needs and demands. The mass audience doesn't care much for the purely poetic or impressionistic film. Pictorial long shots, instead of producing the stunning effect, may turn up looking like spaghetti on the home screen. The creative possibilities are shifting. With the picture image less sharp, the sound track has greater impact. And the old, standard movie close-up—from shoulders to above the head—has now moved in closer to study the face from chin to forehead.

What the medium of television has discovered is visual variety in the human face. One of the earliest instances of how remarkably interesting two faces per half-hour could be was Mike Wallace's *Close-Up*, a live interview program. Wallace's style was more needing than it might need have been but, as oddities and ordinary people answered questions about themselves, the tight close-up gave the audience fascinating glimpses of the inner personality.

The interview has become key material in television documentary. Cameramen now expend a huge proportion of total footage on interviews or conversations. But, even here, documentary style can be manifested. Who is selected for the interview, how the situation is set up and, most important, how the dialogue is permitted to flow—identify the director's style and disclose his point of view.

We require that an interviewer be unobtrusive but, as in traditional documentary, we need his taste and feeling to help us get involved. In an Intertel production for NET, *Germany and Its Shadow*, Producer Arthur Zegart sought to reach the sensitive nerve

endings of Germans today—those who wanted to forget the past and those willing to remember. His questions were troubled, uncertain, and sometimes blunt; he was on his own determined search, and not in the “objective” style of the professional interviewer. The Germans reacted to Zegart and the result was not a report so much as a personally-discovered answer to questions that trouble all of us. In *Mills of the Gods*, the manner of interviewing yielded a highly effective sequence made up of comments by our GI’s in Vietnam; their talk about why they felt they were there was nervous and uncertain, with a poignant immediacy for the viewer. The timing was important, the interviews being conducted directly after the GI’s disembarked. The intent of the interviewer was, clearly, to find the overtones—not what was said. The grim fact touching the GI’s—and, for a moment, the audience too—was that war was now close by and words no longer seemed important.

Conveying a sense of actuality is an art, but a decade or so ago an innovation in technique brought to the home screen a new actuality, stronger than film-makers had ever been able to create before. The roving hand-held camera with portable sound equipment, which has given rise to the *cinema vérité* movement, caught completely unstaged talk and expressions on film. The first results, programs like *Yanqui, No!* and *Primary*, radically changed our standards of authenticity. No longer would the director have to tell people to act naturally within an unnaturally lit-up area limited by the fixed positions of camera and microphone. Now *cinema vérité* allowed them to pursue normal routines while the camera accurately reflected their unselfconscious selves. In its early days *cinema vérité* was uncomfortably shaky, dark or out of focus, but technique has improved. Today the staged look has been virtually eliminated from documentary.

This new wave in documentary has yielded some fascinating films but too often has relied upon the magic of pure technique. The technique was trained on subjects with strong emotional content: the rivalry of two high school football teams and the big game climax; a story about a criminal’s plight in a death house; others ranging from the tension surrounding the integration of New Orleans public schools to that facing a racing driver before a key race of his career. During the enthusiastic beginnings of the *cinema vérité* movement, the major creative task seemed to be to find the highly charged atmosphere—to go where the action was. Great stress was placed upon the objectivity of the film-maker who carefully

avoided using many of the devices to which documentary directors often turn in order to highlight or strengthen an effect. (For example, a more traditional director will sometimes find an excuse to have an action repeated or he might set up a confrontation between two people who would not ordinarily meet; and he might go further to suggest the character of the dialogue that would be natural and expected.) The *cinema vérité* film-maker rejected any of the traditional devices as artificial; he looked for the right moment, as it happened, to press the camera release, feeling a strong obligation to suppress himself.

Having to rely on strong subjects, *cinema vérité* has had trouble finding a supply of right ones. And the drive to be objective, which has deadened hour-long reports of headline subjects, had led *cinema vérité* into the same blind alley—where the subject is all and interpretation is nothing.

Cinema vérité has been, and can be, used creatively—as a means, not as an end in itself. The highly successful *A Time For Burning* illustrates how a special slant, a way of seeing events and people, can enter into the making of a film utilizing the technique. In this story about a Lutheran pastor's small step toward integrating his church, one feels that many of the situations were thoughtfully arranged: the pastor's visit to the outspoken Negro barber; a member of the church board talking things over with his wife; the Negro youths gathered together for comment. Throughout, a film-maker's point of view seems to have guided the filming and final design of the program.

A broad category of documentary films, dealing with ideas and issues, has depended heavily upon the method of *cinema vérité* to perk up content and thus help solve a central and almost insoluble problem—how to take essentially literary ideas and translate them into a visual language for television. Can a viable film be made about such abstract ideas as individualism, democracy, communism, alienation, nationalism—material which will inevitably be a future province for television documentary? An answer to the problem, rarely successful, has been the straight talk show in which attempts are made to illustrate pictorially—as if remembering that the program is not a seminar but a film. Too often documentaries have been expected to come to grips with an idea with the straightforward logic of a magazine article—to explore a number of facets, to include all the salient features, and to reach a logical conclusion.

But film has its own language. The editorial movement is from

image to image, from sound to sound—a series of psychological rather than logical connections. The idea is explored through a series of experiences which the audience can share. These experiences, or sequences, form the basic structure of a documentary. They take time. (There is room for just about three effective sequences in a half-hour show.) Ideas that would be important in a written piece often do not register and must be subordinated to the visual experience. A recent NET film, *The Difference Between Us*, compared education in England and the U.S. The film compared a secondary school in England—strict, old-fashioned, interested mainly in its bright boys—with a free-swinging, too-permissive high school in the States. Going back and forth to compare the two school systems and, at the same time, evaluating the strengths and weaknesses of each, was perhaps too much for the film to bear. Another film, *To Live Till You Die*, compared the lives of an old person in Sweden and another in Italy and was more successful because there were fewer ideas to deal with. In these and other cases, documentarians are searching for styles that extend the range of the filmic essay.

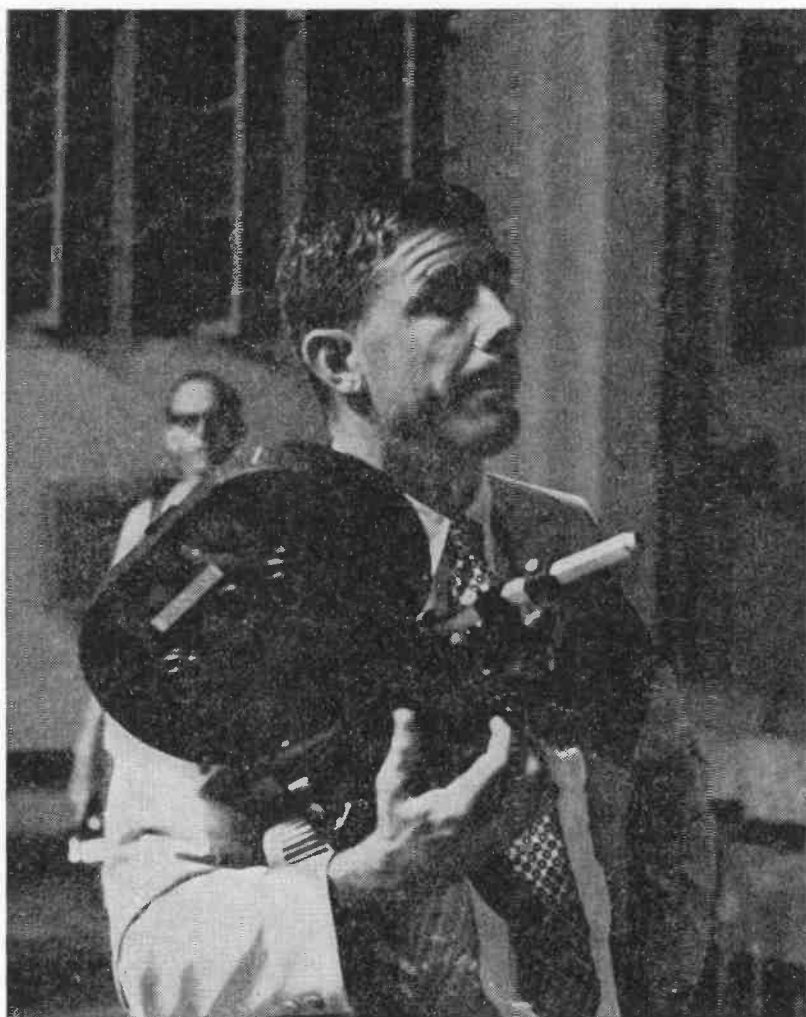
How ideas come alive on television, instead of being merely stated, is a problem of style to which television critics give relatively little attention. A critical review of a television documentary is usually a report on content with little attention to film technique except for occasional references to pictorial beauty or “impressionistic” treatment. Two films on the same subject, one handled with imagination and skill, the other a straight report, are likely to receive quite the same kind of critical treatment. The reviewer finds it easier to confront the ideas than the style of the documentary.

Today, with public television on the horizon, we are still deep in the routines and styles set by commercial television. For the coming era we need to encourage the creativity of artist-reporters, skilled in selecting and interpreting what may rouse our curiosity, make us wonder, move us, make us act.

Recently, television documentary has concentrated on the definitive statement. Now the opportunity must be made for the imaginative statement. We must give the documentary form the widest choice of subject and the freest expression.

IN MEMORIAM—TED YATES

When your jeep axle is broken, you've found ants in the shutter of your camera, the heat has melted away the emulsion on your film and some obscure Asian airline has sent yesterday's film to Peking instead of New York—you laugh. The only way is to make the situation antic instead of tragic... I feel like a war correspondent in peacetime. But I hate to see the world go to war... You have to stick your neck out a mile. You never know whether these people may decide they would rather have you dead than alive. That is why this kind of program isn't done very often.



Ted Yates, a producer and director for NBC News here in Washington, was killed in Jerusalem in the war. He was in a hotel lobby when somebody, we don't know who, opened fire with a machine gun. Others in the lobby fell to the floor and were not hit. But Ted Yates stayed on his feet trying to see what was happening, and he was hit, in the head.

He and his crew were making a film documentary for NBC News, as they have made others in the midst of gunfire—in the Dominican Republic, in Africa, in Southeast Asia. And he always stayed on his feet to see what was happening. We always worried about him, wondering why he wasn't shot. This time he was.

But all of us who worked with him, and all of those who have seen his work on the air, should by no means remember him as a young man who was disdainful of gunfire. Anyone who is disdainful of gunfire is merely a fool. On the contrary, he was disdainful of the human habits of destructiveness, arrogance, and folly. And in Jerusalem, it was this same human destructiveness, arrogance, and folly that finally killed him.

David Brinkley

NBC-TV NEWSCAST

JUNE 6, 1967

TED YATES

BORN: Sheridan, Wyoming October 1, 1930

DIED: Jerusalem June 6, 1967

Television Service

- 1949: Writer, NBC and Tex and Jinx Productions
- 1952: White House Correspondent
Producer, *Your President's Week*, NBC-TV
- 1953: News and Special Events
Director, Dumont TV Network
- 1957: Producer, *Nightbeat* with Mike Wallace, NBC-TV
- 1958: Producer, *The Ben Hecht Show*, ABC-TV
- 1959-60: News Director, Metromedia TV
Producer, *The John Crosby Show*
- 1961-67: NBC-TV
Producer, *David Brinkley's Journal*
Our Man in— Specials
- Producer, Documentary Programs
(A partial list)
- Santo Domingo: War Among Friends*
Vietnam: It's a Mad, Mad War
The Undeclared War
The Congo: Victim of Independence
The Journals of Lewis and Clark
America the Beautiful
Congress Needs Help
Thailand: The New Front
Laos: The Forgotten War
Indonesia: The Troubled Victory

Ted Yates came from Wyoming, but his work spanned the whole world. He produced some of the finest television reporting of our time, and he was respected throughout the industry as a gifted producer and a fearless reporter. . . He went to NBC, where he produced *David Brinkley's Journal*, a marvelous two-year series of documentary programs. At the conclusion of that series he began to expand his work to include special news and documentary programs which eventually took him to virtually every part of the globe.

It was the trouble spot which attracted him, for there was always the best opportunity for frontline reporting and the greatest need for objective reporting. He went to Vietnam to cover the war. He went to the Congo when the fighting erupted there. He travelled to the Dominican Republic, to South America, to Central America, to the countries of Asia. . .

Ted Yates had many outstanding qualities. Perhaps the most obvious of these was his tremendous physical courage. He had planned for several months to do a series of documentary films on the Middle East. When the latest crisis came to the Middle East, he did not postpone his schedule. He advanced it, so that he would be there to report the action first-hand. . .

The physical courage was matched by his intellectual fearlessness. Ted Yates never backed away from an issue. He never avoided a subject because the subject was too difficult or too sensitive to handle. He was a determined and honest reporter. And he was a good friend, as I and so many other people know. His death is a loss to me, as it is to television and journalism.

Senator Edward M. Kennedy

Ted Yates stood—stands—for something far bigger than the carload of plaques and other prizes he has won for his television reporting and documentaries. And this, ironically enough, is what bothers me. That is to say I am bothered by the fact that the press as a whole, the information media, as we are now institutionally labeled, do not begin to measure up to the restless integrity of this journalist who was killed in action. (Within hours two other newsmen were killed, four injured in the same war.) It is one thing to mourn Yates' death in gallant pursuit of duty in the highest traditions of the Fourth Estate. It is another to admit how unkempt those traditions have become through neglect, and the pursuit of profit more than the pursuit of truth.

Edward P. Morgan

ABC RADIO NEWSCAST

JUNE 13, 1967

To those of us who knew him personally, his loss is a severe and tragic one indeed. His talent and integrity are demonstrated in every foot of documentary film he produced, whether in Asia, Latin America, or here at home. That talent and integrity are, fortunately, preserved in his work, and his friends will always recall the vitality, courage, and curiosity he demonstrated in life.

Senator Robert F. Kennedy

TED YATES' PERSONAL JOURNALISM

The first time I realized I was looking at the work of Ted Yates was watching *The Journals of Lewis and Clark*. I first appreciated and understood the saga of the men of the Corps of Discovery through Ted Yates' documentary. Yet I knew nothing of his life until the obligatory biographical material published on his death.

It said that Frederick Langon Yates was born in Sheridan, Wyoming in 1930. He attended schools in the East but worked summers as a rodeo rider in the West. He attended the University of Virginia and first worked in broadcasting as a writer for Tex McCrary and Jinx Falkenburg. After service with the Marines in Korea as a correspondent he went to work for NBC as a producer and White House reporter. He was news and special events director for the DuMont network before he developed and produced Mike Wallace's *Night Beat* in New York. In 1961 Mr. Yates rejoined NBC news as producer of *David Brinkley's Journal* and later produced other documentaries with Mr. Brinkley.

I first saw *The Journals of Lewis and Clark* as a judge in a documentary contest. It points out the waste of beauty and resources, the suffering of the American Indians, and so captures the spirit and adventure of the Corps of Discovery that it sent me on a year long exploration that must become a life long avocation. The more you read by and of Lewis and Clark, and follow their trail, the more you must marvel at the beauty of the film produced by Mr. Yates and his colleagues. After viewing the program nearly a score of times I wrote NBC hoping that it would be made available for showing to students in history and other classes. Yet recently when I saw the shortened version now circulated by a film rental agency, I came to appreciate even more the artistry of the original program. The scenery and most of the information is still there but focus is no

longer on the people. The heart of the program is gone. I now beg NBC to release the original version not only as tribute but so we may see not only more of Lewis and Clark but more of Ted Yates. Why is art so often revealed only after it is emasculated or destroyed?

Like the men of the Lewis and Clark trek, Ted Yates may be remembered as daring and adventurous. Yet that was not the significance of the journey to the Pacific nor is it the mark of Ted Yates.

After *The Journals of Lewis and Clark* I began to notice or recall having seen programs with which Mr. Yates was associated. His search for undeclared wars, appreciation of natural beauty and natural resources, the revelation of inefficiency and waste, became more clearly focused in my mind—as it probably always had been in his.

This year, in *Thailand: The New Front*, and two other programs on Asia, Ted Yates—the man and his work—became apparent to me. He so often emphasized the paradox and confusion of events and took great joy in trying to untangle them. His camera and words focused on people—and usually the “little” people caught in the paradox and confusion. It became obvious that he abhorred ignorance as much as he sought discovery and understanding. Waste, greed, and the cruel seemed to be his constant targets. Yet no discussion of his works can substitute for the experience—if it could, they too would be waste.

Sadly, death—of one or of many—never seems to reveal clearly enough its waste and cruelty. Yet, at least for some, maybe the point has been seen in the personal journalism of Ted Yates. We may only hope that others may discover and understand by his experience.

Lawrence W. Lichty

University of Wisconsin

COMMENT

In November of 1966, the New York Chapter of The National Academy of Television Arts and Sciences presented a panel discussion on the topic, *Public Affairs Programming: Culture or Clutter?* Moderating the panel was Thomas Hoving, former Parks Commissioner of New York City and now Director of the Metropolitan Museum of Art. Mr. Hoving also serves as Chairman of the National Citizen's Committee for Public Television. Panel members were the public affairs directors of each of New York City's television stations. Mr. Hoving put some hard questions to the panel regarding the motivation, content and techniques of public affairs programming. The discussion reveals some of the problems, and some new avenues of approach to such programming. The following remarks are excerpted from the transcript of that meeting.

PUBLIC AFFAIRS PROGRAMMING— CULTURE OR CLUTTER?

THOMAS HOVING: Public affairs programs are extremely important, but I don't think they get down to the grass roots feelings of a community. They take much too long to get out to the public they're serving. What do you think would increase the effectiveness of this programming?

LEE POLK: I think that the question we are really asking ourselves is: what is a public affairs program? I've never heard anybody ask what is an entertainment program. One reason for this might be that public affairs is not popular. It deals with disaster. Of 33 top stories in 1966, exactly four could be classified as non-disaster stories.

GEORGE NICHOLAW: There is a difference, though, between a top story and a public affairs program. We produced a show called *Marriage: A Game for Kids*; and I think it added a new dimension to community broadcasting. We analyzed this issue in five cities, presented it in prime time, and then followed it up with a feedback survey. This survey opened up a two-way communication, a total involvement with the community. It gave the public an opportunity to answer questions, to express their feelings on a major social issue. I think that there's got to be a more total involvement with social issues that can be translated into broadcasting activities.

THOMAS HOVING: I think there are still certain deficiencies in public affairs programming; and I'd like to ask you the following question: is the community, or is the community's government, remiss in making its needs felt to the broadcaster, in revealing to him the real truth?

GEORGE BROWN: We're having considerable success in getting an honest explanation from politicians within a limited time period. This is a little different from the past; but it's going to take a lot more work before we can call the news interview shows anything like an open house.

JACK REYNOLDS: I don't think the problem is with the news interview shows. There we've got reasonable access to public officials: we can bring them into a studio and question them. The real problem is with shows of a documentary nature, where there are two or more points of view. The reluctance begins when we ask the Commissioner, the Mayor, or whoever to come in and state his case. It's relatively easy to come into a studio and be interviewed; it's just the standard game of politics—finesse and avoid. But when you get a substantive, specific issue for a documentary, and you go to the city officials and say, "OK, what about this," that's when the fun really begins.

THOMAS HOVING: That's what I'd like to see more of. I think you must understand that someone in public office gets very used to the ballet of the interview. You go through it so much that you develop an attitude and a presence. You sit in a certain way; you gesture in a certain way; you know what the general questions are going to be. I think it would be interesting to set up some different situations, in order to get a greater degree of honesty and spontaneity.

LEE POLK: I think this is one of the important problems of public affairs programs. They are taken for granted as to form: the interview... how many chairs are on today? It's been proven that programs can be illuminating without the interview or the magnificent teaser. You get an exciting topic that everyone's involved in, and suddenly somebody says: "Good evening. And now we're going to talk." I think we have to consider if form has to be this way, and why the public accepts it...or doesn't even watch.

THOMAS HOVING: Should the FCC be stronger in its requirements? Should they have greater control over program quality and content, and force the industry to broadcast their shows on important issues during prime time?

ED SILVERMAN: The categoric answer is no. This goes to the core of the freedom of the press, freedom of expression, freedom of ideas. I don't think we should be told how, what, where, and when to do something—no more than a newspaper should.

THOMAS HOVING: Would you object violently if someone told you that you had to have public affairs shows in prime time?

ED SILVERMAN: I think you're addressing yourself to the wrong people. As public affairs producers and directors, we put on the best we can with what we have and what we think we're able to do. There are other people who control the money and what goes on the air.

THOMAS HOVING: Do you feel that you're being given short shrift?

ED SILVERMAN: In many cases, I would say yes. But let's be honest. I don't think that you would have as much public affairs programming as you do now if it were not for the FCC—who demands a so-called report card before your license is renewed: X number of public affairs shows; X number of live programs.

THOMAS HOVING: That gets down to an important issue: does local public affairs programming perform a real function of servicing the community in creatively revealing some of the ills of society? Or is it only filling air space in non-prime time to insure that license renewal every few years?

JACK REYNOLDS: This is a much more complicated problem. I think you've got to look at the whole range of public affairs programming. There are some terrible duds on the air, shows which never should be broadcast. But I think that if there were not as specific a government regulation as there is now, you might find less public affairs programming. And in many instances, you might find better public affairs programming. What we are all faced with is that because of the structure of the license renewal, there are many categories in which we provide a service that might better be provided in other categories. Perhaps if we did public affairs programming by quality, rather than by numbers, we might do better. But I don't think I would want to hold still for anyone in government—city, state or federal—telling us what kind of programming or what the quality of the programming should be.

So while there are many drawbacks under the present system, I think it's probably the best one for right now. I've always felt that to be in public affairs meant to be a combination of Socrates, P. T. Barnum and Machiavelli. You've got to have all those disparate elements going to get halfway decent shows on the air.

I think most of the "gutsy" issues have been covered and recovered. The trick is to find the kinds of issues that are going to break far enough in advance to get ahead of our other mediums like the newspapers and the magazines. This is the challenge I see for television.

THOMAS HOVING: Do you think that the television industry sufficiently goes into the problem and toils of exposing new areas, of getting into crusades? Or are you too wrapped up in people saying, "Oh, my God, you can't do that!" Are you going to be a mature dispenser of information; or are you continually going to be held down by people who say you can't do something because it is too difficult or abrasive?

GEORGE BROWN: I think a crusade is a difficult thing to do in TV or radio because a newspaper has a great deal more success in getting out and getting people to talk. As soon as you put a camera or a microphone in front of people, they clam up. The essence of most crusades is getting people to say something. You can do it to a certain extent, but it doesn't have the impact.

THOMAS HOVING: I think that with a hand-held camera you could show exactly where and why people are gathering. A carefully instructed individual with a tape recorder can get anonymous interviews.

JACK REYNOLDS: The main problem is that once you show up with the requisite equipment for a television program, it's a lot different than one guy with a notebook and pencil. We have a lot more to do in terms of developing lightweight equipment and cutting down crews. When you walk into a place with a television crew, suddenly you either get the hams running to get in front of the camera, or else everybody who has to do with the story scoots. By the time you set up and are ready to shoot, everybody has evaporated and you don't have the same story you started with.

LEE POLK: It's like talking about a four-hour *Hawaii* picture as compared to a book. You can't do it. The essence that can be shown on television can have its impact. But the entire scope can be covered by a newspaper.

ED SILVERMAN: We're not in competition with the newspapers anymore than we're in competition with radio. Radio beats TV, TV beats the newspapers; but the newspapers complement and supplement what both radio and TV do.

WALTER ENGELS: You know, you can knock your brains out doing train wrecks and arranging debates, then all of a sudden you hit a program that everybody in the world writes about and that everybody agrees is right for television.

FRED SAYLES: But I think that everyone turns to television to solve all the problems. We cannot do that. We are doing a certain amount of public affairs programming, and we're doing it at a certain level of performance. I don't think there's anyone here who wouldn't agree that we hope to do more and to do it better.

LEE POLK: I'm no apologist for the television industry, or for any form of communications. It doesn't need it. There is more coverage now than ever before and the networks have been caught in the necessity of giving space coverage, election coverage, convention coverage. It's never been that way before and we're just getting the hang of it. For us, it's great. It's requiring interconnection and cooperation between stations; and it's working.

BOOKS IN REVIEW

Malcolm Muggeridge. *THE MOST OF MALCOLM MUGGERIDGE*. New York: Simon and Shuster, 1966.

Malcolm Muggeridge is one of the handful of men having anything to do with the mass mediums of communication who has consistently made more than money from them. He has also made sense. That the high priests of Simon and Shuster should have borrowed from S.J. Perelman the idea of putting the "most" of him in one book is reason enough to take your telephone off the hook. Muggeridge, former espionage agent, journalist in London, Moscow and elsewhere, ex-editor of *Punch* and BBC "personality," will get his nettles into you; so don't begin *The Most* unless you are ready to cancel appointments!

Muggeridge knows all our secrets. Have you covertly shared my belief, for instance, that Winston Churchill was a windy, platitudinous old grump who was merely history's godchild? Well, Muggeridge was there first, not only with the facts but with some ghoulish samples of the much over-rated "Churchillian prose." Do you quietly believe that efforts to make education "fun" dilute its effectiveness? See Muggeridge on his own dull schoolhouse which was "a place to get away from as soon as possible for as long as possible." Nevertheless, says he, "the more boring and flat education is the better." His famous "Down With Sex" article (that first appeared in *Esquire*, I believe) is here in its refreshing glory, along with some magnificently British potshots at American Anglophilia and its accompaniments, "pipe smoking, wine drinking, uncomfortable small foreign cars, words of praise for draught beer, the Shakespeare Memorial theater, the BBC, (and) T.S. Eliot." A pox from M.M. also on Mr. Punch, the British sense of humor, and C.P. Snow—in both his sacred and profane manifestations.

What other essayist would start a piece with the words: "A very minor poet of my acquaintance, now dead and totally forgotten, used to make periodical appearances in London..."? Who would elicit our sympathies for that paunchy, "Etonian Spillane," Ian Fleming, or for Evelyn Waugh, characterized by Muggeridge as "an antique in search of a period, a snob in search of a class, perhaps even a mystic in search of a beatific vision"? Where else but from his pen might one hear the echo of his own personal outrage at the calculated nonsense of the current Kennedy myth; even to the extent of reminding us that the "thousand days" themselves were "a sort of a middlebrow pantheon...constructed large enough to accommodate every cultural cover story, from Frost to Sinatra, and taking in Hemingway. The resultant setup has been described as a 20th century Versailles; if so, a Hollywood version, surely, with Sorensen and Schlesinger looking after the continuity."

The "Hollywood version" in its fullest meaning is precisely what angers Muggeridge best and provides the impetus for his fracturing essays about long-term annoyances like Frank Harris, D.H. Lawrence and Samuel Butler, and short-term ones like John Profumo, espionage novels, and the mystique of the

Côte d'Azur (the Riviera turned to Coney Island). Let Muggeridge share his experiences with you after publishing a *Satevepost* article of satire about the British monarchy, "presiding over a nonexistent Empire," and witness the angry reactions of Americans and Englishmen to his implications that its pomp and circumstances are just so much foolishness.

While he hates BBC-land for what may be personal (and the wrong) reasons, he is suitably tolerant of television. His statement that "television was not invented to make human beings vacuous, but is an emanation of their vacuity," is a juncture of hands across the sea, uniting the profitable world of *kitsch* in the United States and England in one awesome truism. Let Muggeridge believe (as I think I do too) that "American women tend to be more appetizing to the sight than to the taste," so long as he leavens his statement with the observation that the current spread of pornography to the corner drugstore is not just demeaning to the people who trade in it, but that its greater evil has in it the destruction of our sense of sin which once made risqué behaviors such fun.

To call Muggeridge a Conservative is to underestimate him and overestimate Conservatism. Conservatives are not as clever as he. A Conservative would not bother to notice the subtle cruelties of antisemitism in British life, protest the continual unwarranted turmoils of men like Randolph Churchill and P.G. Wodehouse, or be as concerned about the present stifling Anglo-Indian cultural climate or the decline of satire in the English-speaking world. A Conservative would not tell us: "In contemporary circumstances...Christianity can only go on existing as a religion so long as it is not practiced." A Conservative would just tell us that Christianity is dead.

No, if Muggeridge *appears* Conservative, it is because he despises (fundamentally) Liberalism, not as it once was but as it has become: pacifistic instead of realistic; fantastic instead of idealistic; and materialistic beyond resort to alibi or theory. The result, says he, "is constantly to tear the world to pieces." The Liberal's main crime, writes Muggeridge, is that he has become the dupe—not of the Left—but of the bright, well-heeled young men in the British and American middlebrow "masscom" establishments. "The basic egghead fallacy," he writes, "the fallacy of liberalism, in practice so destructive a force, is, it seems to me, that it implies the possibility of achieving imaginative ends by the exercise of the will. Actually, these two—the will and the imagination or, to put it another way, power and love...pull in opposite directions and cannot...be harnessed together. Nonetheless, it is the fate of the egghead to attempt this impossible feat. He buys every gold brick because, imaginatively, its glitter is convincing. When, however, he goes to sell it he finds it is worthless. And quite often he has it thrown at his head for his pains."

GEORGE N. GORDON

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William L. Rivers. *THE OPINIONMAKERS*. Boston: Beacon Press, 1966.

"The aim of this book," writes Professor Rivers, "is to draw a picture of the huge corps of Washington correspondents and to point up the influences—the elite of the corps, officialdom, bossdom—which shape the reports the American people hear, see, and read."

Rivers, who was a Washington correspondent himself once, succeeds remarkably well. And in the preface to this paperback edition, published two years after the original, he himself lists some of the criticisms due the first version—among them, that he overlooked some of the newer influential reporters and the political humorists, like Art Buchwald and Arthur Hoppe.

The book opens with a discussion of the relations between reporters and government officials which is informative, but not as sound or as inclusive as *The Fourth Branch of Government*, by Douglass Cater, River's ex-boss on *The Reporter* magazine. Next he reports on a brief survey of the best-read and most influential of Washington correspondents which up-dates the pioneering study of the same thing by Leo Rosten in 1937.

The middle section of the book is a series of profiles of those Rivers considers the most influential of reporters: Walter Lippmann, James Reston, David Brinkley and the two he calls "the outcasts," *Time* magazine and Drew Pearson. He then has two chapters on news management, which are the best yet on this belabored subject, and winds up with an evaluation of the impact this vast outpouring of words has on the public.

The impact, not surprisingly, is seen as variable, complex and confusing. But if one generalization can be made it is the familiar one that these pundits don't shape opinion nearly as much as government officials, intellectuals and perhaps the pundits themselves think. People, it turns out to no one's surprise, read the columnists who reinforce their own prejudices and ignore those who push opposing views.

Assaying the place of radio-television reporters in the press corps, Rivers makes a couple of good points: thanks to the FCC, they are probably more objective than the print boys—and thus duller. Much more than print reporters, they change the very events they are covering because of TV's cumbersome paraphernalia and because the stars—Brinkley, Cronkite, Morgan *et al*—are more widely known than the people they are covering. And print reporters, perhaps with their own brand of snobbism, haven't really accepted the broadcast reporters into their club.

There is, Rivers points out, some justification for this. TV's role in the dramatis personae of the mass media is to get the top news out instantly and even a half-hour news show, as Walter Cronkite has said, can be no more than a front page composed of headlines and leads. But the real influentials are the men like Lippmann and Reston who can interpret today's complex events, supply background, put them in perspective and tell people what they mean. Significantly Eric Sevareid, who does this for CBS, is the most respected—by the print newsmen—of TV reporters.

One large omission in Rivers' book is that he writes almost exclusively about the giants and says very little about the quality and effect of 90 per cent of Washington correspondents, the men and women who go to a government agency or to Capitol hill after a story, work at it with the help of public information

officers or unsung staff assistants, get it and print it. Yet in sum, the production of these unknowns probably has a much larger effect on the formation of public opinions than the writings of the stars.

On the other hand, in this book Rivers exhibits the good journalist's broad overview of a situation which identifies the significant new truths, instead of the narrow counting of the social researcher who knows a great deal about trees and very little about forests. And he winds up with a suggestion that will certainly be anathema to most editors and publishers—that the press is so critical a part of the governing process in America that it badly needs somebody to criticize it. He proposes a Committee on Public Communication, composed of members of the press "suspected of integrity" who could continuously evaluate how well the media are discharging their responsibility.

Perhaps, as part of the maturing process that seems to be overtaking many American institutions, we might even get it someday.

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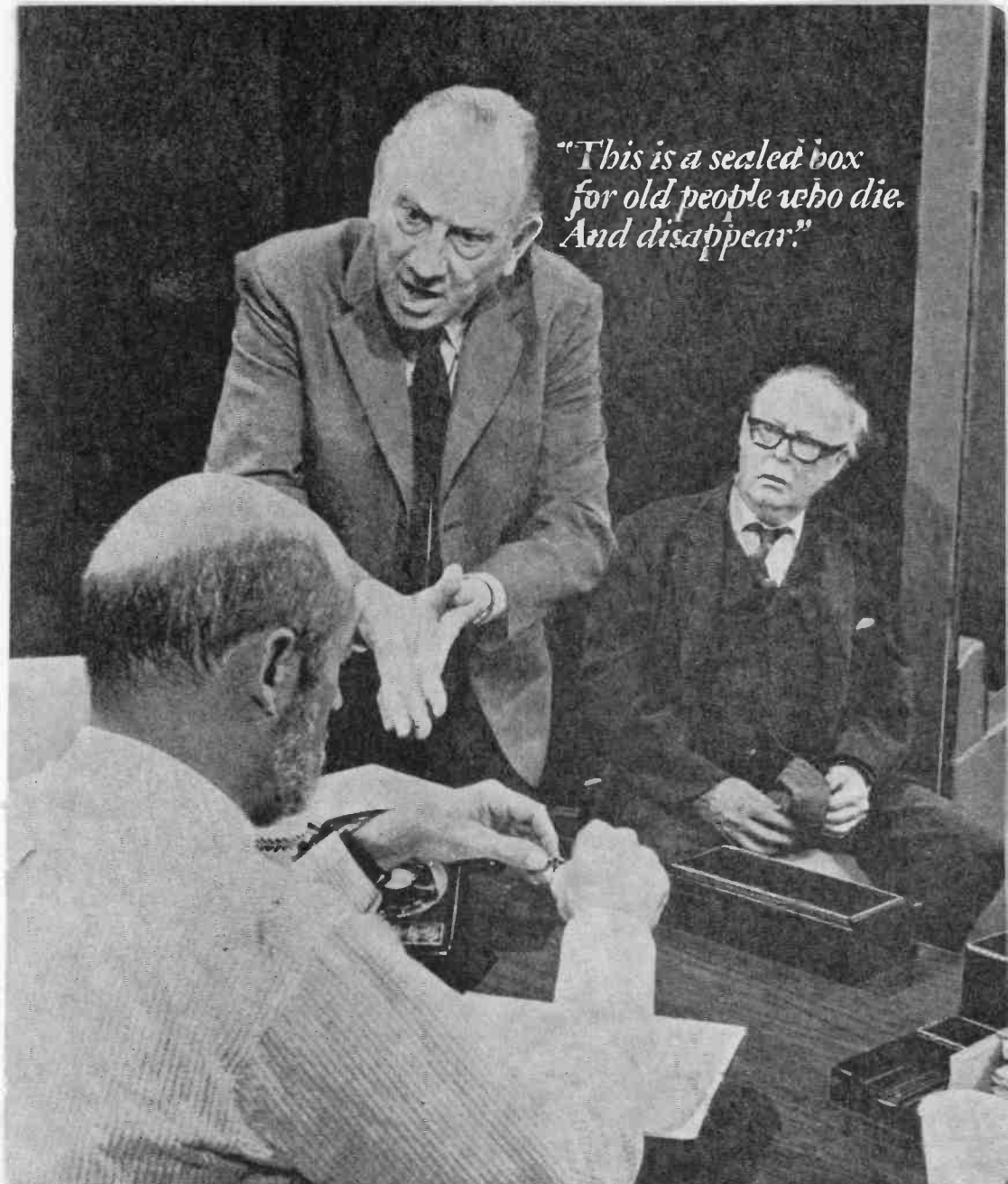
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*"This is a sealed box
for old people who die.
And disappear."*

CBS Playhouse, the notable dramatic series credited with having "magnificently advanced the cause of original TV theater," starts its second season with a powerful 90-minute drama starring Melvyn Douglas and Shirley Booth. Written by Loring Mandel and produced by George Schaefer, the play "Do Not Go Gentle Into That Good Night" deals compellingly with the universal theme of old age and family rejection. See your local listing for time and channel of this CBS Playhouse production sponsored by General Telephone & Electronics Corporation and its family of companies.

CBS Playhouse Premiere Tuesday, October 17 on CBS 

