

TELEVISION

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THE JOURNAL OF THE
NATIONAL ACADEMY OF
TELEVISION ARTS
AND SCIENCES

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of Television Arts and Sciences with
the cooperation of the Television and
Radio Department, Newhouse Commu-
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TELEVISION QUARTERLY

JOURNAL OF THE NATIONAL ACADEMY
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L'ÂGE D'OR

It was the best and worst of times, a period of excess and excitement, fun and failure, adventure and despair. It was carried along by its own momentum for over a decade, and when America's great romance with the tube gradually turned into a comfortable *marriage de covenance* there were those who said a "Golden Age" of American television had gone by. The phrase has since found a place in all serious assessment of what TV was, is, and might become. But it has been observed that the description is vague—that it means too many things to too many people. Certainly there is some room for a not-quite-final word on what it was.

One begins, of course, by acknowledging the bitter and unrelenting few who refuse to admit that commercial television ever attained any creative mark whatever. To the grim and the dedicated, the entire period was characterized by a steady downward slide toward some kind of mass media-ocracy. It required, after all, little sensibility to see the straws in the wind, for from the outset the medium has carried a heavy payload of what might generously be described as culturally valueless and socially unredeeming. If one prefers to recall only Faye Emerson, "Uncle Miltie," Dagmar, roller derbies, *Man Against Crime* and wrestling, then the whole age was one of tarnished brass which reached its expected and inevitable end in the infamous "quiz scandals."

Most observers, however, are inclined to regard TV's early years with enthusiasm. If there was little that was pure gold, there was a lot that glittered. Fondly remembered are *Omnibus*, Pat Weaver, a handful of fine short plays, Halley and Kefauver, *Wide Wide World*, the Army-McCarthy hearings, *Peter Pan*, *Your Show of Shows* and Murrow. There was *Project XX*, *Victory at Sea*, *Matinee Theater*. And if Hubbell Robinson's great *Playhouse 90* seemed the end of an era to some, a post-1957 surge of actuality, documentary and public affairs programming made possible the argument that as one Golden Age died another was born. There are those who insist that the medium never really approached maturity until it finally moved to make reportage one of its prime functions.

In any general terms, then, it is difficult to locate those vague "beginnings" and "ends." The medium has grown and it has diminished. It has been adult and it has been childish. It has been magnificent

and the dear Lord knows that it has been trivial. But it has been all of these from the start and only the shortest of memories would permit one to say that it has ever been all good or all bad.

Still the phrase persists, and it retains a useful and precise application in the study of current medium performance because a hard core of tough, talented critics and creators have given it meaning. There *was* a Golden Age, they contend—with a real beginning and end, and a genuine and specific content.

It began with *Kraft Television Theatre* on May 7, 1947, and it closed with the final production of *Playhouse 90* ten years later. The content was anthology drama—stories of human conflict and confrontation played with honesty and authority in living sight, sound and motion before audiences the size of which no actor, writer or director in all theatrical history would have dared to dream.

It was Hebbel who said that the theater is “the only possible pause in a man’s existence,” and from the outset American television has had its share of artists and entrepreneurs who only saw in this electronic marvel those awesome possibilities for bringing multitudes into a state of engagement with themselves and their individual and collective destinies. Since Thespis committed the significant act of asking his fellow Greeks to pretend that he really *was* diety or humanity incarnate, the theatre has been that single art which carried man outside himself in order that he might better see within himself. The action, said Thespis and his descendants, is *here*—in the threshing circle, inside the proscenium arch, and within the shifting frames of the large and small screen. This was where man could see life as it is or as it ought to be. This was where he could share, through the direct and physical terms of human reenactment, that magic blend of intellectual detachment and emotional involvement which is the true *theatrical* experience.

For the “hard-line” Golden Ager this is what television is all about. It is not quite cinema and not quite the living stage. It allows for intense visual concentration, and yet at its best it is verbal. In some ways TV is the penultimate technological extension of the naturalistic drama’s rejection of romantic superficiality in favor of the vital inner revelation

of human character. The entire theatrical movement toward realism in acting and staging seems to culminate upon the small screen, where it can work out its own absolutes of form and style.

Little matter that the *cineaste* deplores the shaky lines of light upon the tiny screen. No difference that the stage-bound theorist pompously declares the medium "incapable of grandeur." Television is the medium of the mass, and here alone can the man in the living room see his private tragedy delineated with a final degree of refinement. If twentieth century man has any tragic proportion, it is observed, the events and circumstances of his time have perfectly scaled it to fit the small screen.

All of this was understood, or sensed, and so they began. Those eager Medici, networks and advertisers, were happy enough to foster their experiment. As hard and practical "communicators" they foresaw those endless hours of time stretching ahead into a limitless and profitable future, and they were astute enough to recognize that the natural *entre acts* of the drama would provide convenient moments in which someone with something to sell might "borrow" the audience.

But in those halcyon days no one impugned anyone else's motives. Very few troubled to challenge the direct transfer of many habits and strictures from commercial radio to video. Nor, since the new medium was visual, did anyone question the justifiable and logical turn to the stage and the movies for forms of fiction, fantasy and fun.

Only later, when the medium began to dominate the time and attention of an entire population, did the regretting begin. Later, when such phenomena as "audience passivity" and "cultural democracy" began to pose hard and real dilemmas, the criticism grew shrill. Only later did the artist discover the hard fact that in an age of instantaneous mass communication he was merely another vested interest in the fight for that most precious of all commodities—the attention of an entire civilization. With that discovery, the Golden Age was over.

It is a tribute to both artist and system that the battle still rages. The creator's concern for quality drama on the medium is expressed throughout the first section of this issue of *Television Quarterly*. That concern deserves attention.

Last September the American Broadcasting Company initiated a series of projects which were designed to assist the academic community in the development of creative talent for television. Upon the recommendation of ABC President Leonard H. Goldenson a grant was extended to the Yale Drama School for the establishment of an advanced one-year course in television writing. Similar grants were awarded for support of performers of the American Academy of Dramatic Arts and trainee-executives at the University of Pennsylvania's Wharton School of Finance.

The Yale project has already attracted considerable attention within the television profession and the press. Perennial questions of whether promising television writers *can* be trained—and then given a TV outlet for serious writing—can hardly be answered on the basis of a single year of experiment, yet the experience may have given some clearer definition to these problems.

In an effort to assess the impact of the first year of the project, *Television Quarterly* invited **David Davidson**, who directed the course of instruction, and **Tim Kelly** and **William Branch**, two of the participating playwrights, to provide a candid appraisal of their experiences. The judgements and opinions they express below seem to bring to the surface some of the deeper issues underlying the future of televised drama.

At the end of June, a major conference marked the formal conclusion of the year. Among those who assembled in New Haven for the purpose of evaluating the past, present and future of televised drama were writers, directors, producers and qualified parties with a continuing interest in the advancement of such programming on television. In the final stages of their meeting the conferees were requested to meet in smaller groups and to draw up reports of their opinions and recommendations. The substance of the reports, together with a listing of those who participated in each group, is also printed below.

One of television's honored group of Golden Age playwrights, **DAVID DAVIDSON** has authored more than 100 plays and documentaries for the medium since 1950. Mr. Davidson worked for over ten years as a newspaper reporter and foreign correspondent, and has published three novels, including *The Steeper Cliff*. After earlier Academy service as a lecturer in the Montana State University Television Workshop, he was named as visiting lecturer at the Yale School of Drama, where he directed the Yale-ABC project during the past year.

TIM KELLY, a graduate of Boston's Emerson College, is former drama critic for the *Arizona Republic* and theatre editor for *Point West Magazine*. Among his published plays are *Widow's Walk*, *The Burning Man*, *Murder On Ice* and the award-winning *Not Far from The Gioconda Tree*. He has written extensively on the Southwest for numerous publications.

A former Guggenheim Fellow and winner of a Robert E. Sherwood Award, **WILLIAM BRANCH** was a Producer-Writer at WNDT in New York City before being named a Fellow of the Yale-ABC project in 1965. Mr. Branch is a graduate of the Northwestern University School of Speech, and earned his M.F.A. in Dramatic Arts at Columbia in 1958. Listed among his writing achievements are several films, off-Broadway productions, and scripts for various commercial and educational television series.

THE YALE-ABC PROJECT —THREE VIEWS

DAVID DAVIDSON, TIM KELLY,
WILLIAM BRANCH

DAVID DAVIDSON

The writing group was comprised of seven Fellows selected in nationwide competition among young playwrights and five third-year students of playwriting enrolled in the Yale Drama School course still numbered "47" in memory of the "47 Work-shop" that the hallowed George Pierce Baker brought with him to New Haven from Cambridge forty-one years ago.

A visiting lectureship was established on an annually rotating basis, and I was invited to initiate the course of instruction. I was joined later by William T. Corrigan, the stage and television director, who served as my associate in instruction. The fellowships carried a virtually tax-free stipend of \$5,000 for the year. Eligible applicants were any young playwrights who had completed graduate study in drama or otherwise shown ability in dramatic writing. Selections were made on the basis of manuscripts submitted by the applicants.

As a result of last-minute delays in completion of preparations for the program, the submission period for applications was reduced to only a few weeks in early spring. Nevertheless, 62 applications and well over 200 manuscripts came from all regions of the

country. Those finally selected represented a geographic distribution ranging from Tuttle, Oklahoma, to Princeton, New Jersey and from Phoenix, Arizona, to Cranston, Rhode Island. The age spread ran from William Hillier, 24, who was working on his doctorate at Carnegie Tech, to Joseph Caldwell and William Branch, in their thirties, who had both written works for off-Broadway productions. The "47" playwrights were all in their early twenties, but represented an even greater geographic distribution since the enrollment included Ola Rotimi, a Rockefeller Scholarship student from Nigeria.

From the start, a teasing, nagging question was heard. It was first voiced by a number of TV editors and reporters who attended the press conference at which the program was publicly announced. The question was, "For what markets will the students be trained to write?" The answer then and thereafter was: they will be urged to write to the best of their abilities. When the program got underway in September the instructors were confronted with twelve skeptical and articulate young playwrights who voiced the same question in several variations.

They were given a modified answer which turned out to be the one and only inflexible ground rule for the entire course: "Write the kind of play that you yourself would willingly watch on your television set." Later, when one or two "doubting thomases" persisted in offering as their first projects what they deemed to be "commercial properties," a corollary was added: "If you must be a hack, be a hack later, on your own time."

By and large, the twelve constituted one of the most talented and advanced groups ever assembled for a writing course. From the start there was no need to teach them the fundamentals of playwriting. They had all been through that and learned their lessons well. Rather, it became a matter of teaching a specific technique with its own special tools and problems—writing for the camera.

I do not believe that any art can be taught by theoretical, in-a-vacuum instruction. Therefore it seemed logical and natural to try to duplicate the market-place experience of those professionals who changed the styles and methods they had acquired in other media in order to write for television or motion pictures. To these "retreads" the question was: "Where can I get hold of a sample script?" They scrounged around among friends or in libraries until they found one, and then studied and analyzed

the script in order to teach themselves the format, terminology and approach. After picking the brains of ever-patient friends for any answers that still eluded them, they rooted themselves before the little box to watch how a script became a show.

The obvious question is, if that's how most of today's working professionals learned how to write for the camera, why trouble with a television writing talent development program? I think that we have demonstrated that—aside from the sheer pleasure of being paid \$5,000 to learn—a course of systematic, guided instruction can speed up the learning process considerably and minimize the confusions, pitfalls and false starts of a “teach-yourself” apprenticeship.

With so little live or tape TV being done nowadays (and so few models available because many precious “kines” and tapes have been burned to save storage costs), it was decided to concentrate on filmed TV. With this approach the writers could be trained simultaneously to do theatrical feature film writing.

The first step was to obtain suitable materials to serve as working examples. The simple and natural method—so it seemed—would be to go after the scripts and film prints of a dozen or so television plays which had won Emmy nominations or awards in recent years. The approach seemed so obvious that I wondered why it had not become the standard way of teaching TV writing on all the campuses. I soon discovered why. As the kind of a worrier who gets to the train station as much as an hour ahead of departure time, I began in April to line up all the necessary material I would need for the following September. I mentioned my plan to Peter Cott, Executive Director of the Academy, who offered his full cooperation in securing sample scripts and films from the various networks and packagers involved. This was *most* fortunate, for it soon became apparent that my “obvious” plan involved legal intricacies and complexities that make the Gordian Knot look like a shoelace bow.

First, the mere showing of a *Defenders* or *Naked City* film within the privacy of a seminar room could technically be regarded as a “theatrical use” (involving royalty and residual payments to writers, actors, producers and directors), unless proper legal clearance were first obtained from all parties concerned. Second, it had been my intention to Xerox various scripts so that each student would have his own copy for study and analysis. Such du-

plication, it turned out, could be deemed a copyright infringement unless, again, prior clearance was obtained.

Even with the full support of the Academy, it was four months before we had a script, film, and the accompanying clearances in hand. This precious "first" was Ernest Kinoy's Emmy-winning "Blacklist" of *The Defenders* series, and we owed a debt to producer Herbert Brodtkin, a devoted Yale Drama alumnus, for expediting the delivery process. As it was, "Blacklist" arrived almost as our curtain was going up.

Thereafter, scripts and films began to come in from other shows like *Naked City*, *The Breaking Point*, *Dupont Show of the Month*, *Route 66*, *Ben Casey*, and *East Side/West Side*. A tape of a live drama special arrived from the United States Information Agency, and we even received a print of an earlier *CBS Workshop* show, brought to us by novelist Jesse Hill Ford.

As we presented these examples of the camera play it was strongly emphasized that the writers were not to imitate the content in any way, but simply to study the varied and skillful illustrations of screenplay technique they provided. It was also made clear that the goal of the program was to turn out the equivalent of anthology dramas, not segments of a series. To break the ice, the students were first given a survey of the basic shots and stage directions used in camera writing. They were forbidden to take notes on this lecture, on the grounds that camera technique was not to be learned by rote. This was, in fact, the one and only "theoretical" lecture of the course, for we then moved directly to the systematic study of the sample scripts—line-by-line and cue-by-cue.

The course was organized on the basis of two three-hour seminars weekly, as well as half-hour individual conferences. Generally, discussion of a script would occupy a full seminar session. This was followed, at the next session, by a showing of the film and a second discussion on the process whereby script had become show—and with what margin of success.

As dedicated playwrights, the young men did not wait long to introduce that all-important element of dramatic conflict. There was an outcry almost at once. "Why is it necessary," they demanded, "to learn all the technical terms? Why can't all that be left to the director, with the writers doing the words and the director the shots?" Because, I explained, these were the indispensable tools of writing for the camera. Telling a story with the camera, I insisted, involved a whole new way of thinking and could never really

be learned without finding out what instruments were available to the writer and how they can be used. Since most of the writers had seen both the off-Broadway stage production and the English film version of *The Knack*, this fortunately provided a handy illustration of the totally different possibilities and results of working a piece of writing for the camera as against the stage. Somewhat grudgingly, they agreed to make a try. Within a couple of weeks they had become so infatuated with "cinema" that every page of their scripts was choked with camera cues. The overwhelming favorite, borrowed heavily from both *The Knack* and *The Pawnbroker*, was the novel and utterly delicious cue, FREEZE FRAME. There was hardly a script which did not contain page upon icy, sub-zero page of this one.

In guiding the writers toward developing their own scripts, I again attempted to make them emulate the professional routine of the working writer. As each student came for his first half-hour weekly conference, I played the role of producer or editor of an anthology show and invited the writer to talk through whatever idea or ideas he had in mind for his first script. When he had settled on his favorite idea he was asked to bring "a page" (a short treatment which would get his idea down on paper) to his next meeting. As the professional knows, this is a first and rather crucial test. In some cases the story idea evaporated at this point. There simply was no play there. In most cases the spoken idea stood up well in written form, and a classic instance is the tight one-page plan submitted by Ola Rotimi. He worked three full days on this treatment, which eventually became a blueprint not only for a television script but for a full-length stage play that was honored by a "major production" at the Drama School.

Once the short treatment was in hand, the writers were asked next to develop a full, act-by-act story outline. Here too there were some drop-outs, but most of the outlines worked, and led to complete television plays. But this assignment also triggered a student uprising. Two of the writers declared they had never done outlines in writing plays. They waited to be "struck by the creative spark" and then went on to write their plays in one grand sweep. Since these rebels had good track records of past productivity, they were invited to go ahead and write in whatever way suited them best. This was a sporting proposition which generated some moments of doubt as weeks went by without one revealing word from the *insurrectos*. There were no treatments, no

outlines, no conferences. Suddenly one of them, Ralph Arzoo-
manian, became the first in the group to deliver a completed
television play—a superb comedy drama about a Greek-American
family. The second rebel, Dan Potter, found his way at his own
pace. After one play was shelved he delivered a second one, a
powerful barracks drama which he hopes may also turn into his
second published novel.

Both Arzoo-
manian and Potter were among the Fellows, a group
which inevitably—because of the \$5,000 stipend—became known as
the “Golden Boys.” The third-year playwriting majors, of course,
were “The Kids.” The older men were at first regarded with a
certain amount of awe by the youngsters. In the seminar room,
the Kids drifted into their own sub-group at Stage Right, with
the Golden Boys at Stage Left. During the mid-seminar beer breaks,
the Kids at first refrained from tagging along to the corner saloon.
Before long, however, the wall of silence crumbled, not so much
as a result of my parental urging as of the tacit but fierce rivalry
among all the writers. The Kids began to hit just about as many
long ones as the Golden Boys. The best scripts began to come
about equally from the two squads.

Since all of the writers were doing what amounted to anthology
drama, a considerable degree of variety emerged in choice of subject
matter and general outlook on life. In fact, the twelve writers turned
up with twelve separate and distinct “worlds,” each with his own
interests, concerns, style and writing personality.

Here, in addition to the plays already mentioned, is a samp-
ling of the nearly thirty dramatic scripts completed during the year:

Downtown Holy Lady, by Joseph Caldwell. A drama of the
consequences which overtake a warmhearted woman who tries to
live her Christian faith.

The Rock Cried Out, by William Branch. The drama of an
upper-class Negro family which tries to turn its back on Harlem’s
problems.

Johnny Rodeo, by Tim Kelly. A drama about a professional
rodeo rider on the downgrade.

Schlump, by William Hillier. A comedy-satire about the so-called
social values of a group of prep-school boys.

Our Husband Has Gone Mad Again, by Ola Rotimi. A comedy
drama about a Nigerian soldier-politician who has trouble adjust-
ing to modern ways, particularly monogamy.

The Ticket, by Richard Sherman. A drama of an adolescent suffering from today's pressures of affluence.

Miss Teen-Age Connecticut, by John Roberts. A farce-comedy whose title is self-explanatory.

A Wind With My Name, by Peter Barton. A comedy-romance set behind the scenes at a great commercial airport.

In the entire group not one writer did a formula script, and no two wrote on remotely the same subject. In the earlier years of television, when perhaps two dozen anthology-drama programs were on the air (and receptive to new writers and fresh material), a good number of the scripts listed above would have achieved production and their writers could have looked forward to a hospitable and continuing market. As it happened, the 1965-66 season saw only one anthology show on the air, and its offerings were largely melodramas of the "action-adventure" genre.

In order to expand the shrinking opportunities in TV drama and Hollywood feature films, and to give the writers another arrow in their quivers, instruction in the second semester was broadened to include the documentary as well as the dramatic form. A generous group of top craftsmen in this field, including Phil Reisman Jr., Al Wasserman, and John Secundari provided scripts and films for study and also came to New Haven as guest lecturers. Among the documentaries studied were *The Real West*, *Sit-In, I*, *Leonardo*, *FDR—The Third Term* and Richard Hanser's two masterpieces, *The Coming of Christ* and *He Is Risen*.

This part of the program was hardly under way when one of the third-year playwrights, Milan Stitt, wrote (and placed with local station WNHC) a half-hour documentary on the work of New Haven's Long Wharf Theatre. Other documentaries in the works include one on art faking by Richard Burwell and another, by William Branch, on a traveling troupe known as the Free Southern Theatre. The latter is being considered for distribution by the United States Information Agency.

In the course of the year certain targets of opportunity—to use the Air Force phrase—made themselves apparent and were promptly exploited. That is, a number of ideas which started as television scripts proved to have enough body and substance to warrant their development into full-length stage plays. Ola Rotimi, after writing *Our Husband Has Gone Mad Again* as a television script, felt encouraged enough to go further and de-

velop it into a stage play which became the only student work to receive a major production at the Drama School in 1965-66. Similarly, Joseph Caldwell's *Downtown Holy Lady* grew into a full-length stage play which is currently under consideration for a New York production. Several other such plays were in the works as the year's program drew to its close.

Where are the quality television playwrights? There are dozens of the Old Boys still around. These esteemed craftsmen and artists of the 1950's, now writing "formula" to keep themselves in groceries, are waiting to hear the trumpet sound again. As for the new cadres, the Yale-ABC program has already developed at least a corporal's squad of young and able writers of television scripts. It is hard to believe that in a nation pushing toward a population of two hundred millions there are not more dozens of Golden Boys and Kids waiting only for a climate of acceptance for their talents.

It would be a pity if such promising young writers should be lost to television. If it happens, it would be because all of these new talents are more ready for television than television is ready for them.

TIMOTHY KELLY

"It has been my firm conviction for some time that the television industry must place its highest priority on the development of fresh new creative talents. Writing is the most important of these creative talents." This was the concept behind the Yale-ABC project, as stated by ABC President Leonard H. Goldenson. The aim of the project was to develop that idea into a creative workshop capable of producing practical results in the form of usable scripts.

At first glance, the idea seems to contradict the observation once noted by TV writer and novelist David Karp:

A labor relations negotiator for one of the major television networks pointed out that a survey of TV audiences revealed that it did not matter which writer wrote any particular episode of a TV dramatic series. The quality of one writer's contribution over another had no demonstrable effect upon the show's rating. It was said without malice, and accepted without regret, by the writer-members of the negotiating team which faced him across the table.

The participants in the program were asked, therefore, to assume the role of audience rather than that of artist. We were counseled by David Davidson to write only television plays we would like to watch. When the scripts began to appear it was clear that the writers were interested in anthology, rather than serial, drama. The aspiration, nevertheless, was that our scripts would find a home.

One of our hardest problems was combatting the whispering campaign against television. The medium, anyone will tell you, provides "no opportunity for artistry." But it would be wise to remember that the same situation existed when movies began to compete with the stage for a slice of audience pie. What were some of the onion bouquets pelted at the screen? Vulgar. Degrading. Cheap. Inartistic. All of these and more. But the screen *developed*. It may seem odd that so many deny television its right to be bad in order that it might some day be good. Any future applicant to the Yale-ABC program should ask himself the question: Do I really want to write for TV? If he considers himself a working writer, there will be no problem. He will desire as much as any writer to go beyond the cliché-type vision. On the other hand, if the urge to address himself to a single person or to a small group is uppermost in his thoughts, he may be in trouble.

Let's take a look at what the writers got out of the program. Perhaps it would be simplest to take this writer's case history as being more or less typical of the Fellows.

Prior to Yale, my writing was limited to paperback mystery novels and westerns. In 1963 one of my plays was given an off-Broadway production, a fast-wilting affair entitled *A Darker Flower*. Five plays of mine were in print for the community theatre market. A number of scripts floated from producer to producer. I earned my living as a drama critic, newspaperman, and magazine writer specializing in western Americana. My only work for TV had been a script for *NBC Matinee Theatre*, written while I was in college. It was re-written, by studio request, several times. When it finally appeared I was credited only with the story. After that I tried a few scripts, but none clicked.

I felt secure in the mechanics of writing for the magazine, the newspaper and the stage. I felt I could handle the requirements for the novel. Radio scripting, what there was of it, held no terror. (I emphasize here that I am speaking of the mechanics of writing. Content is another matter.) But in watching television, I kept asking myself, as a writer, how it was done—meaning how, technically, a scene was accomplished. I was anxious to learn how to write a screenplay or a television script for film.

I got a break when Bill Talbot, of the Samuel French office in New York, sent me word that the program at Yale was starting and that it might interest me.

The application, besides the usual background biography and two letters of recommendation, required three play scripts. I submitted *Song of the Dove*, a drama based on the Carlota-Maximilian story (it had just closed an engagement at the Stagebrush Theatre in Scottsdale, Arizona); *The Natives Are Restless*, an avant-garde piece that Theatre Northwest had taped; and *Welcome to the Casa*, an unperformed work with Arizona as its setting. I selected these because they varied greatly in style and approach.

I applied to the Yale-ABC program because the prospect of learning "how-to-script" was attractive. And I did learn. In a reasonably short time I was able to cope comfortably with the difficulties of screenplay and of work destined for tape. My first effort was an hour-long film drama about a bronco rider, *Johnny Rodeo*. When an Arizona channel asked to present the play, I converted the script so it was suitable either for live presentation or for taping. Six months earlier I wouldn't have known the difference between

film and tape. My concept of "live" TV was to take up the curtain and, with a single camera, photograph whatever was going on. I quickly found out that a filmed play is no film at all.

My next effort, *Viva O'Toole!*, illustrated the learning process. *Johnny* was instinctively a stage play which managed to become a TV script. *O'Toole* could never have been anything *but* a film. In short, thanks to the Yale-ABC program, I had begun to think *for* the camera and was no longer unsure of technique.

I was able to make the acquaintance of many TV writers and, through the program, I found a good agency which handled TV writers. One month after the program ended I was working on prospective scripts. Thanks to the agency's efficiency I had no difficulty in making the necessary contacts. Now the question was a matter of producing the right script for the right market.

From a critical standpoint, Yale was an odd choice for this program. It has absolutely no facilities for television work. No cameras, no taping machines, no technicians. There were a few writing courses for television listed in the catalogue (1965-1966) and that was it. When one considers the excellent TV facilities available in at least a score of universities throughout the nation, the choice becomes even more perplexing. My personal opinion is that the Yale Drama School is uncomfortable with television. The school's reputation was and is built on preparing students for the *legitimate* stage. Television may be in the "House of the Performing Arts," but this has not been formally acknowledged at Yale.

I did see portions of *Johnny* taped at a local station. A director and cast volunteered from the Drama School. It was the first time any of the aspiring actors had been on camera and they were anxious for experience. The camera setup was inadequate and the scenes didn't quite come off. Yet, during those four hours of taping I saw what writing for the camera was all about. I could write my camera cues and angles, but until I witnessed them in operation I had an incomplete picture of what I wrote.

Playwrights in the Drama School see their efforts in workshop rehearsal, rewrite as problems arise, and are able to see why their writing for the stage is effective or ineffective. This was impossible for the TV Fellows. Academic sensibilities aside, a practical workshop would certainly have been a bonanza. The brief taping period with *Johnny* had the makings of a workshop. But there was nothing beyond this.

A second oddity lies in the fact that the Fellows never visited the ABC-TV studios in Manhattan. Several of the program's writers spent the entire seminar without once entering a television studio. If the concept of the program was to widen the writer's horizons, fine and good. If it aimed at instructing the writer in the technical requirements of writing for film and television, it succeeded admirably. But for the most part, the Yale-ABC Writing Talent Development Program remained heremetically sealed from the benefits of *practical* experience. And this was a weakness.

While I was engaged in the Yale-ABC program, I attended the theatre in Manhattan with a group of acquaintances. It was TV-baiting time. Before curtain time, I was told what a debased occupation it must be for the writer. TV, they insisted, contributed nothing to the enjoyment of sensitive men and women. (Let's bypass the chestnut: "TV has *some* good things. Documentaries, newscasts, NET, and things like that.")

The performance began. It was one of the most memorable evenings I have spent in the theatre. I thought the production magnificent. So did my companions, two of whom boasted they didn't own a television set.

"Now if TV could do something like that—"

"*Could* TV ever do something like that—?"

"You see, don't you, the chasm between theatre and television—?"

The musical play was *Man of La Mancha*.

I took considerable pleasure in informing my amigos that I had seen the work in an earlier version (authored as a *television* drama by Dale Wasserman), *I. Don Quixote*.

Know what?

They didn't believe me.

WILLIAM BRANCH

TV Guide's skeptical reporter, Neil Hickey, had put it this way: "Seven young men (who) crafted fine crossbows and learned to fire them with accuracy—a service quaint and endearing, but more than a little beside the point."

The New York Times' video observer, Jack Gould, had broadly hinted at stock market and public relations collusion—emphatically denied by both Yale and ABC—in a long column in which, in a single cryptic concluding line, he reported the announcement of ABC's \$76,000 grant to Yale for a program of fellowships in writing for television.

Even David Davidson, the tall, white-haired veteran of television's vaunted Golden Age of original drama who had painstakingly shepherded the seven selected Fellows (plus five senior writing students from the Yale School of Drama's regular degree program) through nine months of seminar sessions, ruefully admitted that he had had a devil of a time persuading the School's new Dean, Robert Brustein, to accept the ABC grant for a second year. Brustein, it seems, held little hope that any good would come from having truck with commercial television interests, especially as regards serious original drama. In point of fact, the program for 1966-67 has been directed toward film rather than television, and two film writer-producers will replace Davidson as overseers.

Still, despite all this aura of uncertainty and doubt, all seven of us Fellows had stuck out the academic year at Yale, worked diligently under Davidson's genuinely earnest and effective stewardship, learned a good deal about the craft and techniques of crossbow firing—er, pardon me, I mean writing original drama for television, both live and filmed—and were now ready and eager to offer the world our shining talents.

One thing remained, however: a three-day colloquium on drama in television, or the lack of it, which had been planned by Yale as a sort of final wrap-up of the ABC Fellowship program for '65-'66.

So here it was the end of June, and gathered at Yale were some of the most illustrious names in the business: Herbert Brodtkin, David Susskind, Hubbell Robinson, Robert Montgomery, Jacqueline Babbin, Arnold Perl, Peggy Wood and others. Had this event been scheduled only a few weeks earlier, it might very well

have proved a mere exercise in frustration, for the outlook then showed no substantial or impending change from that long-standing dearth of original dramatic fare on network television so pointedly noted by critics. Hickey, Gould and Brustein. Yet there was an unmistakable mood of cautious, but genuine, optimism as the invitees gathered for an opening session in Yale's Woolsey Hall.

This welcome change in mood and outlook resulted from a couple of hopeful announcements in the month preceding the conference. David Susskind's Talent Associates, Lt'd.—now no longer associated with ABC Paramount—had signed a pact to present a series of "name" drama specials on television next season. Further, the Columbia Broadcasting System announced that it was initiating its own forthcoming series of original dramas, with fees to writers running up to \$25,000 for a single script. These swift, unexpected and dazzling revelations (when added to ABC's previously disclosed plans for a *Stage '67* series of entertainment specials—which is to include some live drama), created a sudden revival of hope among those who admired, and especially among those who participated in, the productions of such Golden Age offerings as *Playhouse 90*, *Philco Playhouse*, *Alcoa Hour* and *Robert Montgomery Presents*.

To the Yale-ABC Fellows it was, at least theoretically, an unlooked-for but heartily welcomed latter-day justification for the program we had just completed. If there was to be a genuine return to prime-time, original, contemporary drama on network television, would not these seven young writers—fortuitously just graduated from an exacting seminar on that subject—be marvelously ready and in the running to supply scripts for such a new market?

Well, possibly. Just possibly. But before any of us went out to begin spending a single dime of that up-to-\$25,000 per script we'd been reading about, a quick check with our agents soon made us reconsider.

In the first place, we were told, CBS was currently busy trying to interest the bigger-name Golden Agers—such as Paddy Chayefsky, Rod Serling and Reginald Rose—in commitments for its new series. In the meantime, those off-Broadway playwrights who, according to the first announcement, would "probably serve as writers for the series" had better cool their heels. The welcome mat was not yet out for them.

As for Susskind's series, Susskind himself confirmed at the conference that he planned television productions of stage plays by famous authors—Williams, Miller, Giradoux—and he would be unable to use even the Chayefskys, Serlings and Roses, let alone such total unknowns as us ABC Fellows. (Sorry, Fellows, but only the big names *sell*.)

That still left ABC-TV, with *Stage '67* having been announced months ago, with its plans to commission several original dramas for inclusion in its weekly series. But the ABC Fellows had already had their experience with this. Following through on what seemed to be a natural connection, David Davidson had submitted a number of the original scripts completed during the seminar to the *Stage '67* staff. After the first several came back (highly praised with a "don't call us, we'll call you" kind of commitment), we stopped sending them. *Stage '67* now has a new executive producer, Hubbell Robinson, and he has expressed interest in considering some of the fellowship scripts.

Of course, as Herb Brodtkin pointed out during one of the three panel sessions held during the second day of the conference, there is no guarantee that *any* writer's work is automatically good enough. This proved one of the reasons, we were told, for the decline and fall of the Golden Age, i.e., an eventual dearth of good scripts, even by the established writers.

Still, at this writing, the message coming in loud and clear is that if network television does indeed follow through on these announced plans for a return to original drama it will initially be more interested in the name value of the writer than the quality of his script.

This drew a dire and possibly prophetic warning during the Yale conference from veteran story editor Ed Roberts. If any projected renaissance of television drama proceeds to rely upon a return of the old writers rather than developing its own new writers, Roberts said, it will commit itself to failure. The excitement of the Golden Age, it was pointed out, stemmed not so much from the name of the writer as from the impact his script had on the audience.

The conference ended with a sober public session at which the reports of the three panels were presented. Save for a brief wrangle between Susskind and an FCC representative (who objected to the Susskind-chaired panel's uncomplimentary references to President Johnson's "non-involvement" in the task of improv-

ing television programming), the three reports were similar in their "cautiously optimistic" view of the prospect for a richer dramatic diet next season on network television.

I'm sure all seven of us 1965-'66 Yale-ABC Fellows share part of this optimism, but none of us is taking any chances. With our newly conferred "certificates of accomplishment" in hand and ready for framing, we are returning to our home areas with sincere appreciation to Yale and to ABC. But I suspect I am not alone in the sad notion that, if any of us does harbor aspirations of writing serious original drama, it will probably not be for television.

Not yet, anyway.

THE FUTURE OF TV DRAMA

A REPORT OF THE YALE CONFERENCE

GROUP I

Leader: David Susskind

Secretary: John Roberts

Members: Royal E. Blakeman, Richard Connell, Douglas G. Leonard,
Richard Lewis, Arnold Perl, Robert D. Squier, Howard Weaver

A truly balanced and diversified programming schedule should and must include meaningful drama on a continuing basis. While grateful for the recent promises from all networks to schedule a number of dramatic "specials" next season, drama as implied in this report means *original drama of the anthology type on a regular weekly basis*. Wherever the term "network" is employed we comprehend all three of the major commercial networks—ABC-TV, CBS-TV, and NBC-TV.

It is our conclusion that these networks are delinquent in their failure to schedule original anthology drama as part of their program service to the American public. We are aware of the fact that anthology drama, with rare exceptions, tends to receive lower audience ratings than such popular entertainment fare as the situation comedy, western, and variety or game show. Nevertheless, we conclude that regularly scheduled quality drama is of the essence in a network service devoted to serving the broad and diverse public interest.

As practicing television professionals, we recognize the practical problems of financing that kind of programming which invariably results in lower audience ratings. Why should an advertiser knowingly buy a dramatic program which delivers a smaller audience than could be gained with the same dollars spent for other types of programming? The answer is inescapable, and it can be concluded that anthology drama will exist on a continuing basis only if the networks, in whose hands all programming authority resides, subsidize such programs.

The networks have created ample precedent for such underwriting in the public interest. Countless numbers of news and public affairs programs have failed to win total sponsor support, but the networks felt it essential to the public interest that such programs be available, and they have willingly underwritten that part of the financing which could not be gotten from advertisers. The same public interest, and the same assumption of financial responsibility, must dictate future network action in dramatic programming.

Several members of the group suggested approaches for sharing the cost of TV drama which networks might present to sponsors. One plan involved making sponsorship of the most popular commercial programs available on a "preferred" basis to advertisers who would at the same time undertake sponsorship of drama. Herein, the cumulative audience reached by such a sponsor would give him a satisfactory cost-per-thousand basis for his expenditure.

Another inducement might be to reduce time charges to advertisers who sponsor dramatic programs so that they would not be paying "*Life Magazine* rates for *Saturday Review* circulation."

It was held that in this era of affluence some of the giant corporations might make outright commitments to the sponsorship of meaningful drama on a continuing basis, thus answering an urgent cultural need while simultaneously enhancing their particular "corporate images." In general, it was agreed that the cost of subsidizing dramatic programming might be passed on the sponsor in such a way that such production efforts could become self-sustaining.

It was a unanimous conclusion, however, that in the final analysis it is the sole and solemn responsibility of the networks to give the American public at least a minimum diet of television drama. This "minimum diet" was deemed to be at least one dramatic program on each of the three networks each and every week. The issue of network responsibility for programming drama was unanimously regarded as a serious moral obligation that can no longer be denied. Networks and television stations are more than private corporate enterprises. They are, as a result of the importance of their service, the vastness of their audiences, and the scope of their influence, public utilities whose responsibility to the public interest must always be paramount.

None in the group would deny that "art agitates," and that dramatic art on television will in all probability agitate the minds

and emotions of its mass audience. We were also aware that television networks, sponsors and advertising agencies do not welcome "agitated" reaction. Nevertheless, it was unanimously held that dramatic programming can neither be neglected nor abandoned because of the spectre of "excited" reaction. In a mature society, dramatic programming is a necessity and networks must not flinch at the prospect of such reaction.

Several practical remedies were suggested in this regard. First, the magazine concept of sponsorship is ideal for dramatic programming because multiple sponsorship obviates the criticism that might be directed at any one sponsor on any given program. It was suggested that, because broadcasting sponsors tend to be more directly identified with editorial content than print advertisers, disclaimers which explain that the sponsor had no part in the presentation of a program could be introduced. Such disclaimers were used with success by Standard Oil of New Jersey in its sponsorship of *Play of the Week*.

The Group unanimously concluded that the only criteria for dramatic programming on the commercial networks should be *excellence, quality, and good taste*.

All were in full agreement that the Federal Communications Commission must not abdicate its critical obligation to stimulate stations and networks toward more balanced programming. While no one recommended executive fiat, additional legislation or official reprimand, all were most anxious that there be no abatement in the continuing dialogue between the FCC and the broadcasters. It was a shared conviction that the FCC should use its enormous power of moral suasion to remind the networks of their responsibility for diversified and balanced programming.

It was commonly held that the FCC should be given increased freedom from political pressure. In its present relationship to the Congress, the FCC is frequently hamstrung in action and tempered in thought by its strict accountability to the Congress and the President. It was advocated that the FCC would be less subject to political whim if it were recast as a more independent agency—with longer terms for its commissioners in the tradition of the Federal Reserve Board. Such a change might also prove to be in the best interest of the Congress (many of whose members maintain relationships with broadcasting), because it would obviate the possibility of conflict of interest.

The group also wished to record its concern over President

Johnson's failure to make any public statement with respect to American television since his assumption of office. He has declined to comment on the power and potential of television in the creation of "the Great Society," and he has never noted its overriding importance in educating our people and improving their cultural level. His silence can only suggest that President Johnson seems to condone the present state of television broadcasting. He has made no contribution, wittingly or otherwise, to its improvement. The group urges the President to take note of the television scene and comment upon it.

As a practical method of advancing the cause of television drama, it is our unanimous recommendation that the government make immediate and substantial financial contribution to National Educational Television and the individual ETV stations now on the air. Under the present structure of broadcasting, educational stations could become a most important training ground for all the creative elements involved in television drama. Appropriations ranging from five to 15 million dollars should be granted to educational television for the creation of dramatic programming for its member stations. This money should be spent not for facilities or other "hardware," but to create dramatic programming of a qualitative and meaningful nature. The grant should be unrestricted—without strings or conditions—and all decisions regarding the nature of such should be left to the discretion of the educational television broadcaster. Two objectives would be realized by such an appropriation. First, a large and talented group of television professionals would be given the opportunity to practice their craft and learn television drama, and second, inevitable growth of television drama on educational stations would act as an effective stimulant for commercial broadcasters.

In any case, such an appropriation would help fill the vacuum which now exists in this area of programming. It would help to remove many educational stations from under the watchful eye of nervous state legislatures, and would reduce the agony of eternal fund searching which has unfortunately, become a way of life for the great majority of educational stations.

We concluded that the press has a continuing responsibility with respect to television drama when it re-emerges. A responsible press should pay attention to such programming. None of us suggested that any special tolerance or sufferance be extended to what is finally aired. The critics must and should "call them

as they see them," but it is of the essence that television drama be noticed, commented upon and evaluated. It was noted that the one television dramatic program that does exist on the network schedule—*The Chrysler Theater*—received scant attention during the past year despite a number of exceptional offerings. Television drama will thrive on attention, and it will wither with disinterest.

Finally, our group made note of the important contribution of the university to television drama. From the Yale Drama School alone television was enriched by the talents of Fred Coe, Tad Mosel, Herbert Brodtkin, Robert Hartung, Delbert Mann, George Schaeffer, Herbert Hirschman and many others. If a single university's drama school can contribute such outstanding creative manpower for the medium, it seems fair to assume that many other universities can make similar contributions.

It is, therefore, our recommendation that commercial networks as well as leading foundations make substantial contributions toward the establishment of dramatic schools at leading universities in the tradition of the Yale Drama School. Such universities should teach playwriting, direction, design and all the other related creative subjects. It should be the responsibility of the university to establish such schools and administer them without any outside interference. It is the group's conviction that establishment of such schools would provide television with a continuous source of creative manpower, thus more than justifying the initial investment.

It is also urged that networks provide outlets for the work of university students, providing such work achieves real professional competence. Writers, designers and directors cannot operate in a vacuum. Their work cries out for showcasing, and it should be the obligation of the networks to provide such opportunity either on the networks or on selected owned-and-operated stations.

Such endowments as we recommend should be the concern of all broadcasters—groups, independent stations and networks. The endowments should be adequate to establish an effective facility, faculty and curriculum.

In summary, we acknowledge the imminent progress of television drama with the announced scheduling by all three networks of a number of dramatic "specials." This is a heartening development—but it is only a beginning. Television drama must again become a staple on the schedules of all three networks. It cannot be a sometime thing.

GROUP II

Leader: Irwin Sonny Fox

Secretary: William Branch

Members: Peggy Wood, Alvin Boretz, Herbert Brodtkin, David M. Davis, Sidney Galanty, Ben A. Hudelson, Edward Barry Roberts, Hubbell Robinson

The sense of our group toward drama on television is one of "cautious optimism." "Optimism" because there seems to be the beginning of a renaissance of drama on television. "Cautious" because many of us have been down this road before and are well aware of the difficulties that beset any serious attempt to present such work in the medium.

One of the difficult problems we faced was to find a comprehensive definition for the *drama* we were to discuss. Each time we thought we had an answer we quickly found exceptions. Were we speaking of a series, a format show, a one shot film, or tape? (At one point Mr. Brodtkin suggested the definition, "What there isn't enough of on TV.") After considerable discussion we came to the realization that the major determinant should involve *content* rather than form, and another useful yardstick would be *intent*.

In the kind of drama we sought, the playwright and producer would seriously be attempting to come to grips with character and theme, and the resolution of the play would be dictated by the development of the plot rather than by the requirements of a predetermined format. This precludes soap operas and all programs in which we know the hero is to return the next week, but does not by any means preclude comedies. Such a categorizing is probably neither definitive nor always clear, but in the time we had it was as close as we could come to a meaning that satisfied us all.

In view of a new surge of interest in drama we thought it important to look back on the days when live and tape plays were a staple in the TV diet in order to examine why they were successful and why they all but disappeared. When TV drama was beginning its most exciting period there were approximately eighty cities with stations, and in those eighty cities there were far fewer sets than today. The audience was fairly select, and TV still enjoyed the luxury of risking failure. In those days a *Studio One* hour telecast cost only fifty thousand dollars.

There was also a spirit in those days which unified producer

and writer, who worked together as a creative unit. The producer fought for the scripts that he believed in, and the writer thought there was nothing more important in the world than to be on *Studio One*, *Alcoa Hour*, or *Playhouse 90*. Many good writers seemed to spring from nowhere, but in reality it was the time and encouragement that producers gave to them which enabled writers to develop swiftly with the medium. Not every show was deathless. The recollection of those who were intimately involved was that perhaps one out of three were completely successful. But viewers stayed home to watch and the next day the plays were discussed. Television seemed to be realizing its exciting promise.

What then happened? What caused the decline to set in?

We are aware that every program has its rise and fall. Merely through the working of time and exposure, shows lessen in impact, tend to become repetitive, and finally disappear. Certainly this was a factor in the decline of dramatic programs. So, apparently, was the difficulty of continually coming up with good scripts. *Playhouse 90* had several producers working with their units but there were simply not enough good scripts to fill that tremendous weekly demand. A complicating factor, and one that is perhaps overlooked, was that even in the Golden Age of drama many of the better writers deserted TV for the brighter gold of the theater and motion pictures. While it is held that TV deserted these writers, in many cases the opposite was true.

Finally, the rise of ABC-TV as a fully competitive network brought on a general debasement of programming standards. *The Untouchables*, *Surfside Six*, *Hawaiian Eye*, and *77 Sunset Strip* became the new success formats and the other networks tended to fall in line and keep up with the parade. This new competitive situation, coupled with the rise of film (with its attendant residual benefits) as a recording medium may have dealt a final blow to the live anthology drama.

Now, just when everyone has despaired of rescuing a fallen industry, we are learning of new, bigger and more expensive plans for new, bigger and more expensive drama. In considering the reasons for such a shift, it was agreed that there was no overwhelming economic demand upon the networks to undertake the difficult task of mounting serious television drama. Profits have never been higher. Total audience has never been larger. There are certainly no irresistible pressures from the FCC. Why the new thrust?

It was the consensus of this group that some fairly intangible considerations must be taken into account if we are to explain this new movement. Over the years there has been a mounting drum-fire of criticism from respected critics and members of the industry. We feel that there have always been executives and producers who have wanted to do drama, who have wanted to be proud of their medium, and who have been waiting for the right set of circumstances to develop. Apparently one of these circumstances was created when, in a speech to the NAB, Leonard Goldenson challenged the television industry to come up with new answers. Mr. Goldenson presumably took his own speech seriously enough to start the ball rolling, which resulted in the creation of next season's ABC-TV *Stage 67*. Although dramas are scheduled into only ten of 28 programs, this must nevertheless be regarded as a first important step.

While other networks were reviewing this development, *Death of a Salesman* hit with stunning force—creating tremendous excitement and acclaim, and delivering a respectable audience. The desire of each network to be the first in “prestige” now began to make itself felt, and what once was a competition which lowered programming standards may now become a competition to raise them. Talent Associates was able to sell *Glass Menagerie* and other dramatic specials to all three networks. CBS-TV will now commit money for scripts in order to create a dramatic series in which original plays with serious contemporary plots will be presented.

These developments are, to say the least, extremely welcome, but we approach them with some reservations. How will these dramas be greeted? How long will this resurgence last? We feel the answers depend on two very important factors. First, how will they succeed at the box-office? Will they get the ratings that will justify their continued existence? Can they earn their way? Second, if they fail to earn their way will the networks be willing to subsidize drama to the same extent they now subsidize documentaries and public affairs specials?

It was the sense of the group that unless the networks consider it important enough to their balanced programming (and to their image) to pick up part of programming costs, good drama on television will continue to fight an uphill battle. There was little doubt in our minds that people would rather laugh than be moved to emotion.

TV drama today is a high-cost programming element. *Death*

of a *Salesman* cost \$450,000 for the program and \$250,000 for air time. Xerox paid for air time only, which meant that CBS-TV underwrote that particular program to the tune of \$450,000 plus another \$500,000 for promotion. Certainly the network feels that its total investment of just under one million dollars was worth it, but the question remains whether all networks will continue to feel that subsidizing good drama, though not necessarily on as large a scale, is good business.

In the interest of insuring the chances for survival of drama on television, we developed a series of specific recommendations.

It was felt that the producer must possess a personal commitment to high program standards. His willingness to fight for those standards holds the key to the continued success of any drama project. Too many television producers try to satisfy packagers and thus have no point of view of their own. It is important that producers create an atmosphere in which the other members of the creative team can function with reasonable insulation from the pressures which are always present.

It was stressed repeatedly that the producer has the responsibility for working with, nurturing and developing the writer. The atmosphere in which the writer works is as important as the money involved. If the writer is treated with respect and dignity, he is encouraged to develop ideas and is guided in their development. If the markets are there, our feeling is that there will be a steady supply of good scripts.

Note was also taken of the absence of works by Negro writers and others who wish to write material which includes Negro American subject matter. Despite such outstanding exceptions as *The Defenders*, Negro characters and themes are still rare on the home screen. Further, Negro writers are seldom considered for assignments which are *not* related to race.

In the matter of planning a regularly scheduled dramatic series of hour-or-longer offerings, it is our recommendation that such a series be done *on a guaranteed three year basis and with a lead time of one year*. The lead time would, of course, give the producer a chance to examine and develop enough scripts for his first year of shooting. With the knowledge that a second year was guaranteed, the producer could begin gathering his scripts for each year's shooting at a much earlier stage. In the past, one of the major limitations in developing material has been the producer's inability to commit to future scripts until the first season was almost

finished. This practice cuts the lead time down to a matter of weeks, and the result is that the second year of a series is often inferior to the first.

We reviewed the entire question of program testing, but could arrive at no unanimity of opinion. By this technique a random sample of viewers is shown a program, usually a pilot. The participants are asked to indicate whether, from "minute one" to "minute sixty," they like or dislike a program. These reactions are recorded mechanically and fed into a computer. A continuous graph which gives a minute-by-minute profile of audience reaction is thus produced. Such testing services are conducted by CBS-TV (the Program Analyzer), and Screen Gems.

A marked division was apparent in the group's attitude toward testing. Defenders felt that there was much to be learned from the technique, arguing that Broadway had its out-of-town tryouts, motion pictures had their sneak previews, and a television series about to go on for 39 weeks needed to know its strengths and weaknesses before it appeared on the schedule. It was mentioned in the case of one pilot that the delineation of the main character was substantially changed because the sample audience felt it could not identify with certain of his characteristics. It was also noted that pretesting has been 90 per cent accurate in the past.

There were those among us, however, who felt that the submission of programs to such a testing procedure represented a complete abdication of production responsibility, and this is especially true for dramatic series. The dissenters argued that the subjection of any program which represented valid production concepts of producer, writer, scriptwriter, director, and cast to a minute-by-minute analysis was a flat denial of their skills and creative integrity.

On one point all of us were agreed. It would be utterly mistaken to pretest a "one-shot" TV drama, whether a special or on an anthology series. It is our firm recommendation that pretesting be avoided for these types of drama.

Finally, we turned our attention to the structure of television and what might be done in terms of revising that structure in order to enhance the presentation of drama.

We first examined the FCC's "50-50" plan, which proposes to allocate half of prime time to advertisers and outside producers while permitting the other half to remain under control of networks. It was observed that, whereas the advertiser was concerned with

just his hour on television, the network looked at the entire week's programming. It would be hard to imagine an advertiser accepting the responsibility for subsidizing serious drama with limited audience appeal under the "50-50" proposal. We have previously referred to the importance of the network image in the resurgence of drama, and it is our judgement that at this time the implementation of the "50-50" proposal would serve only to reduce the chances of a serious renaissance of dramatic fare.

Continuing our examination of revised network procedures, we also reviewed the value of the "magazine concept" of advertising, wherein the advertiser buys a certain number of spots in prime time on the network but cannot choose when those spots are carried. The object of this technique would be to divorce the advertiser from control of the content of any specific show. It was our conclusion that, since the advertiser would still be buying an average-rating minute, the network would still be under constant pressure to discard low-rated shows and substitute higher-rated shows. The magazine concept would not in itself strengthen the chances for increased dramatic programming.

Finally, it is our unanimous recommendation that a fourth network, to be made up of existing and projected educational television stations, be established and adequately financed by an annual allocation from the federal government. This recommendation is predicated on our conviction that there is no more effective way of disseminating education and culture than through television. Since the government assigns the public airwaves to stations which operate primarily for profit (thereby also deriving considerable tax revenue from these licensees), it is our feeling that a part of this revenue ought to find its way back into television. Such funds should be used to serve that segment of audience which is largely unserved by commercial television and to present programs which are in the public interest.

It seemed reasonable and proper to this group that the government create an independent television commission to receive and administer these funds to an educational network. It was also felt that the creation of at least five regional production centers would offer a new flexibility and diversity in the creation of programs for this network. We are well aware of the practical difficulties of implementing this proposal, but we also feel that once the idea is accepted in principle ways can be found to carry it out.

GROUP III

Leader: Jacqueline Babbin

Secretary: Richard E. Burwell

Members: Ashbrook Bryant, Peter Cott, Karl Genus, Robert Montgomery, Philip H. Reisman, Jr., David Walker

We established several general points of agreement during our meeting. It was agreed that the current state of TV drama is sadly deficient. There has been no market for the best of contemporary thought and feeling. There is no question that the current climate in commercial television is not conducive to attracting and holding creative people. The networks have not created an atmosphere in which talent can function to its best advantage. Finally, quality is not achieved only through the simple expenditure of great sums of money.

Mr. Montgomery cited in detail the history of American entertainment, and pointed out that until the government took an aggressive stand against monopolistic trends, it was not possible for the public to be served. Mr. Montgomery drafted the following independent statement:

It is axiomatic under our system of free competitive enterprise that, unless regulated by the government in the public interest, a commercial monopoly is inconsistent with, and mayhap highly damaging to our basic institutions. But an unregulated monopoly in TV program production and procurement seems to me doubly objectionable and indeed dangerous to the ideals and objectives of our free society. An overcentralization in network managers of economic and creative control over what the American public may see and hear exists in television, the most powerful and pervasive of mass communications media. Such control is doubly damaging not only in its restriction of economics but in its tendency to stultify the creativity and flow of the information and ideas which constitute a significant part of the raw materials from which public opinion and attitudes are produced.

The group agreed with the basic principles stated above. Most of the members questioned, however, the feasibility of such alternative plans as the "50-50" proposal. Mr. Montgomery felt that until the "roadblock" of network interference was removed, it was impossible and unnecessary to work out any future plans for the the medium. Others in the group were wary, however, of jumping from the proverbial frying pan into the fire—of replacing one type of tyranny with another. Redistribution of power to advertising agencies or packagers was not the simple answer.

Unfortunately, there was not enough time to discuss ways of avoiding these pitfalls. Nevertheless, a few more pragmatic ideas were developed.

1. Since the airwaves belong to the public and are merely leased to the networks, it is obvious that the public must have a voice in what they are watching. The problem is that the public is not aware of this fact and therefore does not exercise its privilege. This is basically the fault of the FCC, which does not let the American people know its power. The FCC has either been remiss in its duty or so timid as to be totally useless. Certainly, there are funds available to the FCC that can be used to disseminate public information concerning its powers. The FCC must acquaint communities with their responsibility to take action against those local stations which fall below established standards. Licensing is not automatic, but until the public is aware of its power to revoke a license, the community's voice will not be heard. If the FCC cannot—or refuses to—function in this matter, some other government voice should be appointed to represent public opinion.

2. If the government (for whatever reason) is powerless to fight the network lobbyists, then various agencies now representing the public must be given a greater voice in determination of the quality and content of what is telecast. The organizations that are now in existence, such as the National Association for Better Radio and Television, National Council of Churches, and others have failed thus far. Perhaps the best way of reactivating these groups is through local grassroot branches. Community theatres must also learn to speak up, for their future is also involved.

3. NET is to be congratulated for its leadership in the fight to establish a creative climate wherein new voices can be heard. Unless NET receives the support of the community, however, it will not succeed in creating a challenge to the commercial networks.

4. There has not been enough stimulation and genuine dedication within various craft guilds. Too often, unions have become bookkeepers and have lost sight of what they owe to their membership. SAG has taken a positive step in protesting network domination, but the other guilds have yet to be heard from. The unions owe it to their membership to protect creative as well as fiscal working conditions.

We are in agreement that, despite promises, television does not really offer much hope for new and imaginative programming. We must begin with the viewers, as distinguished from the purveyors, of American television. When the public outcry is loud and clear enough, they will get programs we can all be proud of.

I simply refuse to believe there is not room in this medium for programs that deal in effective dramatic form with the human condition today. I cannot believe we lack completely the capacity to dramatize in understandable and compelling terms some of the problems that haunt and terrify us in this racing century.

There are those who dismiss the Golden Age as nothing more than nostalgic nonsense, arguing that any clear-eyed examination of television's programming of the early and middle fifties would reveal it as primitive in terms of both economics and entertainment. And it is obviously true that much of our work in those days, at least in its execution, would fare poorly when compared with today's television's techniques.

Why then has it become a rallying point for the disenchanteds? What was it about the programming of that era which left such an indelible imprint that those of us who care about television's future treasure that part of its past? For there certainly was a happening in those years—and only the simplistic rhetoric of the button-down mind would totally deny it or denigrate it.

In my view, it was not the individual programs of the Golden Age which made it shine, so much as its spirit; for it was, it seems to me, a time of creative ferment in the medium. Neither its imaginative people—both before and behind the camera—nor its management were as yet cynical. Certainly they wanted success, but they also placed value on success with distinction. They were not blandly following the precept that appealing to the lowest common denominator was the only way to achieve that success.

There was a spirit of adventure in the air.

And most important of all, there was room for failure.

Hubbell Robinson

—remarks before the
National Press Club,
Washington, D.C.
May 8, 1966

GRAPHIC DESIGN IN TELEVISION

FRED MOGUBGUB, SAUL BASS
GEORG OLDEN, ELINOR BUNIN

Last spring members of the New York Chapter gathered at the Huntington Hartford Gallery of Modern Art to screen representative examples of outstanding graphics design and animation creation for the medium. The program, part of the Chapter's continuing *Forum* series, was produced and presided over by *Elinor Bunin*, whose work was featured along with creations by such distinguished designers and animators as *John* and *Faith Hubley*, *Fred Mogubgub*, *Georg Olden* and *Saul Bass*.

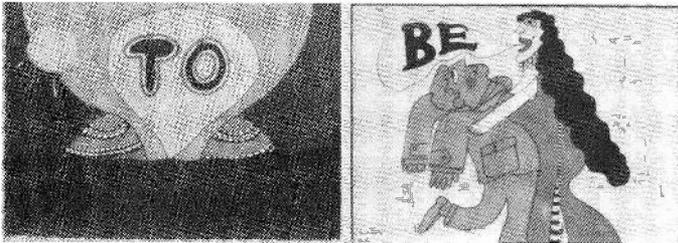
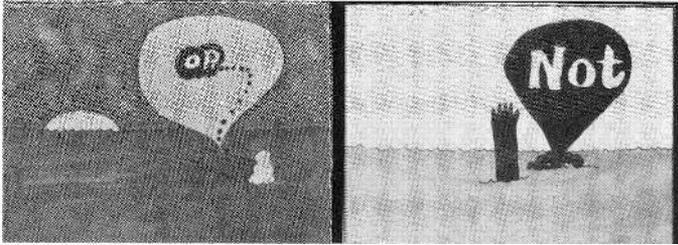
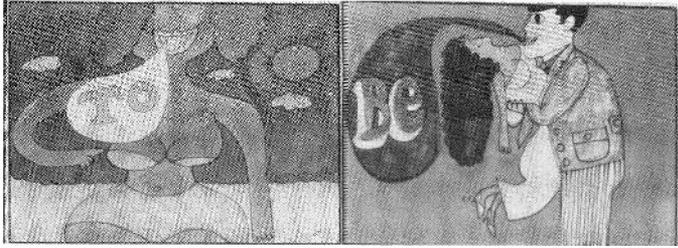
With the gracious assistance of Miss Bunin, *Television Quarterly* has prepared the following sampling from the best of current graphics and animation now displayed in American television. Commentary is taken from the remarks of those who addressed the forum.

*A native of Fall River, Massachusetts, **Fred Mogubgub** has been an independent film-maker for the past four years. His work has earned every major award in the advertising design field, and his most recent film, Enter Hamlet, was given a first prize for feature shorts at the Venice Film Festival.*

***Saul Bass** has received international acclaim for his contributions in graphic, industrial, film and exhibition design. Included among his many awards and honors are an "Art Director of the Year" citation from the American National Society of Art Directors and awards for distinguished contributions in design from the Museum de Arte Moderno in Rio de Janiero and the Philadelphia Museum of Art.*

*A pioneer in the field of television design, **Georg Olden** began his TV career as Director of Graphic Arts for CBS-TV in 1945. He has earned nine consecutive Gold Medal awards from the Art Director's Club of New York, as well as a Special Gold Medal from the same organization for "outstanding contributions to television graphic arts." Mr. Olden is presently a Vice-President at McCann-Erickson, Inc.*

***Elinor Bunin** has won nearly thirty major awards in the field of design. Holder of two degrees from Columbia University, Miss Bunin served as Senior Designer in the CBS-TV Graphic Design Department, and Creative Director for New York's Channel 13 before opening her own studio. Among Miss Bunin's most recent honors is "The Award For Excellence" from the Art Director's Club of New York, given for her color opening of the CBS-TV special, Color Me Barbra.*



FRED MOGUBGUB

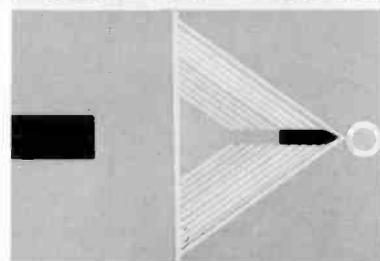
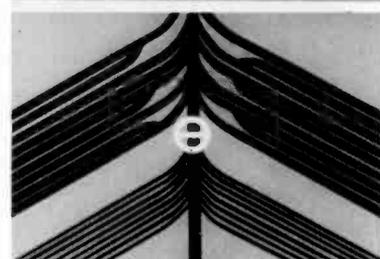
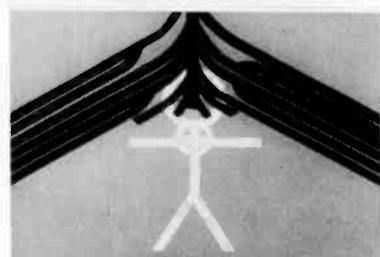
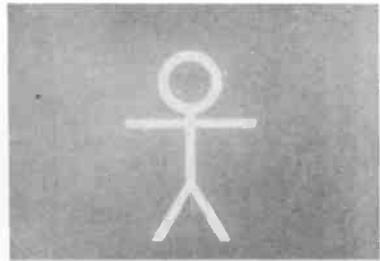
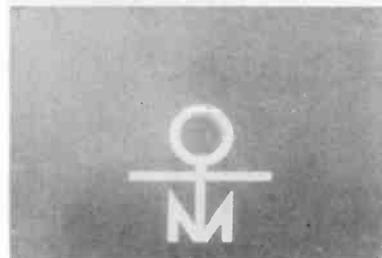
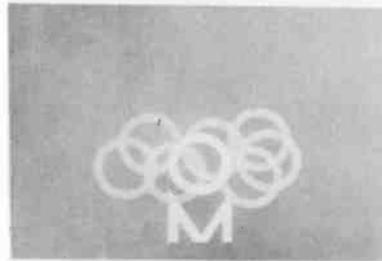
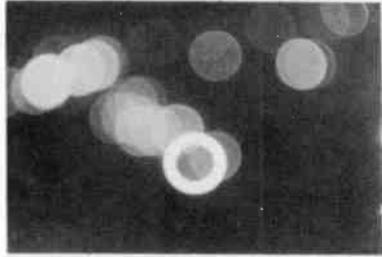
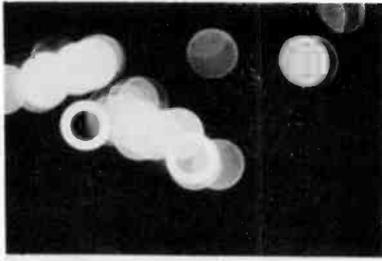
I believe that in order to be a film-maker, one should be like a child who puts down his thoughts boldly and with complete confidence. When a client comes to me for a film he must leave me alone. The moment he puts his thoughts into it, no matter how original his ideas, he has changed it. One person alone must decide what the final film will look like. You must please yourself first of all. You cannot possibly please everyone. Everything you put down you must believe is right for you. If a client requested a change I would turn him down, only on the grounds that I am not doing him justice by trying to please him. If I make this change, I am no longer an artist, and I believe film-making is an art. My form of expression is not in words but in images.

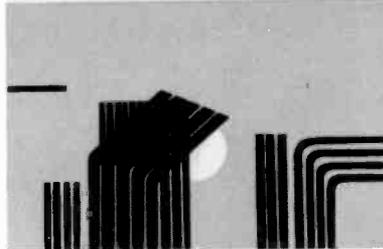
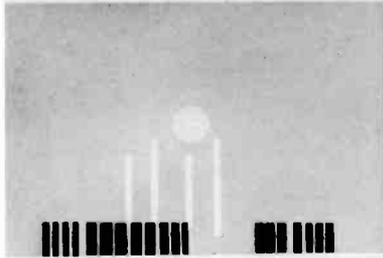
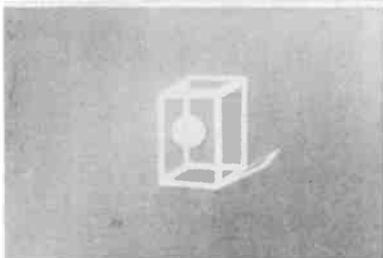
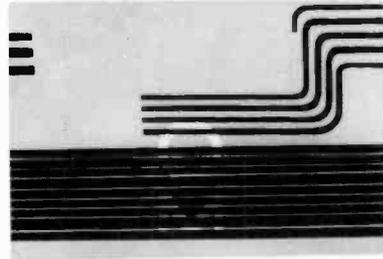
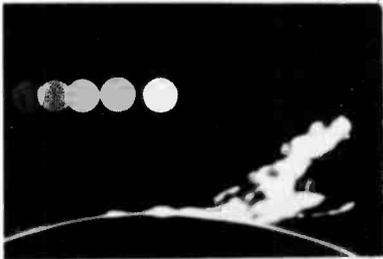
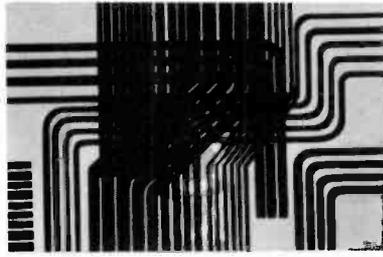
Fred Mogubgub

OLIN MATHIESON

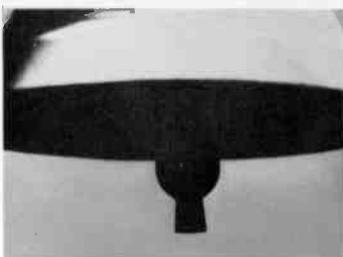
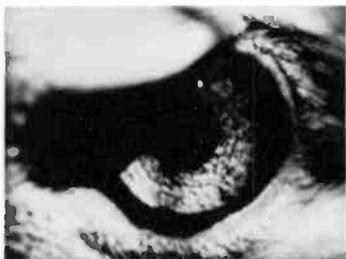


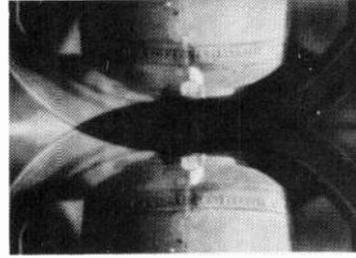
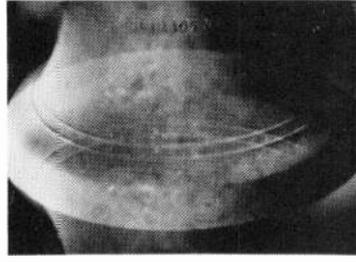
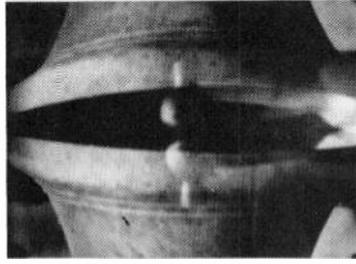
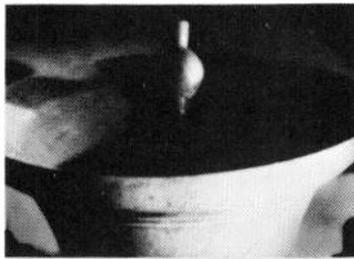
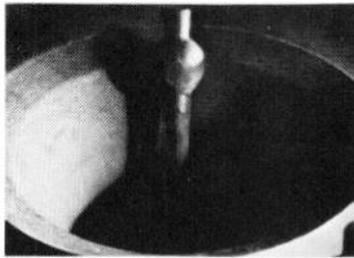
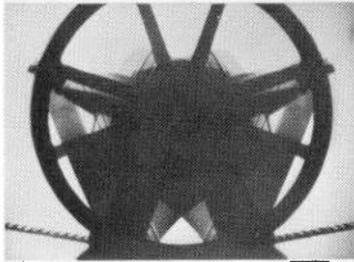
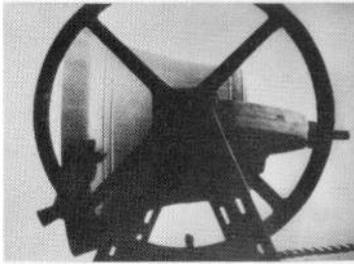
SAUL BASS





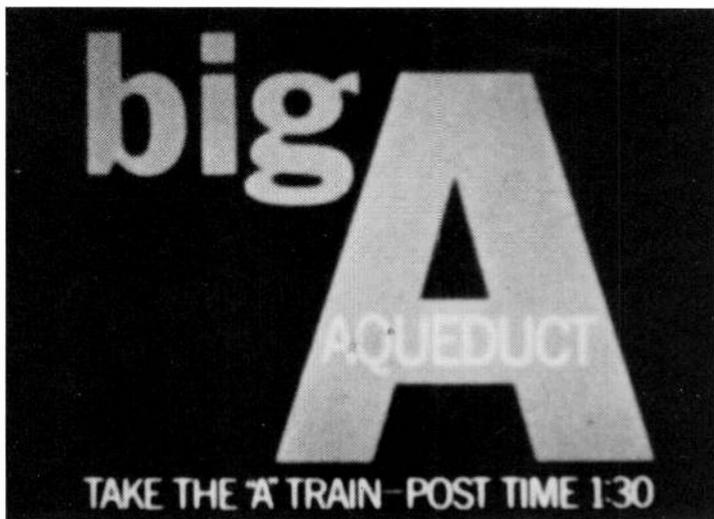
SAUL BASS





SAUL BASS

GEORG OLDEN



The graphic designer who works in an advertising agency has a great advantage over those still working in television program departments. You don't have to ask to do original things. You simply do them because that is what the agency expects of you. I would enter a plea for those who are still in chains in network programming departments. They are visually trained, but these people are expected to do titles, period. I'm not knocking title work, but they deserve broader opportunities to execute creative design. Limiting them to titles is a waste of their talents. They should be involved in the entire program concept because they can make enormous creative contributions to the entire mise-en-scene.

Georg Olden

Maybe what you need is a nice
relaxing hobby out in the sun

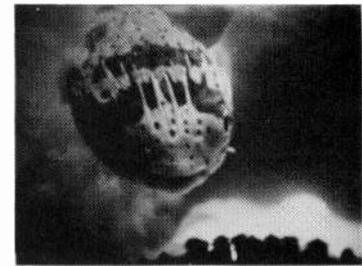
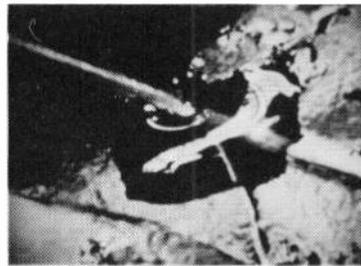
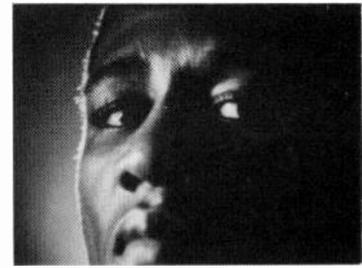
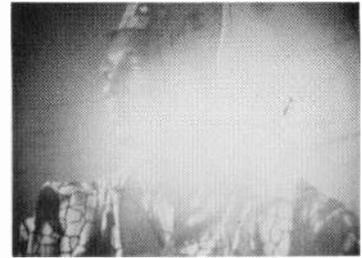
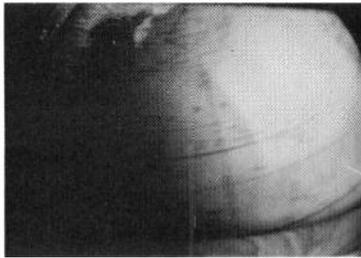


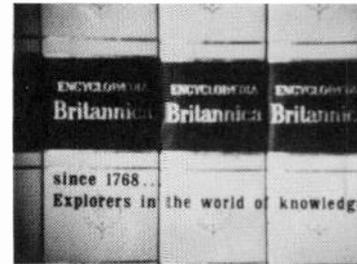
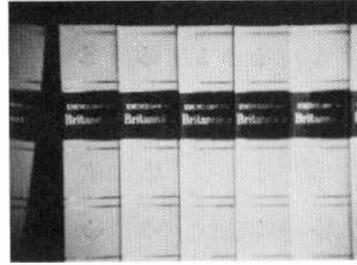
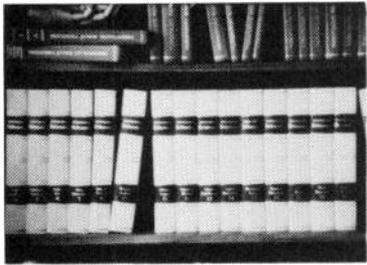
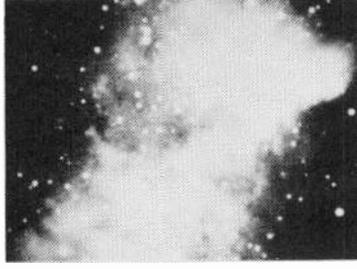
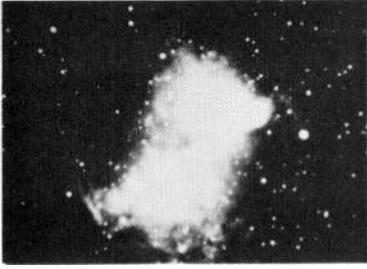
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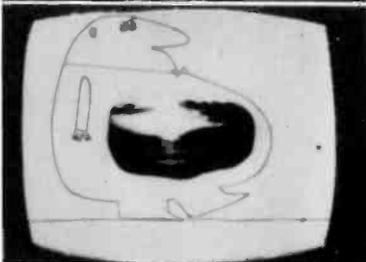
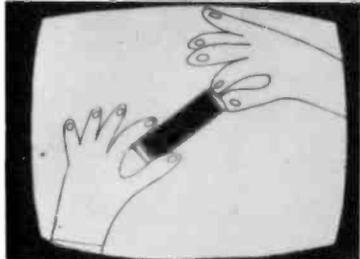
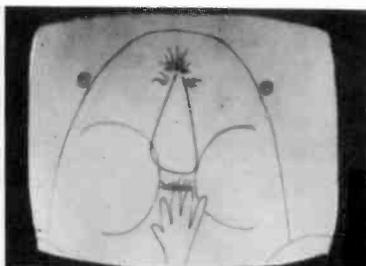
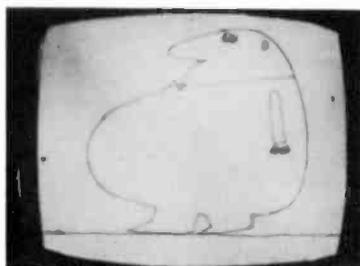


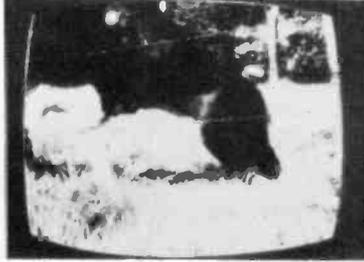
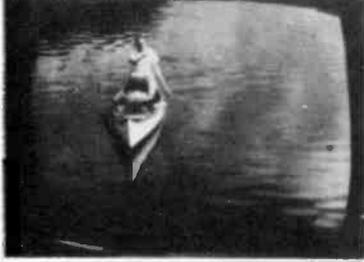
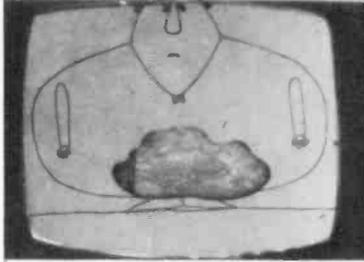
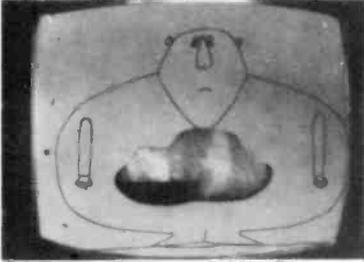
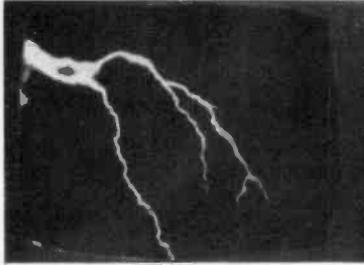
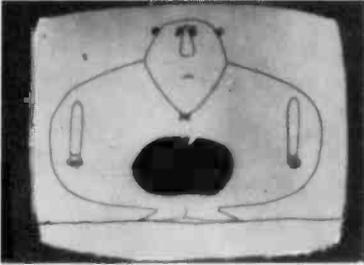
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TAKE THE 'A' TRAIN - POST TIME 1:30

GEORG OLDEN









GEORG OLDEN

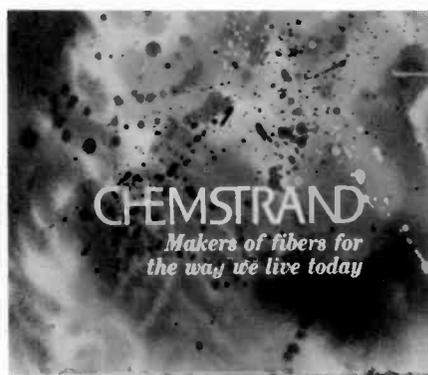
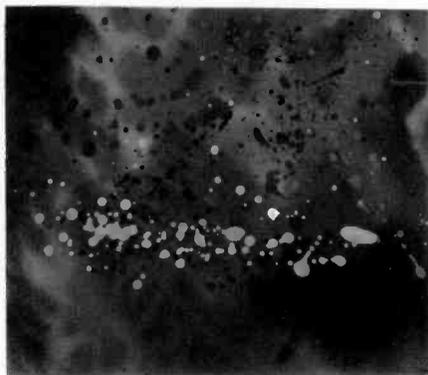
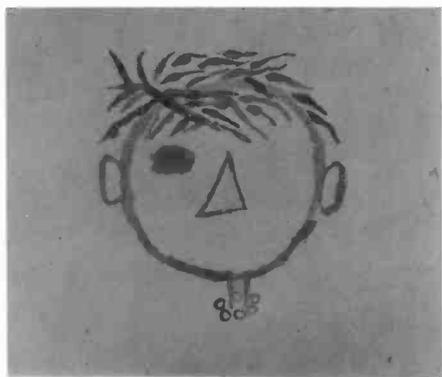
ELINOR BUNIN



In television, it is necessary that the designer begin with a strong concept. He must be able to execute his ideas in sound and image which combine to set mood and tone. The design must be provocative. If he is successful, the brief, momentary flow of his design upon the screen can carry that idea, emotionally and intellectually, to the viewer.

Each new assignment demands a new expression. Challenges must be solved in ways which are unique to the problems. Versatility is essential. The designer must be prepared to search for a solution in forms with which he is familiar—double images, abstract shapes, live action, animation, collages, stills—as well as in forms which he may not even have discovered.

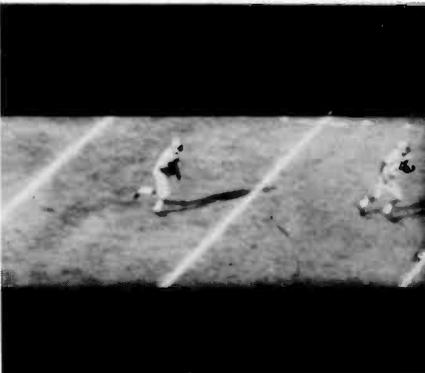
Elinor Bunin

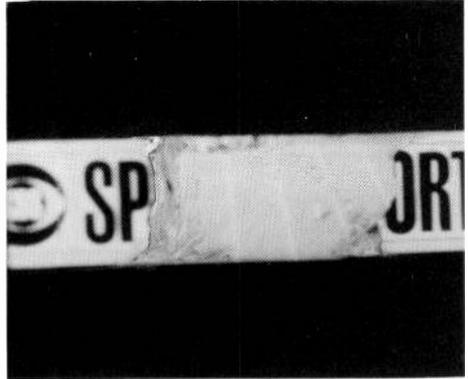
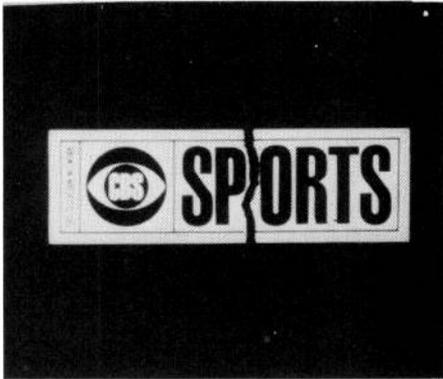
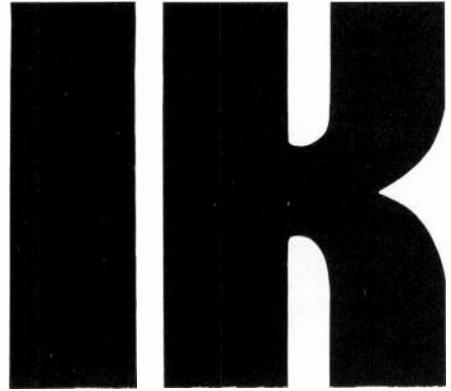
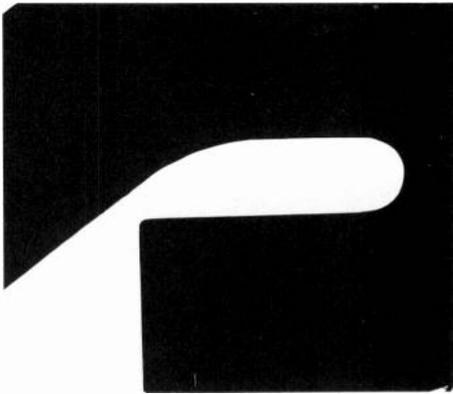




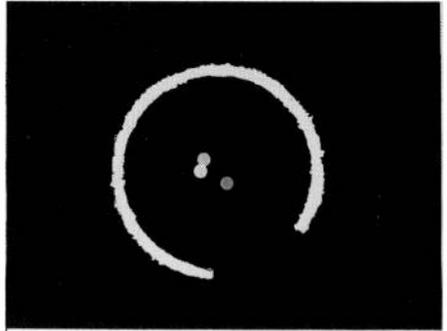
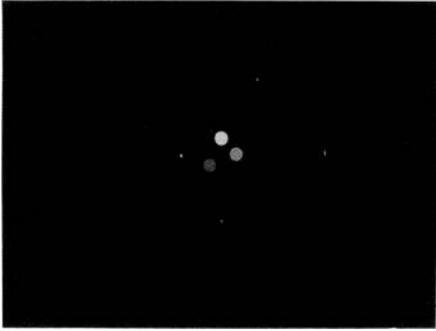
ELINOR BUNIN

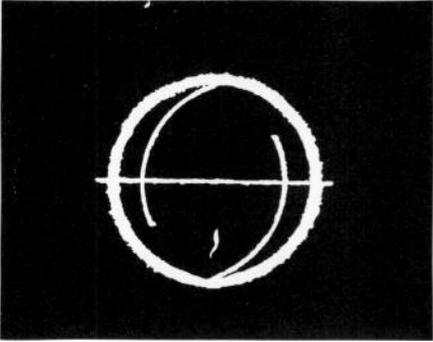
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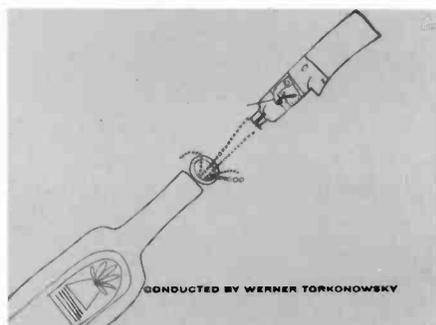
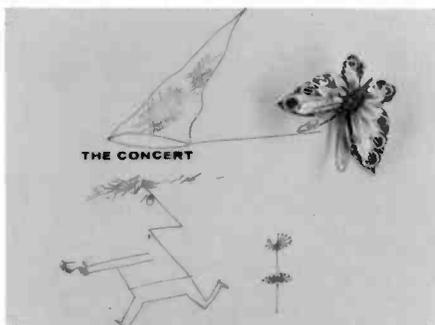
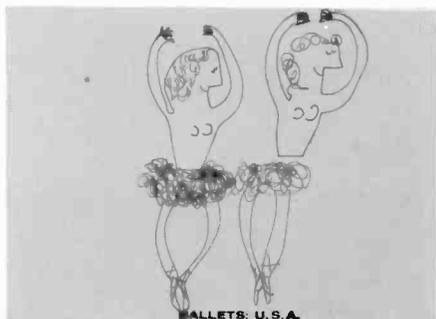
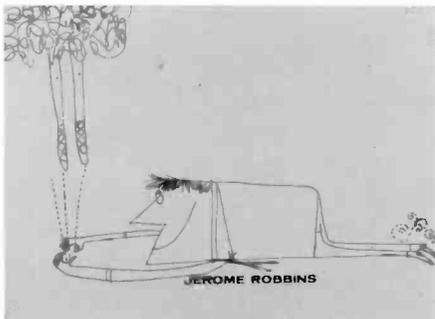


ELINOR BUNIN





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President Kennedy urged me to think about television and I tried. I doubt that there is any relationship between the government and its citizens which is more sensitive than that between the FCC and its broadcasting licensees. As a result of this sensitivity there is often a failure of communication between the two.

We have built in this country an uneasy alliance of private ownership and public regulation. We have built contradictions and paradoxes right into the system and we have an eternal war, it seems to me, between those who must regulate and those who must be regulated. The holder of a license has tremendous freedom, but we, as citizens, demand that there be some periodic public accounting to the representatives of the people as the price he must pay for this license. What I tried to do at the FCC was to encourage the public to participate in broadcasting more directly.

I have always recognized (and my service in the government reinforced this feeling), the dangers in having government agencies developing vested bureaucratic interests of their own. What I tried to do was extend the debate beyond the words exchanged at broadcast conventions.

Broadcasting is too important to be left only to the broadcaster, or only to the FCC. As the debate expands in coming decades to larger arenas, there will be growing awareness of the ever-increasing responsibility of television in our time. Having just returned from a conference involving some eleven European broadcasting systems, I believe more firmly than ever that under our system, imperfections notwithstanding, we have built the best and finest broadcasting system in the world.

Television educated a whole nation when it focused on the flight of astronauts into space. It opened up a whole new world when it broadcast the Ecumenical Council. When we see the Olympics live from Japan, or when the tragedy of a great President's assassination shatters our hearts and hopes, we sense that it is television which somehow holds the nation together. It pieces us back together when it provides such unprecedented links between the public and history.

Aristotle thought that a democratic community could not survive with more than 30,000 people—the outer limit of the number of people who could combine together to form a democratic society. I think that with television there is every opportunity to continue the democratic process in a nation with hundreds of millions of people, provided we use the medium to educate and elevate as often as we can. An instrument of the people which can rise to as great heights as television has, must never be permitted to fall into the depths and despair which characterized its early years.

Newton N. Minow
—before the City Club
of Rochester, New York
Spring, 1966

COMMENT

In a recent address, Edwin R. Bayley, Vice-President for Administration of National Educational Television, made these observations regarding the development of a sound financial-support program for educational television.

The manager of our New York station is convinced that ETV stations must be allowed to run a limited number of commercials to support operations. He sees no other stable, continuing method of financing, and contends that he could do this without compromising the quality of his programming. We do not agree. To us, it seems inevitable that dependence upon advertising would result in cheapening programs to gain a mass audience, and in a loss of the independence that most ETV stations now enjoy. If you stand to lose a fat advertising contract by laying bare the phony claims of a drug manufacturer, you're going to think twice before you do it.

Further, if an educational television station does take this route for financing, it will soon lose all of its regular support. Citizens—and foundations for that matter—are unlikely to contribute their dollars if they see those advertising dollars rolling in. And with the loss of broad-based support goes the loss of independence. The arguments against commercialism seem to me overwhelming.

A much more widely held view is that government must provide the basic financing for educational television. Advocates of this course argue with some merit that no other source is big enough to support the undertaking, and point out that under the Educational Television Facilities Act the government has furnished funds for station equipment without inhibiting freedom.

Proponents of government financing also cite the example of the BBC, which does seem to operate independently and critically despite the fact that it is supported by the government. Some of the backers of this view propose that educational television be financed through a tax on television sets or a tax on television advertising, methods employed in a number of foreign countries.

The majority of us at National Educational Television are opposed to government financing of ETV programming. Personally, I am a Democrat, and I am not opposed to federal aid for highways, water pollution, urban renewal or even education. But I am opposed to government aid in the field of mass communications where you are concerned with the same thing that is of primary interest to the politicians—public opinion. If there is government support for making programs in public affairs, the government is going to want to tell us what programs to make and what to say about the issues.

Experience supports this view. A substantial number of our affiliated

stations are licensed to universities or to state boards or commissions. All of these stations worry about the legislature, from which they get their funds. In some cases, these stations have refused to run NET programs which dealt with controversial issues or which took a position critical of the government or contrary to the view of the governor. Nor do many of these stations produce local level programs on controversial issues. In some cases, station boards have stepped in directly to veto the showing of programs, and station managers have been called before them for explanations and reprimand.

Officials of NET, too, have been asked to appear before committees of the Congress to explain programs about which constituents have complained. NET President John White appeared before a sub-committee of the House Foreign Affairs Committee to defend a film about Cuba which some Cuban refugees thought was too kind to Castro. He convinced committee members that it wasn't. I have met with committee staffs on that and similar issues. Since we get no government funds now, these committees have no power to compel us to appear, and we have done so out of curiosity. But the scrutiny is close, even under these circumstances, and if we were reliant upon government for our operations, I believe firmly that our freedom and our independence and our ultimate value as an institution would disappear.

The BBC can remain relatively free because England's tradition of individual freedom of speech is stronger than ours, and because in England, like several countries in Europe, there is a centuries-old tradition of the free use of government funds for the advancement of culture, with no strings attached. Here, Congress investigates almost everything, and especially where government funds are involved. The inclination to dictate program content was demonstrated this year in the House debate on funds for the new Commission on the Arts, in which Congressmen wanted to approve in advance the individual artists or musicians who might receive grants under the program.

In our case, it is the Ford Foundation which gives us freedom. The Foundation asks only that we concern ourselves with what *we* think are the vital issues of the times. It does not tell us what *it* thinks are the issues, nor does it tell us how to treat these issues or what stand to take on the issues.

And therein, I think, lies our value to the American people.

At this point I have backed myself into a corner. I have no magic solution to the problem I have posed. The *problem* is relatively simple: educational television, and I mean both the stations and the central programming service, needs more money just to do well what it is doing now. For the future, to meet the challenge of advancing technology, it needs even more money. The biggest source of potential financing is the federal government, which brings with it the danger of federal control. I have ruled out advertising because of what it would do to programming. What is left?

Ideally, the most desirable solution would be continued foundation support at a higher level of funding, preferably through an endowment or multi-year commitment, and with the support of other foundations than the Ford Foundation. This would provide a maximum of independence.

While I am talking about the ideal, I would like to say that what I have proposed is not very ambitious. There should be a time when there will be several educational channels in each community. There might be one station that provided a general informational and cultural service like the present one. There might be another channel that specialized in "how-to-do-it" programs in gardening, cooking and carpentry, for example. There might be another that furnished adult education courses. And there might be several national programming sources like National Educational Television. But total foundation support for even the minimum development I have outlined is unlikely. Foundations like to experiment, blaze new trails, get things started, and then get out and let some one else carry on. They don't like to tie up a major portion of their funds for years in advance to sustain any operation, even a good one.

But unless some solution is found, the most valuable part of educational television might be crippled or become the captive of the federal government. Instructional television will continue, financed by local school systems, but there might be no critical, independent examination of public affairs on television.

My guess is that foundation support will continue, and that contributions from industry and business will increase. But I doubt that this support will be sufficient to make government contributions unnecessary, and I am aware that there is growing sentiment for the idea of government support of educational television. Some compromise may have to be made.

The compromise might be government support for capital outlays and equipment, including the cost of interconnection. Under the best of conditions, such grants would not lead to government control of programming. A further safeguard might be the establishment of a quasi-public, partially-independent agency like the National Science Foundation, through which aid might be channelled one step removed from Congress.

Perhaps the Carnegie Commission on Educational Television, a high-level group which has been working for more than a year on this very question of financing will come up this fall with a solution no one has thought of. And maybe the unpredictable forces of technology will turn up something that changes it all.

What I *am* sure of is that some way must be found to continue the kind of educational television I have been talking about, and to improve it and to extend its availability. And I am confident that this will be done, one way or another.

BOOKS IN REVIEW

Paul P. Ashley. *SAY IT SAFELY: Legal Limits in Publishing, Radio and Television*. Seattle: University of Washington Press. 1966.

Written by a Seattle lawyer in layman's language, this book is intended to be a Baedeker for those who must—or should—wrestle daily with the legal risks inherent in what they publish or broadcast. As a practical, everyday handbook for authors, newspaper people, publishers of magazines and books, radio and television broadcasters, advertising agencies and public relations counselors, the book should serve its purpose well. It is the kind of book to which those who toil in the fields of communications will want to refer frequently.

Say It Safely is the third edition of the author's original work, published ten years ago; that in itself was an outgrowth of Mr. Ashley's *Essentials of Libel: A Handbook for Journalists*, published in 1948. The present work shows the effects of the revising and editing process whereby the author has succeeded in concentrating a significant amount of important information in only 163 pages. Mr. Ashley focuses on two areas of danger for those who write or photograph and publish or broadcast—the law of libel and the right of every individual to privacy. He does not treat copyright, an entire area in itself, and one in which publishers and broadcasters must be aware of the risks.

The author defines libel as any false statement, written or broadcast, which tends to bring a person into public hatred, contempt or ridicule, cause him to be shunned or avoided, or injure him in his business or occupation. It is noted that a photograph is considered written matter, and that a libel may consist of a statement of fact—such as a story that a person has acted dishonestly—or a statement of opinion based on facts, actual or supposed, that says a person is a criminal. The author's definition of libel does not make clear that the mere writing of defamatory matter in itself is not libelous; there must be a "publication" or communication of the libelous statement to a third person in order to establish a defamed person's right of action for damages. Later in the text, however, the author does stress that publication is an essential ingredient of the actionable wrong of libel.

Continuing his consideration of libel, Mr. Ashley points out that it makes no difference that no libel is intended so long as the words used may reasonably be understood to be defamatory by some readers. This distinguishes libel *per se* (defamation evident from the words themselves—"X is a Ku Kluxer") from libel actionable only if actual damage can be shown. Libel *per se* gives rise to a cause of action without actual damage to the person defamed. The author lists six pages of expressions which are libelous *per se* when used. They cover a broad range of statements typical of those which must be evaluated as to risk in the everyday working world of communications people.

The author devotes several chapters to the important exemptions or privileges which make an otherwise libelous statement actionable. He takes care,

however, first to disabuse his readers of any notion that good intentions, mistake, or explanation will excuse one from responsibility for defamatory remarks. Truth is, of course, a good defense, but this means being able to prove that what is said is fact, not merely that some one else is accurately quoted. Publishers—whether their media be print or broadcast—must be circumspect not only as to what *they* say, but as well with respect to what others are permitted to say for publication by them. This, of course, includes advertising copy as well as other quoted matter.

Privilege as a defense to a charge of libel is of two kinds—absolute and qualified. Mr. Ashley points out that publishers and broadcasters have available only the latter as a defense. The protection of absolute privilege applies only to judicial proceedings, legislative proceedings, and the acts and statements of important government officials. A qualified privilege is a good defense to a defamatory statement when the public interest in information outweighs in importance the protection of the individual. The defense is lost if the publication—i.e., communicating the defamatory statement—is malicious. Factual reports without liability may be made, even if false and defamatory, in the reporting of what takes place at a trial or other official judicial proceeding, of legislative debate and action, and of higher level executive hearings and proceedings.

The importance of the decision of the U. S. Supreme Court in *New York Times Co. v. Sullivan* (decided in 1964 and already a landmark case in the law of libel), is discussed. The *Times* published an ad which described the maltreatment of Negro students in Montgomery, Alabama, and contained statements clearly libelous *per se* of a public official. In deciding against the public official who sued the *Times*, the Court held that a public official may not recover damages for a defamatory falsehood unless he can prove that the statement was made with actual malice—that is, with knowledge of its falsity or with reckless disregard of whether or not it was false. It should be noted that the *Times* case did not change the law. A jury may still infer actual malice from the facts. Whether defamatory statements about a candidate for public office will be similarly privileged is a question not yet decided by the Supreme Court. The author, therefore, wisely cautions publishers and broadcasters to consult local counsel in this area.

After discussing qualified privilege as a defense to defamatory statements of fact, the author explains the defense of fair comment applicable to defamatory statements of opinion. Fair comment, he writes, is an opinion fairly stated in relation to the facts and is therefore not libelous. He points out that the *Times* case has liberalized a strict rule formerly applicable, but cautions that even the liberalized rule has its limitations. It is still essential in commenting about a public official or candidate that the comment be in the public interest and that there exist an honest belief in the truth of the statement. Careless news gathering or accepting information from an unreliable source may make it difficult to convince a jury that there was honest belief and therefore no malice.

Mr. Ashley proceeds to touch upon the defense of truth, consent and replies, and the considerations involved in deciding whether to publish a retraction of a defamatory statement. The laws of the various states differ in regard to a retraction, many holding that a retraction may be introduced in evidence

in mitigation of damages. Again, the advisability of consulting local counsel is stressed. Ashley also discusses contempt of court—"any act which significantly derogates the dignity and authority of the court or which tends to impede or frustrate the administration of justice." The author points out that critical editorial comment, ineptly worded in respect to a pending suit, is an obvious path to contempt proceedings. While a case is being tried the publication of supposed facts not admissible in evidence may force the judge to grant a mistrial; the publisher by his publication has interfered with justice and invited contempt proceedings.

Three important chapters near the end of the book are devoted, respectively, to the expanding right of privacy, political broadcasts, and free speech and fair trial. The author summarizes clearly the general rules for determining when the right of privacy does not exist. He points out that courts have said the right protects against "the unwarranted appropriation or exploitation of one's personality." Ashley's message to publishers and broadcasters is that if they will exercise a modicum of discretion and use the good taste which, as individuals, they exercise in their own affairs, the now-evolving right of privacy will not become a greater menace. In contrast to libel, truth is not a defense where right of privacy is concerned; nor is absence of malice a complete defense.

In the chapter on political broadcasts, Mr. Ashley discusses the requirement of the Federal Communications Act that, if a station permits any person who is a legally qualified candidate for any public office to use its facilities, equal opportunity must be afforded all other such candidates for that office. He sets forth the guidelines for determining whether a person is a legally qualified candidate. By a 1959 amendment to the Act, the meaning of "use" has been clarified to eliminate certain news-type programs; the author lists these, with an explanation. While broadcasters may not censor candidates' statements, Mr. Ashley urges them to use persuasion to obtain and review copies of scripts in advance.

In the chapter on free speech and fair trial, an area of much heated discussion by lawyers and the press since the Oswald and Ruby cases, the author summarizes the opposing viewpoints of media and the bar on coverage of trials. He reports on specific recommendations by various groups, including a committee formed by the Massachusetts Bar Association and the Boston Bar Association, assisted by members of the Massachusetts judiciary. Special attention is given to media coverage of the work of the juvenile courts.

In summary, Mr. Ashley states that when performing the vital functions of scrutinizing, reporting and commenting upon public affairs, media are today afforded greater protection than was formerly available to shield them; when publicizing purely personal and private affairs, media are now held to higher standards of accuracy and consideration than in years past.

Mr. Ashley's book describes the high spots, the rocks, and the shallows that publishers and broadcasters must be wary of. It is a compendium of danger signals, but it demonstrates that there is still room in which to maneuver.

EDWARD T. BURNS

Stern & Wincor

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LOOKING AHEAD



THE FREEDOM TO SEE

The institutions of a free society exist within that delicate tension between essential stability and necessary change—between the recognition of what can be done and the vision of what must be done. In our democratic society we have traditionally expected the major media of public communication to perform functions related to this state of dynamic tension: to support a stable social fabric and, at the same time, to help institutions revise, reshape and redirect their aims and purposes.

Because of television's dominant control of this society's attention, many regard the medium as a sheer and raw electronic power to not only introduce but to *force* change. Is it possible that television, given its unique nature, is not equipped to do so? The point of argument is what is meant by "control" and "attention."

Some years ago John Crosby, in his normal state of high irritability, remarked that "television viewers must not be watching what comes out of the tube—they must be staring." As is most television criticism, the observation is only half correct. We must recognize that, for the most part, the audience for television is probably not watching, at least if we define "watch" in that traditional sense in which a performer, an editor, a director, a teacher, a coach—anyone who wishes to instruct, enlighten or sell a cause—says, "Now watch this...." The natural consequence of this approach to the communicative process becomes: "If you watch, I will show you something that will lead you to change a pattern of activity." One watches, one develops new attitudes, one pursues new lines of action and one learns. In this definition of watching the audience for television is not cooperating at all, and it is doubtful if it can be led by the application of this process toward any new or stronger uniformity of response and action.

Yet for the most part the audience decidedly is not staring, but *seeing*. Because viewers are only casually related to experiences set forth upon the small screen, they are "seeing" with all of the deepest psychological implications underlying that activity. On television the message which urges *watch-and-learn* is ignored because the medium has so shaped the message as to rob it of the demand for response. Only when the insistent quality of the message becomes too strong—when its *watch now because this is important* connota-

tions are too stark and too intense, is it *stared at* or, if it cannot be stared at, physically turned away from—as evidenced by the recent channel-switching which occurred when the lives of two American astronauts were threatened.

It is logical to assume that either a deeper “seeing” or an avoidance response will continue to develop. *Overcommunication* is taking place in all those matters where the past principles of *watch-and-learn* could effectively be instituted. Television, carrying its own psychic overload in all that it transmits, comes to the audience amidst the realities of daily life and extends man’s senses to the entire community, nation, and what Marshall McLuhan calls our “global village.” In this situation man must respond differently. He must somehow—to use McLuhan’s term—“cool” the communication, thereby removing from it urgency and immediacy. The process described by McLuhan as “depth involvement” might also be described by an analogous term borrowed from physics—*refraction*, which is defined as the change of direction of a ray of light, heat or the like in passing obliquely from one medium into another in which its speed is different. If refraction cannot be achieved—if the messages become too redundant, obtrusive and insistent in their demands for response, the viewer will avoid them. There is, at this point, a deep psychic need neither to watch nor see, but indeed to stare.

If this refractory tendency in the television audience were to render the medium totally incapable of inducing social and cultural change, then we might abandon all hope for a serious medium altogether. The truth is that there is still a considerable usefulness to be drawn from television, but only to the degree that it is allowed to free itself of the methods and styles of its sister public media and the dissonance they have wrought in our civilization.

For as we contemplate the present structure and direction of the major media of communications in this century, it becomes perfectly obvious that the only force which is at least working toward some individuation of spirit and independence of mind among the masses of mankind is television. Print and theatrical media (including the traditional “story” cinema) have gradually succeeded, in both their public and educational aspects, in forcing the first stages of rigid conformity within our society.

“Group” action and interaction, positive and distinct role identification, obedience to authority and institutional power, “respect” for the measure and direction of social change established by various elites, and distinct and safe patterns of social action for some “common good”—these are the substance of the continuing flow of messages being addressed to our society, particularly through the medium of print but increasingly through aural-visual forms of communication.

It is precisely because television’s power-center rests in the mass of society, where neutralization of those messages urging conformity is effected by the refractory and avoidance processes which the medium itself forces, that television’s audience manages for the most part to escape this directed and highly-structured response-demand.

This phenomenon promises great hope for some new liberation of the human mind and spirit. For the first time in history, technology has created a medium in which masses of people may be absorbed in their own involvement—taking what they will from the medium, engaging and disengaging as

they please, and free to make what is ostensibly a "mass" form of communication into a highly individualistic communicative interaction.

Whatever else television may be, it has this undeniable virtue: in all crucial matters of taste and social behavior, *it leaves people alone*. TV demands no course of action and seeks no conformist response to those myriad situations and conditions of life which it brings before people. The requirements of mass marketing and a necessary governmental assignment and control of frequencies have fostered a public medium which is as nearly free of group or institutional power as any in history.

It must readily be admitted that the elitist and power groups within our society hardly intended to produce the conformity that now threatens us. Their one-time, and honorable, function was to produce not conformity but *uniformity*. Uniformity subsumes conformity by making it a *conscious* act, and this occurs when most citizens are made aware of situational options and alternatives, and make those positive choices which enable the entire social unit to progress. Conformity, on the other hand, occurs when a state of overcommunication of conflicting opinions, values and ideas is made by media whose techniques are used to force participation in a directed, one-way manner. Confronted with this massive and persuasive flow of divergent opinion, judgment and value, the citizen must find a way to resolve the dissonance created. He seeks closure *quickly* and the easiest response—conformity.

So long as the print and theatrical media were not so repetitive and overwhelming in their demands for action as they are now becoming, there was a possibility of minimizing the safe and easy response. But under their steady influence and control, the mass of human beings are beginning to feel that they can react in no other way.

Awareness of this situation among those seeking social uniformity has led to panic. From various factions within institutions of higher education, foundations, governmental bureaus, big labor, big business, the power establishments of art and literature and—ironically—the older media themselves, a "hunt-and-destroy" message is now going out. The target is television, and this new message begins with slogans labeling television as "the most powerful medium for 'social advancement' (read 'cultural advance', 'education', 'awareness', 'responsibility') ever devised." Because the medium cannot live up to this expectation, it is charged that television is compounding the very conformity the older media have produced. Elitist solutions to the displacements of power introduced by TV take the form of admonitions that the new medium "clean up the mess." And the program of action recommended, of course, is that TV use the same methods as the older media.

Yet any successful attempt to move television in this direction would mark the ultimate conversion of a seeing audience to a staring audience. Our society would gradually come to a halt, because those options now remaining would evaporate and total conformity result.

Fortunately, TV could not introduce this method even if it tried. This is where those who seize upon Orwell as a predictor of the future miss connections. Power in 1984 could neither be directed nor sustained by messages through the essentially one-way, mass-centered television system we now have. Without the introduction of a total two-way system in which the viewer is also televised—and therefore *cannot turn off or avoid* his camera—the entire con-

ception of television as the instrument of socio-political terrorization is without substance. This may well explain why some elitist groups lament the lack of feedback in the TV system, for it is the annoying insufficiency of response which makes it difficult to know how to completely structure the stimulus. Purveyors of the conformity message through print have seen in Orwell's two-way screen—which is merely a response-recording system rather than a *communicative medium*—a way in which to reduce their own anxieties over a situation they have created and wish to perpetuate through television. They totally misread the technology, and assume that television can function as a patterned stimulus-response programmed-learning machine.

Indeed, Orwell (a print journalist) also missed the point. The TV screen would hardly be useful in any 1984 society if it were used—as it is now—to transmit images of *people-in-action*. Such images are too diffuse, and they invite the risk of refractory viewing. The effects of the electronic screen could be maximized only if TV were used as a *newspaper*, transmitting symbol after symbol in a sequential and printed form, and if the range of abstractions to be drawn from each symbol were as limited as they are in most newspapers.

Simple words in a telegraphic style transmitted in printed form and flowing across a screen—coupled with a spy-system which gave assurance that people were *reading* and *watching*—would be the most effective way to involve television in the perpetuation of a state of absolute conformity requisite to the ultimate social closure of 1984. Then viewers could never escape the message by bringing any collaboration of their own to the screen. If this process were alternated with the same messages delivered over the radio, some kind of mass programmed-learning could perhaps be achieved—but, even then, attention would have to be *forced*. Finally, even when forced—or conditioned—to attend to the message, there would still be the strong possibility that mere physical engagement of viewers would not be accompanied by any depth-involvement. The staring would begin.

Those in power who are aware of the necessity for response if societies are to advance (and advancement is assured only if some uniformity of liberal and enlightened action encourages it), can be categorized into two general types.

First, there are those who place all their chips on a theory of *action-through-information-via-television* as a method of promoting social change. Journalists, teachers, public servants—many who are concerned with maximizing a steady flow of information—come to the medium with a simplistic *force-feed-'em, involve-'em, tell-'em-and-keep-telling-'em* spirit, perpetuating that same kind of linear message-structuring which may result in a staring audience.

The shrillness of the *watch now* argument is lost in the welter of the highly-directed response communication so prevalent in our time. And the more those who advance such communication become aware of this, the more hysterical are their preachments and the more pessimistic is their blaming of men and existing institutions. They will begin to seek shifts in the balance of power until they, also, come to recognize that the power of men in those institutions which control the media so interacts, and is so complexly involved with the power of men in other institutions who could replace them, that change is mere substitution. Thus any proposals for small and prestigious "commissions" who might serve as an "outside conscience" for television are pointless. We cannot

forget that all institutions—regardless of motives— are also compelled to seek social change by gaining reasonable uniformity of response to matters of social importance. And how, one may ask, can men develop “prestige” except through society’s institutions?

In extreme cases, when the frustrations of the quest for uniformity grow overwhelming, the *watch now* theorist may launch out blindly—as did W. H. Ferry, an ex-newspaper man who is now employed by The Center for the Study of Democratic Institutions. In a recent paper, Ferry simply lumped together all of the major power institutions in society, reinstitutionalized them as *Masscomm*, and suggested that they “grow up.” His ideas are hardly new and hardly workable.

The second major type of reaction to that extension of the senses which television offers to mankind is largely a reflection of opinion which holds that *taste* is a total index of human behavior. This is the *social-change-through-art* school, and the position is best exemplified in the workings of the theatrical “story mind.” Among those who angrily demand response from TV’s audience are many who regard television only within a framework of their specialized training in the living theatre or fiction film. These—perhaps rightfully—insist that drama *in a theatre* should be an outlet for “art, ideas and social ferment.” Since television presents living people moving in sight-and-sound through space, they hastily assume that TV’s natural *métier* is the dramatic form; and they insist that if we get the drama on television to produce the same “fire-works effect” it elicits from a theatre or motion-picture audience, we will somehow revive a uniformity of taste *and* purpose in our free society. Many of these are the same critics and artists who also lament the passing of the Golden Age of TV drama but who have forgotten the very “coolness” of its greatest successes—those tentatively-structured minor stories of minor people which hardly revealed crucially significant social issues.

Writing in the February, 1966, *Playbill*, critic Richard Gilman acidly identified the audience for television as, potentially, “everybody, that is to say it is nobody, nobody with an identifiable consciousness, nobody with the desire and need, peculiar to men singly, but never in social masses, to be shaken up, changed, released from conventional attitudes and stock responses.” Aside from the revelation of his own elitist attitude, Gilman adds little to what we already know. Where he makes his error is in the simple confession that he is disappointed because the television audience does not react like a theatre audience. Missing from Gilman’s critical repertoire is the understanding, reluctantly confessed by Tyrone Guthrie, that perhaps theatrical drama (except as the rare “event”) does not belong on the television medium at all. Gilman’s predilection for “shaking up” the TV audience raises some new and provocative questions. In the quest for that aware and conscious conformity which constitutes uniformity, is it really the function of the most powerful of all mass media to *release* multitudes from “conventional attitudes and stock responses”? If so, *which* attitudes and responses? Are there no dangers inherent within this approach? Is it possible that TV’s greatest value to this century lies in precisely an opposite direction?

These are the givens: a society which in large measure accepts television as an extension of day-to-day reality in the home and treats it as a pastime, just as the evening bridge game; a society which is willing to see on its own terms

but will not watch the urgencies of actuality transmitted on the small screen, and indeed is beginning to avoid them entirely by "switching off" either mentally or physically. The latter tendency is now marked and there is no valid reason to assume that, since television now has its "own war" to report, the trend will not continue. We know that 30 per cent of the total audience physically dialed away from three New York network stations which carried the near-disastrous orbital hook-up. How many switched off also in the psychological sense—and stared?

With these givens, must we not also suspect that the old-style methods of making people respond by demanding that they *watch* when we really want them to *see*, makes no sense at all? Whatever is held "serious" and "significant" in older uniformity-seeking media will be less successful in television if it is advanced in the pushing, insistent and argumentative styles of the past. A large share of viewers are incapable of dealing with this kind of communication simply by lack of experience, education or level of emotional development. And if I have read correctly the significance of the late Gary Steiner's study, a still larger part of the audience which *could* respond with some degree of proper experience and inclination chooses *not* to do so. Together they constitute a growing majority of the television-viewing audience in the United States, and a vast majority throughout the world. All have opted for the freedom to see only what they want to see.

For its pains in observing this phenomenon and generally matching its output to suit it, television is doubly damned. We are told by one elite that TV is directed at the "12-year-old mind" and by another that the median age in our society spirals downward toward 25 and that "television had better do something about it"—in which case the latter provides a clear rationale for the former.

It is patently clear that those who devote their careers to telling television what it must do may need to do some "growing up" of their own. There certainly is hope for a greater use of this medium in the further development of our democratic society. But all such hope depends upon a critical analysis which must grow out of and away from ancient, tired slogans and resentfulness of institutions we have long since admitted into partnership as controlling forces in our society.

If television is to make a greater and more meaningful contribution to the quest for sanity, order, reason and fulfillment of man in the democratic society then it will have to ignore all short-sighted criticism and stumble ahead as it has been doing. It cannot betray its own style—a style that is totally shaped by the way in which its messages are perceived and by the larger life-conditions of this century, as best revealed in the overlooked relatedness of what is happening in the world of contemporary art and the significant discoveries of social-scientific research.

Every observation of the nature of change in public opinion confirms that time and exposure are the essentials of an intelligent search for the uniformity of response we do so desperately need. Relevancy and relatedness to the configuration of the entire television communications situation cannot be ignored or overthrown by "content-centered" messages of urgent and somber import. What is to be communicated by television in our time—and there is much which must be said—must be brought within television's special style. What is "hot"

must be cooled, and what is "cool" can only be slightly warmed. "Tonnage," as Richard Salant has pointed out, will not replace faithfulness to that style in the presentation of news information. And whether one chooses to use McLuhan's terminology or the language of aesthetics and psychology when considering the cultural role of television, the audience must be respected for what it is and why it is engaged with the medium.

If the audience chooses to *see* rather than to *watch*, it cannot be blamed. Each person within that mass, for reasons which are his alone, wants television to divert, to play, to engage him lightly, and—in all matters of vital social concern—to let him see for himself. After nearly five centuries of being tyrannized and directed by print, after five decades of being pushed and literally carried outside himself by cinematic "story" images, and after twenty centuries of being made part of a theatrical mob, man is at last left alone amidst the richness of experience in a total world civilization. No pedagogue, author, director, playwright, politician, editor, or anyone else who demands that man *watch*—and employs all the wondrous technology of this age to make that demand insistently persuasive—can make man do so.

While many in television still proceed with diametrically opposite hopes and assumptions, the medium itself is the single form of public communication which may be freeing man to be himself.

A.W.B.



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