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Print Culture and Video Culture

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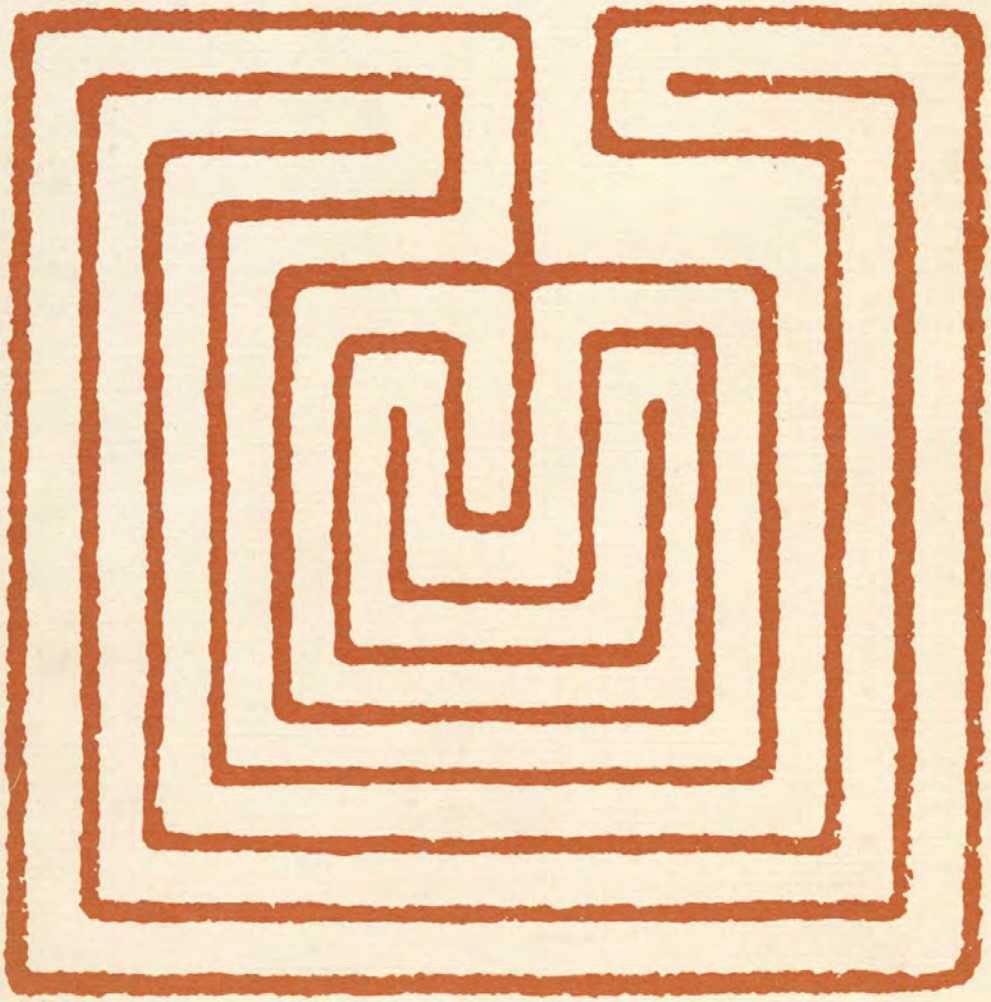

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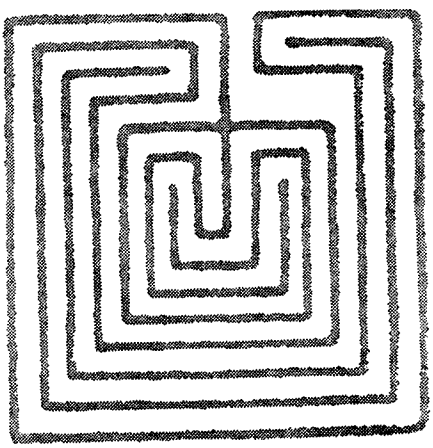

Preface to the Issue, "Print Culture and Video Culture"

THE PROPOSITION ADVANCED BY Herbert Butterfield that the so-called scientific revolution, the revolution of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, "outshines everything since the rise of Christianity and reduces the Renaissance and Reformation to the rank of mere episodes, mere internal displacements, within the system of medieval Christendom" is both imaginative and arresting. It is the kind of statement that invites speculation: Was it ever intended as more than a *jeu d'esprit?* Can Butterfield have been wholly serious, or was it his way of emphasizing the neglect of the scientific revolution to the advantage of more parochial happenings? Why did he think it necessary to employ such hyperbole? Or, did he in fact believe that he was communicating an unconventional, but simple and unvarnished, truth?

Considerations like these come to mind when we consider the "information revolution" of our own century, a revolution that is constantly prated about but rarely investigated. Because of the inherent ambiguity in the term itself—acknowledged by several authors in this *Daedalus* issue—the incentive to use a less grandiloquent metaphor, perhaps to avoid the term "revolution" entirely, is overwhelming. Still, no alternative imagery can relieve us of the obligation to estimate whether today's information revolution is "the" event of our age, transcending all others, reducing our century's putative major events—including the two World Wars, the Russian Revolution, and the rise of Nazism—to local incidents of substantially less cosmic proportions. Are we disinclined to examine the significance of the changes in the ways we communicate because we are too much preoccupied with secondary occurrences? And do these testify to nothing more than our traditional sense of what is supposed to be consequential? Ought we not to attend more to other kinds of developments, including the kind discussed in this volume? Why do we not do so? What is it that keeps us from reflecting more on an age that has seen such vast changes in its communications?

Recent historical inquiry has told us a great deal of what followed in Europe on the introduction of print, of how it rapidly reduced the centrality of script as a communication system, while having major and sometimes wholly unanticipated repercussions on science, politics, thought, and religion. Few today expect the visual media to drive out print in the way that print once drove out script, but there is considerable interest in how the two now relate, how they may come to relate in the future, and what the new kind of "visual information economy" may mean for education, for work, and for leisure.

Television, we are told constantly, is changing our culture, politics, and society. Just as new weapons and new military capabilities are significantly

transforming war, so too do novel information technologies, in theory at least, make possible wholly new kinds of popular intervention and participation. Whether such larger public civic involvement (should it in fact occur) will prove beneficial—how, for example, politics will be affected—is but a single element in a larger puzzle, one that has to do with the effects of publicizing the changing character of economic organization and social configuration in societies that have clearly moved away from their traditional nineteenth century moorings. To ask whether contemporary societies do in fact live with new myths, how these relate to what is perceived, and how much these perceptions are the invention of certain groups and not others, is to ask about power and influence in this new man-made world.

Is the new technology likely to create something like a universal culture, or are we more likely to see a few major urban centers serve as the *de facto* "intellectual" capitals of the new "video" world? How are traditional ways of living and consuming likely to be affected by such changes? How, indeed, have they already changed? Will the new society be one of greater information abundance, with greater choice being available to all, or is this anticipation simply one more of our contemporary illusions?

To reflect on the future—of all that may happen as the result of the further (and inevitable) expansion of communications technologies—while wholly appropriate, cannot justify a diversion of attention from the present, from all that is already happening. This issue of *Daedalus*, while preoccupied with the potentials of the new technology, is as much concerned with the present, with what we are today experiencing, and how this differs from what was common just a few decades ago. If we look ahead to an age of "electronic print"—which is already with us in its early forms—we are interested also in the differences between "reading" and "viewing," believing that while the second is not always a substitute for the first, it does no good to imagine that all values vanished with the commercial appearance of video.

We need to know why so many fear the visual media; we need also to know why scholars so rarely make serious efforts to understand the substantial conquests achieved by the visual media. In politics, as in war, reporting has changed substantially over the century. The most extravagant notions circulate today about the supposed power of television in both these critical arenas. It is good to have certain of these inflated generalizations questioned, to recall conditions that obtained earlier in the century, and to ask whether today's reporting conventions do not perpetuate practices that were already common when print enjoyed a near-monopoly condition. What, then, is new, and for whom?

Some believe that the visual media, while temporarily creating certain homogeneities, will in the long run have the effect of producing greater differences. More abundant choice, they argue, will be the ultimate consequence of these new technologies. A more unsettling possibility lurks—that new class cleavages will develop, and that these will increasingly separate those who "read" from those who "view," those who know that information is only one of the products of print culture from those who imagine it to be the only useful one.

What, in short, will the intellectual character of the new society be? What will be the "literacy" of its people? An issue that concerns itself with how video has already affected public attitudes on race, science, and defense policy—suggesting the limits of the medium in all these critical areas, but dwelling also on its undoubted influences—is striving for a kind of measure that is rarely thought necessary by those who simply dwell on the "power" of the new media. This issue of *Daedalus* is both speculative and descriptive. It seeks to probe the meaning of certain contemporary developments without being at all overwhelmed by them. More than that, it is mindful of certain continuities.

The range and variety of insights in this issue makes any kind of brief synopsis of its findings difficult. The reader is invited to browse, to read, to criticize. This is not the conventional account of what television is doing to the country or the world. A second volume on the "information revolution" is planned for early 1984. The John and Mary R. Markle Foundation is to be thanked for making this study possible.

S. R. G.

ANTHONY SMITH

Information Technology and the Myth of Abundance

> Inevitably, the culture within which we live shapes and limits our imaginations, and by permitting us to do and think and feel in certain ways makes it increasingly unlikely or impossible that we should do or think or feel in ways that are contradictory or tangential to it.
>
> —Margaret Mead
> *Male and Female*[1]

WHAT REALLY *is* a technological revolution? And who are the revolutionaries? What are the criteria for a historical process to be so described? Where do we *look* for the results? I cannot claim that this essay will answer these questions, nor even that they are precisely enough formulated for useful answers to be provided. But it might be possible to construct a new kind of mental picture of the phenomenon of technological transformation, of its driving motivations and cultural consequences, by looking at certain aspects of current developments in information technology within a historical setting. The advent of printing had obviously "a great deal to do" with the rise of the nation-state, and Elizabeth Eisenstein's researches and narrative,[2] as well as those of Martin and Febre,[3] have helped to fill out the picture of a late Renaissance "information revolution." An age in which a new transforming technology is taking hold must, almost self-evidently, express its most profound social, economic, and political changes in terms of that technology—so closely and complicatedly, that historians inevitably try, but fail, to disentangle the resulting skeins of cause and effect. Was there a drive for empire that altered the technologies of European navigation in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries? Was imperialism a result of technology-push or economic-pull? Do the processes of "take-up" of innovation relate to the dominant creative, emotional, and intellectual mindset of an age, so that the tracks may be found again through later research?

Such questions are the permanent concern of social history, but need to be asked also in the present, while the transforming process is underway. The intention of this essay is to suggest that there exists a great unifying social and cultural urge behind a technological revolution, particularly one that relates to

information. The search for the emotional satisfactions of the vernacular and the evolution of the feeling of nationhood were indeed tied to the technology of "moving letters." The Victorian bourgeois' obsession with the perfect mechanical reproduction of images in movement, sound, and hue had some psychic link with the evolution of the representational technologies of film, phonograph, telegraph, and the wireless. Today, a surging belief in the perfect development of the individual as consumer is somehow discovering its own confirmation in the development of technologies of information abundance; but that individualism is tied also to a new imperialism or transnationalism in the growth of the phenomenon of cultural dependence of the South upon the North. The new information technology is reconfirming the world vision of the developed world, reestablishing its confidence as the primary subject of culture, as the developing nations fall victim to the cultural pressures of external data flow. Thus, if this argument works, information technology leads toward the displacement of nationhood, of national cultures.

I

We have all become modishly aware that the information environment, so to speak, of the late twentieth century individual is in the course of being transformed. News columns with titles that play neatly on the words *revolution*, *age*, *galaxy*, *shock*, appear monthly. But we remain prisoners still of an essentially Victorian idea of the requisite constituents of social change, in the sense that we tend to predicate the transformation upon the technology. We relate and chart development according to a measure of machinery, alongside the evolution of inventions. So numerous are the gadgets of the computer age (there goes an example of what is being criticized!) that the designated historic turning points—the number of "revolutions" per decade—are too numerous to absorb, their effects too shrilly predicted for easy listening. We are paralyzed by the dimensions of the transformation, partly because we have internalized a kind of Whiggian principle, by which machines "produce" social effects of a measurable or, at least, observable variety. The trouble is that technological and social history cannot be related in this way, since the extrapolated trends shoot off the graph every time. Consider the influence of the photocopier, the coaxial cable, television news, teleconferencing, and so on. There are no anchors to cast in each voyage of speculation; every trip rushes straight toward infinity.

We would be greatly helped in the present epoch of speculation if we had available some improved metaphors for social change, something less traumatic and less overworked than "revolution," something more intermingling of cause and effect, something that suggested less emphasis on technology and placed more pressure on social need as the starting point of technology. New technologies close gaps, resolve tensions, register the temporary shelving of problems, as well as automate jobs out of existence and fill the home with new junk. Above all, in order to reduce the current bewildering hyping of technical history, we need some explanatory models of the inventing process that demonstrate the collective, though concealed, social dialogue that almost invariably precedes the advent of a new device.

The apparatus of the modern media of information has been accumulating steadily through the century; the modern home may possess a telephone and a typewriter, a camera, a record player, a pocket calculator, a pile of disks or cassettes, probably by now a couple of television receivers, possibly a cable TV link, an 8mm. film camera and projector, a device for playing video games, for receiving pay TV, for decoding teletext or videotext signals, perhaps even a video camera, and a home computer. Few people, however, are as yet aware of the linkages that exist—or that can exist—between all of these gadgets; the information revolution of the late twentieth century consists very largely of the increased propensity for these text and moving image machines to converge and to interact. That propensity has been latent since Victorian times. Thomas Edison invented the phonograph as a repeating device to aid the telephone, thinking that a central office such as the telegraph bureau would record messages sent down the telephone lines and deliver the disks to the homes and businesses of nonsubscribers.[4] It was not a fallacy so much as a prophecy, for we are witnessing today that intermixture of telecommunications with information storage that he envisaged. What happened in the late 1970s was a sudden increase in the potency of telecommunications and in the computing capacity of society that has made it possible for us to reap a whole series of benefits that were impossible when the same technical possibilities existed on a smaller scale. The present "revolution," if such it is, is one of investment rather than technical innovation, of transformation of scale more than of technological horizon.

All of the devices that have emerged as discrete physical media of information and entertainment have their own industrial housing, so to speak. The century has witnessed the growth of a music industry around the phonograph and radio, a TV industry, a film industry, and telecommunications, computing, and book publishing industries. These great blocks of investment and industrial activity are currently undergoing a transformation, and in every society in which they flourish (surprisingly few, in fact, since most societies are becoming highly import-dependent in respect of media software), there is currently a reconsideration of the regulatory environment in which they operate. In some societies, the process is being labeled "deregulation," where it is perceived as a process of removing legal constraints against intercorporate competition. In other societies, the same process is envisaged rather as one of making new and appropriate regulations to stimulate similar releases of enterprise, often accompanied by moves to protect indigenous culture. The new devices of cassettes and disks and the new paid broadcast services entail an extremely complicated regearing of all the established industries that hitherto have been device-specific. In other words, it has to be possible for a set of rights and obligations that have been acquired in respect of a given artifact (say, a film made for theatrical release) to be transferred to a wider range of distribution systems (cassettes, cable television). The changing situation is bringing about a gradual alteration in the way we think about the property element in information and entertainment, and about the cultural demarcations between genres. At one level, the change consists in a series of publishing devices and promotional arrangements; at deeper levels, it must alter our ideas about what constitutes a "book," what separates an "academic work" from a popular one, indeed what body of data should properly be considered a book or an "author."

Let us consider a not unusual career for a modern work of fiction. It may begin as a novel about which an individual writer has pondered for years, or it may originate as a commission conceived by an agent or a publisher and fostered upon a writer of recognized skill. If it seems likely to sustain the investment, the finished work may be promoted, and through dextrous manipulation of the apparatus of literary review and public discussion, forced through a series of different kinds of text distribution. It will come out in hardcover and paperback, in serial fiction and digest form, and then as an even cheaper paperback. But it may also be transmuted into a set of moving images, where its basic authorship will be further dehydrated and industrialized in complex ways. A film designated for cinema distribution may in fact be shown, in widescreen format, only for further promotional purposes; the 70mm. image will be seen only by a small fraction of the emerging audience, as the work passes into 35mm. and 16mm. gauges for distribution in various specialist systems (such as the film society network or the college circuit). It will appear in cassette form (all the framing of the original lost in the transformation to the smaller screen) and videodisk, on cable and pay TV, ending up on "free" over-the-air television, public or commercial. At later stages in its career, the work may return to one or more of its earlier phases, but it will remain in public consciousness with greater permanency than that bulk of Victorian fiction which failed to become one of the tiny band of classics.

The new work of today faces a wider variety of audiences and enjoys a more finely calculated career. It is commensurately more heavily dependent upon promotion, and, indeed, more and more different kinds of entrepreneurs will speculate upon its possibilities during the course of its complicated life. There is a rush of newcomers to the marketplace, but inevitably, a wave of cartelization will ensue as soon as this market is rationalized. Thus in this period of convergence of devices, a new division of cultural labor is growing up among them. At the same time, there is a search for new and appropriate forms of material, not dissimilar to that which took place when the telephone and cinematography were evolving, when perception of social role preceded each of a multitude of technical offshoots. The social impact of television and telecommunications has been much subtler and more far-reaching than that of other devices of the same era. Both telephone and cinematography were very slow, however, in gathering around them the aura of transformationism that today envelopes the offshoots of the computer and the television receiver.

In the 1880s it seemed possible that the telephone would become a medium of entertainment. In London and Paris, experimenters were to set up connections between the principal theaters and the central operator, so that subscribers could listen to plays and to the songs of the music hall. Others thought that the new medium would be a useful supplier of general information, supplementing that of the newspaper. As a person-to-person instrument, it suffered from obvious limitations: there were few people with whom one could speak, the costs were high, and established systems of social discourse inhibited subscribers from incorporating the machine into their lives. The telephone was neither intimate nor reliably private. It was often confined to small professional groups, such as the lawyers and doctors of Glasgow, who enjoyed their own separate and mutually incompatible exchanges. As an instrument of business, the

telephone suffered from other limitations: it was more expensive than using messenger boys; it created tension within the national telegraph administrations (one of which actually proposed charging for the telephone according to the number of words spoken along the line). It came into use at first through a series of specialist groups: the construction teams on early skyscrapers, the police, doctors, lawyers, and so on. It grew within the interstices of society, later coming to occupy a more general public role.[5] The influence of the telephone on the development of social structures and the physical layout of societies is extremely hard to calculate and has tended to be overlooked.

Road and rail systems are more visible, and the great feats of engineering that made them possible have seized the attention of social historians more tenaciously than the invisible forces of telegraph, telephone, and radio. But the areas of influence of the communication devices are themselves different: while transportation facilitated suburbanization in the present century, communications has had a great deal to do with the changing "images" of the different parts of a city, the constantly shifting areas of respectability and trend. Suburbanites have not been migrants on the whole; they have desired to retain the advantages of metropolitan life and to remain in constant touch with the centers of the society, while shunning the geographical core. Communication systems have thus helped with the light-and-shade of social evolution, and have provided a wider range of matters over which social nuance can be expressed. However, each device developed in the Victorian era (and later) began life in an aura of a certain vagueness as to its destined purpose. Was the telephone destined for entertainment purposes, or did it fulfill a special role in preserving social order or in providing general information? Did it facilitate person-to-person or group-to-group communication? The purposes have constantly shifted, although each device eventually acquired its own clear purposes, its own "culture." Now, all is in doubt again, all the boundaries are moving.

Each fresh wave of new devices has registered and expressed a new stage in the evolution of city structure, in neighborhood development, and in the structure of the family. Cinemas in the twenties and thirties released people from their homes; television in the fifties recemented the home as focus of the family, until in the sixties, a new politics of the family seemed to break up that tight postwar grouping. Today, the new multiple devices slice up the family and reindividualize it, permitting and encouraging a new microconsumerism, the pursuit of a fresh, but (temporarily) satisfying, illusion of individual gratification through endless freedom and "choice."

II

The communication and representation devices of the late Victorians were manifestations of a vast, unarticulated urge; they were an act of ideology expressed again and again, in different versions, of a machine for the perfect reproduction of the lifelike. It is worth dissecting the "invention" of film in some detail and comparing its tortuous progress, via a complex of interactions between technique and social aspiration, with the phenomenon of today, when it is still difficult to express, in one similarly neat phrase, the nature of the parallel contemporary aspiration. There appears today to exist a latent collectiv-

ist, egalitarian consumerist urge, a prompting to break through economic and institutional constraints, toward an abundance of messages, from which a mass of individuals can draw material according to their "personal" choice. Choice is the chimera of the age, the hypothesis of a new adulthood arising from the opportunity to "perfect" the self as the basic mechanism of consumption. The Victorians, however, were pursuing, through their technologies of illusionism, an ideal mode in which their desire for a kind of artificial immortality could be assuaged.

The moving image was a substitute for—an extension of—the cemetery. The mass suppliers of early film cameras blatantly exploited this deep need of the age: the retention of the perfect images, in motion, of one's loved ones. One of the newspapers that reported the first public screening by Louis Lumière of his films said: "When these cameras become available to the public, when all are able to photograph their dear ones, no longer merely in immobile form but in movement, in action, with their familiar gestures, with speech on their lips, death will no longer be final."[6] The representation and extension through time of the human body was one aspect of the great bourgeois aspiration, but the techniques have their roots in the Renaissance, with the development of anatomical study and the growing importance of perspective as the enabling science that made it possible for the new knowledge to be recorded and imparted.

Marey's discovery of the persistence of vision in the nineteenth century played a similar role in the development of machines to capture, record, and dissect the nature of movement.[7] But Marey was not in pursuit of moving pictures as illusions; indeed, he rejected the machines that enabled movement to be synthesized in favor of another line of invention (which included his own chronophotograph—the first camera to employ celluloid strip) that captured movement on a still frame through strobic effects. Marey and his follower Londe were both attempting to overcome deficiencies in human perception rather than create an illusion of reproduced movement that deceived human perception. They wanted to depict reality in a form that slowed down or speeded up true movement. In a sense, Edward Muybridge's notions lay along the same line of thought; his Zoepraxiscope succeeded in reanimating a series of still photographs taken in succession by different cameras of a horse in motion. The purpose was scientific—to dissect a natural phenomenon and to reconstitute the movement, in order to prove the correctness of the analysis. Muybridge's images were generally taken to be aesthetically unpleasing. They were to influence painting in due course, but only after delivering a shock to those artists of the traditional schools who thought that the real world corresponded to the idealized images that had been taught academically.

Earlier in the century, a flow of devices demonstrated the other half of the Victorian inspiration—illusionism. Daguerre's invention was a natural development of his skill in trompe l'oeil. At the Great Exhibition of 1851, the stereoscope had drawn fascinated crowds, since it seemed to add a dimension to still photography by supplementing a gap in the pure representation of nature. Baudelaire mocked the hungry eyes "bending over the peepholes of the stereoscope, as though they were the attic windows of the infinite." At the same time, the demand for the perfect illusion was being fed through nonphoto-

graphic devices for creating the sensation of movement or of three-dimensional images, such as the Thaumatrope and the Praxinoscope, which depended on a disk with images that appeared to combine in motion through rapid rotation. These were representational toys dismissed by the more scientific school of Marey, since they demonstrated, but did not analyze, scientific phenomena.[8] Thus the pursuit of the Victorian aspiration for representing an image of life in its perfection veered from one line of development, in which its various manifestations were deemed to be recreational and at best educational, to another line, in which the quest was not to substitute for painting but to serve science.

It was the Lumière moving-picture show that captured the contemporary imagination in the mid-1890s. Writers as far spread as Gorky, Kipling, and Henry James witnessed the show as it traveled between Spain and Moscow, Austria and America. They were presented with one-minute scenes of real-life events, unstaged but nonetheless contrived, through choice of camera angle, location, and timing. The train arriving at a station, the workers leaving the factory, the gardener turning the hose upon himself—all became familiar metaphors that impressed upon those pioneer audiences the first collectively experienced moving images that inaugurated the great store of shared allusion which has subsequently accumulated. At the same moment, Edison's laboratory and its breakaway group, the American Mutoscope and Biograph Company, were feeding the same popular drive toward perfect representation with a series of inventions that offered short travel or anecdotal films projected in a machine into which the viewer had to peer. Edison was working to a much grander design that led him to overlook the importance of his own silent camera and projecting device; he wanted to link his own phonograph invention with a film and recording technique, with stereoscopic effects added for good measure. Edison wanted to perfect a total system of representation that would perceive, record, and transmit across space, and he thus employed, in a spectacular series of electrical and mechanical inventions, the whole range of sciences that were to be worked on in the course of the following eighty years.[9] All of the experimenters alluded to, and many others, were technicians primarily, but with a keen eye either on the audience of science or on the audience of contemporary showmanship, sometimes a little of both. The first decade of the twentieth century saw a further group of experimenters who were primarily artists, such as Georges Méliès and Edwin Porter, though both had some technical background. Both saw the possibilities of developing narrative forms by means of the new moving cameras. Méliès had started as a conjuror, and he drew from a line of nonrealist illusionism for his film ideas, of which he developed hundreds. His stock—transformations of human beings into animals, the appearance of strange apparitions, a Jules Verne-type space journey—was the culmination of the aspirations of a Victorian conjuror. Porter, however, drew upon a realist line of narrative, breaking away from the theatre rather than from popular showmanship. He is famous for having developed the pacing techniques that laid the foundations of modern narrative cinema—the cutting, linking, and transposition of shots, and the suggestion of simultaneity through building-up a chase scene by intercutting events taking place in different locations.[10]

Behind these different lines of artistic and technical development, all of which proved ultimately interactive and intensely creative of technology, was a growing institution, cinema. Behind each movement forward—and many that proved to be cul-de-sacs—there lay a shared phenomenon that grew by accretion, based upon an audience whose perception and expectations were being progressively intermingled; each mechanical device depended upon a range of artistic conventions that had to be accepted and internalized by a rapidly growing audience if the institution of cinema was to develop. That institution itself was obliged to follow the contours of contemporary taste, to search for the city locations, the distribution systems, the pricing mechanisms, the patent and copyright devices that would sustain the new medium. The technology that emerged registers as a series of interim readings of the relationships that between them constituted, as they still do, the institution of cinema.

Of course, it is impossible to produce a perfect record of the evolution of a technology by concentrating on the interactions and dependencies—social, artistic, technical, and intellectual—since to do so would entail an analysis of an entire society. Marconi's work on radio was taking place at exactly the same moment as the work of Lumière; Zworykin was working on the basic principles of television in the same decade as the main work of Méliès. Regulatory systems for the telegraph and the telephone were being simultaneously created, and these were greatly to influence the early and continuing institutions of radio and television. And of course, contemporary developments in all of the other sciences—from biochemistry to metallurgy, optics to engineering—played their part in the evolution of the communicating technologies. Nonetheless, those lines of development that led to film, television, and radio entailed clusterings of technique that derived their impetus from the same animating aspiration, that of creating a perfect and enduring representation of the perceptual world.

III

It is rather harder to discern the central drive that unites the various new communication media that have been developed in the last and current decades from that earlier aspiration. Certainly, there no longer exists an unsatisfied craving for the mere illusionist representation of reality; perhaps a reverse principle might today be at work, whereby the techniques for suggesting reality are being pushed toward a realm of perfect fantasy in the new potential for, say, computer imaging. But there is some more general demand or perceived demand that is being stimulated and satisfied by the new media—demand for an abundance of supply and an image of the consumer as individual, arising above an ocean of materials. There is the image of a new leisure, a worklife without toil, a textured, variegated career structure. Many of the new devices are concerned with text storage and distribution as much as with still or moving images, with data processing as much as with storage. Some of the new devices appear, in the present stage of their development, to be concerned with supplying a new multiplicity of channels (cable systems, videodisks, satellite broadcasting, cassettes), while others have more to do with adding to the conveniences of the home or reducing information overload (home box office for

first-run movies, videotext), or both. The suppliers of new services are breaking down, unconsciously for the most part, old traditional genres, such as the newspaper or magazine, by offering the chance to dial directly a specialist line of information; they are also providing a chance to evade the many constraints of over-the-air broadcasting with its "paternalistic" overtones of prescribed, preselected patterns of material. The new specialist cable channels are on the whole reworkings of the public broadcasting service model, and offer the chance for a new kind of self-definition on the part of the subscriber into a class or subculture type, rather as the newspaper industry did in the era when newspapers of every conceivable stripe flourished.

All of the new services have broken into preexisting monopolies of some kind, but all are searching for new monopolies of their own in order to survive—monopolies of first-run movies, monopolies of travel or business information, monopolies of high culture material, monopolies over certain geographical zones or certain social groups. With the advent, a decade or so from now, of direct broadcasting by satellite, a wholly new complication will arise, since the satellite, unlike any other transmission system devised hitherto, is capable of equal address across a whole society or group of societies.

Yet these services are, in the main, systems of supply quite separate from the industry providing material to a variety of systems reaching different layers of the audience. Thus a cable offering a cultural channel acquires its content from a multinational industry, programs that have been created to serve a primary market elsewhere (though with an eye to further sales). The market for software is becoming many-layered, even though various homogenizing market forces have already set in. The previous forms of distribution for much of this visual material continue to exist and tend still to be the primary sources of funding—the major national television networks and their independent suppliers. There are half a dozen annual markets and festivals at which the main lines of dealing and the main relationships are built up: Milan, Monte Carlo, Cannes, Berlin, New York, Los Angeles. Film festivals have created video offshoots, with new video markets in Europe and the East being established. But the dealing on individual projects continues throughout the year by means of bilateral arrangements between banks and production houses, television channels and cable organizations, Hollywood majors and publishing houses. Inevitable rearrangements of capital within the media conglomerates are taking place. A new world industry of moving-image products is emerging, highly diverse, but still dominated by the companies that established their grip over the heartland of the audience in the days of the old national television monopoly. The material today is beginning to pass through a complex mesh of distribution systems, each one technology-specific, each with a different pricing mechanism and in a different stage of development. A European publishing house owned by an American bank, for example, will initiate a project designed as a series of films and an international book. It will presell the films to a London-based television company for a price that covers a large proportion of the basic production costs. To cover the rest, it will presell the same series to a U.S. public television station or one of the New York cable stations, the London TV company retaining a percentage. The publishing house will then proceed to

organize translations that will sell well, on the reputation of the British and American television transmission. The profit to the original publishing house, however, will tend to come from vastly enhanced book sales, since the whole scope of the market for the books has been transformed by the broadcasting operation. Gradually, the materials will flow into other cable and box office systems, while selling in cassette form in the education market. The product will retain strong national overtones; it is owned ultimately by the American bank, but its makers are British, and its accent will tend to be also. The same thing is happening in Paris, Frankfurt, Tokyo, and Amsterdam, but five geographical locations in the developed world are coming to play an ever greater role in the world supply of moving images and, indeed, of text materials also.

The five locations are New York, California, London, Frankfurt/Munich, and Tokyo,[11] places where there exist strong and sophisticated national audiences for the first-generation television materials, plus the necessary access to capital and the habit of working together on the part of a critical mass of relevant skills and institutions. It is likely that these five centers will remain at the heart of the world market for software in the entertainment and information fields. (Computer translation might eventually enable the Japanese to break also into the world text-information software market, already dominated by Japanese hardware). There was a similar concentration in the world of book publishing a hundred years after the development of moving type, but the evolution of the newspaper, with its polycentered culture, was quite different. Quite different, too, was cinema, which, though it rapidly became a narrow market, began with a wide variety of supply centers. The developing world contains a number of major centers for film-making (India, the Philippines, Hong Kong), but these have remained largely national in the 1970s. Today, one or more of them could break into the wider world market, but probably only through major investment from the existing centers, since they are "hampered" by the different musical and literary traditions of the East.

It is clear that two quite distinct developments are taking place. There is a new range of physical artifacts on which are inscribed images and text—cassettes and disks—and these are distributed in roughly the same manner as books and gramophone records. These are, however, to some extent different from their forerunners, in that the material they offer is already familiar to the potential buyer, through the promotion and marketing of a film, of which the cassette or disk constitutes an extended line of supply. The other new media are all services rather than artifacts, although the recipient may, legally or illegally, make a physical copy of the text or image in the home. Thus the new videotext systems are publishing devices, where payment is made through the telephone company for "pages" of material that have been received on a domestic television receiver. Some of the cable systems are paid for overall by the subscriber, as European public broadcasting systems have always been, while other cable systems or scrambled signal systems oblige the viewer to pay for each selected program; these leave the recipient without a physical artifact, unless a domestic personal recording has been made. Policing the uses made by individuals of private recordings is, for the rights-holders, something of a nightmare, and pricing mechanisms are having to adjust for the practical

impossibility of retaining rights long-term after the distribution of a new product. The owner of those rights has to consider the timing of the whole package of new media outlets, relying on industry-wide organization for the policing of the multitude of new networks that are springing up.

It is still far too soon to see which technologies will prevail for specific purposes, to discern whether an optic fibre network set up nationwide would eventually take over and swamp all other systems of cables, microwaves, direct satellites, and broadcasting channels, in the establishment of a universal broadband domestic system, a kind of general information ring-main, like the electricity ring-main, linking every individual to the entire national and international system. It does appear, however, that Western societies are on the verge of the development of a system, or collection of systems, that, in their net effect, will tend to negate the basic principles by which information has traveled through society since the Renaissance. Even though the cassette and the videodisk operate in the same mode as books, distributed on the basis of single copy purchase by each user or group of users, the pressure of the nonartifact services is such as to suggest that the artifacts may play a diminished role in the longer term. The Gutenbergian principle is so firmly rooted in our culture that it is hard to imagine a society in which it has been abolished (and, indeed, no one is suggesting that anything like abolition is likely to occur). Rather, we are liable to witness a rapid erosion of the settled notion that information is naturally multiplied in physical copies until the number of copies approximates the number of those wishing to receive it. The Gutenbergian principle has already ceased to function in the case of broadcast material, where the opposite—or what one might call the Alexandrian principle—operates. There, a single copy exists in the originating tape or live performance, which then reaches its audience in nonmaterial form; a physical tape can be generated by the individual recipient, but the mass multiplication of physical materials, as in the newspaper and in publishing, is absent.

One uses the image of Alexandria, because it suggests a great store of material that is deemed to be fully authentic, but available only to those who come to it to choose. A modern data base is, in a sense, an electronic version of the principle where material is added to a central store according to fixed and accepted methods, and is then available to all who have the means and skills to unlock it. In the field of moving images, the world is today steadily building such a store of accredited materials, which have, most of them, been through the authenticating procedures of network transmission before becoming available through the newer systems of distribution. Unlike the materials of a great library or a computerized data base, these materials have still to be laid out as a program by a cable company or satellite distribution company before they can be chosen; but as broadband systems develop, we are veering slowly toward some new condition in which an individual can choose electronic dissemination of a single item that was itself chosen from a vast or total store of video products. In the field of data, this condition is rather closer, if anything, as the various videotext systems slowly agree on international technical standards and interconnections. One further aspect of the steadily dissolving Gutenbergian principle is the part that distance has always played in fixing the cost of communication of any kind: this has applied equally in the case of the telephone

and telegraph and the printed book. As the electronic systems emerge, it is becoming increasingly clear that distance is a rapidly diminishing factor in costs, both of collecting information and of redistributing it.

We are witnessing, therefore, a subtle transformation of the underlying principle that has sustained the information systems of human society since the Renaissance. The shift is coming about as a result of a vast number of quite separate responses of corporations to perceived demand, responses of technology to science and of science to imagination. There is no central machine generating this change, no great corporation or conspiracy of corporations. There does indeed exist a powerful, almost total dependence of the whole structure of change upon a number of giant corporations, but they are tending to grope toward the trend while trying to influence it. Their corporate needs greatly influence the pace of change, and while they often choose specific private directions for a period of time, the central pulse reestablishes its rhythm.

Despite the atmosphere of feverish change that has always beset the information media, the basic technologies and content forms have changed very slowly indeed. One may take, for example, the novel and the newspaper as direct emanations of the printing press, and note how each has changed fundamentally in form not more than, say, once in a century. Despite the enormous number of attempted means for creating moving pictures in Victorian times, the celluloid strip, which established itself in about 1897, has remained on the same gauge until today. The development of celluloid only took place at the end of the 1880s, and the earliest cameras for shooting a succession of images on a moving strip of celluloid hardly left their experimental stage before 1895. And yet a piece of Victorian film can be taken in 1982 to any city on earth and screened. A newspaper printed in any language since roughly the same date will be clearly perceived to be a newspaper in any part of the globe, and many of its chief contents—puzzles, news, editorials, share prices, reviews—apprehended as such in scores of cultures where the language itself may not be known. Radio and television have developed more rapidly, but even with these, each new development—from the valve to the cathode ray tube, from color signals and transistors to cables—has required about fifteen years to become established within the market. Forms remain stable because the market keeps them so; the public's expectations of any particular device or genre take years to develop, and these expectations, transmuted into listener, viewer, or reader habits, are the capital assets of the publishers and companies that have discovered or nurtured them.

Yet behind the kinds of material and the hardware, important trends do make themselves apparent. Two that have been at work since the beginning of the century are worth emphasizing in any attempt to size up the changing information environment. One characteristic of the nineteenth century systems and devices—from the popular reading room to the peepshow—was that the audience was expected to make no investment in the system itself; revenue was derived either from the purchase of an artifact, such as a newspaper, or from the sale of a right, such as admission to a hall or tent. Indeed, the quest of the age had been so to multiply the product that the mass audience could have access at the lowest coin available. Thus arrived the half-penny newspaper, created as a result of expensive and diligent development of the mass press, mass distribu-

tion system, and the mass transportation system. As the century developed, however, the audience has been expected to indulge in an ever higher proportion of the total investment. Today, most of the investment necessary in maintaining a national television channel is held by the viewer rather than the supplier of the system—compare this with the theatre, or cinema, or the church.

In all of the new media, the audience's share of the investment has gone even higher, and the equipment companies have unsurprisingly been among the chief impresarios of development. The audience has to buy or rent the receiver and the recorder, the cable decoder, the videotex black box and so on. In fact, most of the new media are dependent upon there being several television receivers in a majority of homes; otherwise, there would be little hope of splitting the family as a viewing unit and thereby exploiting the potential for individual choice of material. With the arrival of direct broadcasting by satellite, the cost of each unit audience will rise substantially, since the engineering mechanisms required for switching from satellite to satellite, and thereby obtaining a wider choice, are fairly expensive. The whole expansion of the information sector thus hinges on the general expansion of the consumer economy, on the expansion at a steady rate of the consumer's propensity to invest in new entertainment systems. In the changeover from the old to the new systems, we are thus watching a very considerable switch in total investment in the resources of social communication from the manufacturer and the supplier to the audience at home.

The other important overall trend is for the gradual growth of local monopoly in any system. Information is historically torn between the condition of competition and its condition as a natural monopoly. One may cite the newspaper as a good example. Competition within the market for newspapers seemed natural, inevitable, and desirable in all democratic countries—as it still seems so today in places—so long as political circumstances made this desirable, and so long as the advertising done by mass consumer manufacturers required large slabs of display material. Gradually, television has become the channel for political material and the preeminent disseminator of national and regional manufacturer-to-consumer advertising. This has occurred on both sides of the Atlantic, although there are still a few European societies in which television advertising is illegal or minimal. Newspaper circulation has fallen a little in many countries, but seldom dramatically; where the total circulation has in fact fallen, the explanation often lies in the erosion of the habit of purchasing more than one newspaper as papers have become more comprehensive overall. The markets for advertising have, however, significantly altered throughout the economies of the West. The major area of growth has been in classified advertising, especially in recession-sensitive advertising such as that for jobs and contracts. The market has therefore become more volatile, while television advertising—dependent more upon manufacturers and sellers of commercial services—has tended to be much more resilient to temporary economic trends. There is a natural tendency for a newspaper to be most attractive as a source of advertising (and of news) where it is believed to be most comprehensive in its content, and this tendency, in the context of the changes mentioned, has greatly accelerated the development of natural local monopolies among the printed press. In the United States, this tendency has occurred alongside a growth of

chains and of cross-media ownership at the corporate, if not the local, level. The newspaper has thus been coaxed by stages into becoming typically a local monopoly. Only a very few countries, such as Britain and Japan, have retained thoroughgoing newspaper competition, and in those cases, the reason has been the institution of national distribution, which has produced monopolization of another kind—within social strands rather than geographical location. Even in Britain, however, with its highly competitive journalism, the same phenomena have occurred with local newspapers as in Germany, the United States, France, and elsewhere.

The processes of monopoly have not set in as far as the electronic media are concerned, where cartelization is restrained through regulation. It would not be surprising, however, if a certain clarification did not begin—in those markets with a very large number of television outlets as the new media, with their far greater promise of abundant choice—to reach the middle and lower levels of the market. The same tendency toward a single outlet has occurred in the case of cinema, though mitigated by the habit of tripling or quadrupling movie theaters—not to create wider choice, but to provide finer tuning of the audiences for the existing repertoire as they grow and shrink during the run of a given film.

I have deliberately refrained from stressing national differences of trend or of magnitude throughout this paper, in order to bring out the shared phenomena of Western economics. We are witnessing a cultural shift, or set of shifts, that are more subtle and far-reaching than the physical devices, the products of modern electronics, themselves suggest, but that are more deeply rooted in the continuing and the slowly evolving than is often believed. After all, abundance of choice does not in itself constitute a transformation, since an individual will make conditioned choices and will probably not greatly increase the total hours of his exposure. But the role of text in our civilization and the development of the various skills of text are indeed in all probability today in the course of fundamental change. The management and use of a data base require quite new skills, and will emphasize different aptitudes from those required traditionally in primary education. The computerization of text suggests that we may absorb smaller quantities of text into our lives, but it will be text that is better ordered and more appropriately selected. The term *book* will probably come to cover a narrower range of products than it now does, and the technical aids to research will, in the late 1980s, enable a wider range of disciplines to benefit from the boon of the computer.

One might take, as an extreme example of the kind of "book" that is becoming outmoded, the telephone directory, where the form is used, in full Gutenbergian trappings of binding and single copy mass distribution, as the housing for a collection of data, only a tiny fraction of which is required by any individual reader. The time taken to collect the information and to reproduce it is so great that a high proportion of the material required by any individual reader is invalid by the time the finished product reaches him. As the total number of telephone subscribers rises, the proportion whose addresses change more frequently also rises. The directory is an essential body of data in urgent need of an appropriate mode in which to present itself to its readers. Clearly, the format of the traditional book is inappropriate, or will become so as soon as

an alternative technology becomes as easily accessible, or where the level of accessibility of the alternative outweighs the disadvantages built into the existing mode. It is thus that the book will "die," not through sudden technological redundance, but through the prudent choices of those who actually require the information it carries. As the newspaper passes through its own crises of form, many of its traditional elements will probably be lost to the new electronic mode. The pursuit of information "abundance" in this case is in reality the pursuit of a manageable modicum of relevant information.

But for the most part, the contemporary drive for abundance of choice is a besetting ideology much more than a practical need. It is more like the Victorian illusion of mechanized immortality, providing evidence for the psychic tension of the moment rather than for a social or economic need. The pursuit of plenty in the sphere of information is a psychological analogy to its pursuit in the sphere of nourishment in the developed world, where the use of food has more to do with marketing, fashion, and general culture than with biological need. Information abundance has likewise much to do with cultural identity in the late twentieth century, and little to do with need. Nonetheless, it is a motive force and a justification for an industrial evolution with revolutionary repercussions. As a recent OECD report observes:

> The production, transmission and processing of the most varied information will be at the heart of economic activity and social life. . . . through its links with data processing and telecommunications, the electronics complex during the next quarter of a century will be the main pole around which the productive structures of the advanced industrial societies will be reorganized.[12]

There are plenty of documents in circulation that outline the growing disparity in the provision of information, and especially the communications technology, between the countries of the North and those of the developing South. Eighty-five percent of existing data bases are in the North; 70 percent are in the United States. One company, IBM, is responsible for manufacturing two thirds of the world's computers. The abundance both of hardware and software is the privilege of a tiny group of societies, who are themselves enjoying a continuingly increasing disparity. Information grows by what it feeds upon.

Studies of the flows of data from computer to computer reveal its increasing internationalization. The growth of international networks is growing in the wake of the establishment of effective national networks: EURONET is establishing itself after the American TELENET and TYMNET systems. Even the countries of the socialist camp are now becoming connected to Western economics through the flows of international data. There is a strong tendency for all data flow to be concentrated on capital cities, however, because that is where the main data users are located. But there is also a tendency for data to flow from the less developed to the more developed, where processing facilities are more plentiful and more efficient. In the three least advanced countries of Europe, for example, over a quarter of their national data flow is toward other countries. The revenues from computer services in the United States have more than quadrupled in the last decade ($2 to $8+ billion), the international element tripling ($300 to $900 million).[13] The newly emerging techniques of remote

sensing and satellite distribution of data are bringing about further exponential growth and further tiltings in the international flow of data from developing to developed worlds. The cultural implications are self-evident, and the political implications, easy to deduce. Behind the emblem of information foison there exists a growing phenomenon of global cultural domination, produced not by powerful armies, but by powerful international companies. The greater the stock of expertise in a society, the greater is its ability to make use of the information technology and benefit from its software. The educated society is the one best suited to prosper in the new age, and everything conspires against the society that has a deficit in its national balance of educated talent. The profusion of data through which the Western industrialized consumer indulges his or her choice, and expresses the nuances of a carefully refined and nurtured life-style, is the same oversupply that is drawn from the international data flow and jeopardizes the nationhood of developing societies. We may expect in the next decades the lines of international tension to shadow the contours of data abundance.

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ITHIEL DE SOLA POOL

The Culture of Electronic Print

A PREMISE TO A VOLUME on print culture and video culture is that they are different, and indeed they have been. The inherent differences between words and pictures have been compounded by differing structures of their publishing industries, differing immunities at law, and differing capabilities of their production technologies. Publishers in the Gutenberg tradition have a heritage of involvement in religion, politics, science, and ideology, and a recognized status under the First Amendment that exists in only atrophied form for movies and TV. The technology of print lends itself to supplying the marketplace not only with such mass products as big-city newspapers, *Readers Digest*, and *TV Guide*, but also with specialized books, pamphlets, and little magazines; video has had none of that profusion.

Technological change, however, is making some of these distinctions archaic. Videodisks, videocassettes, and 100-channel CATV systems need not be limited to the mass market of TV, and information retrieval of print may not produce the same sort of products as does a literary intelligentsia.

Speculations about the shape that print and video will take in the years to come could lead us in many directions, but in this article I will restrict myself to one set of questions—namely, how electronic delivery of print may change the nature of print culture. I will attempt in this essay to peer into the publishing of the future, starting with issues that are with us now, like the debate about electronic yellow pages, and moving gradually, through issues like CATV access and copyright, to prospects that are mere possibilities for the twenty-first century.

Yellow Pages

A bogey haunts the boardrooms of newspaper publishers; it is the "electrocution" of classified ads. If the 31 percent of advertising revenue that these bring in is lost to videotex, newspapers will be in crisis.[1] Editorials and human interest stories may be read more easily from a printed page than from a computer screen, but an interactive terminal is far more convenient for classified reference material. The reader can call up a selection of listings that meets his needs: for example, three-room apartments for under $400, within twenty minutes of downtown. A listing can be instantly updated or expunged; a

job, if it continues to appear listed in the electronic want ads, is still presumably open. An ad can also be part of a transactional device to complete a deal, not just to convey information; an ad for a left-handed hot-pot glove can provide the code number to key-in to place your order.

The implications for advertiser-supported printed media, once terminals have become pervasive, are ominous. There exist today little printed magazines containing nothing of significance but classified ads and coupons, but owing to slow postal response and the lack of interactive aids to searching, these cannot compete effectively with media that offer substantive editorial content. With electronic integration of the marketing process into advertising, however, we may see the emergence of patterns of editing and control very different from those currently in use, where passive informational ads are inserted into media published for other purposes.

Less predictable is the mix of forms and organizations that the computer systems will take. The hardware may be microprocessors sold in computer stores, or bridging attachments from the phone to the TV set, an arrangement that in the jargon is called videotex. The terminals may use typewriter keyboards, light pens, or voice input/output. The business may be controlled by present print-publishers-turned-electronic, cablecasters, computer companies, or telecommunications carriers.

The battle over those alternatives of control is what the attack on AT&T by newspaper publishers is about. Newspaper publishers have pressed the Senate, the House, and the court that heard the antitrust case to prohibit telephone companies from competing with them as publishers of information. In the fall of 1981, the Senate was considering a rewrite of the 1934 Communications Act. One objective—achieved, in fact, in a different way by the AT&T antitrust settlement—was to allow AT&T to move into the computer age by modernizing its customer services, something the 1956 Consent Decree and regulation under the 1934 Act then prevented. But newspaper publishers became alarmed; they feared that AT&T would begin to provide electronic yellow pages and thus become the classified ad publisher of the future, and they lobbied intensively to prohibit it.[2] The American Newspaper Publishers Association (ANPA) hired the former chairman of the FCC for the campaign, approached every Senator, and sent action alerts to every newspaper.

Yet electronic telephone directories make sense. Instead of looking through the large free book given annually, a subscriber with an alphabetic key pad could type in the name he seeks and have the phone number displayed. Electronic yellow pages make sense too. Instead of just looking up a listing of restaurants, one could, in the ways described above, get a listing of the kind of restaurant one wants, with information on the day's specials, the current waiting line, and perhaps have an interactive way of making a reservation. The French telephone system is currently engaged in a large experiment to develop on-line electronic directory service.

Under a clause that the newspaper publishers lobbied into the Senate bill (S898), however, electronic yellow pages would not be allowed: "AT&T or any affiliate thereof . . . may not provide (within any area in which AT&T is providing exchange telecommunications service) cable service, alarm service, mass media service, or mass media product." The specter the newsmen raised to

get this clause adopted was of AT&T becoming the nation's monopoly publisher. In the name of pluralism, they persuaded the Senate to designate who may publish and who may not.

Ironically, after the Senate bill—which sought to hamstring AT&T by restricting publishing by local telephone companies—was passed, AT&T and the Department of Justice reached a consent decree in the eight-year antitrust case then pending. AT&T was ordered to give up its local operating companies, thus leaving it free to enter the electronic yellow-page business. The ANPA, which had supported the Senate bill, then changed its tack. It persuaded the House Subcommittee on Communications to draft a bill that would prohibit any telephone carrier from publishing information over its own lines, thus barring AT&T from using its long lines for anything it publishes. Finally, the ANPA successfully appealed to Judge Harold H. Greene to amend the Consent Decree on which AT&T and the Department of Justice had agreed, by adding a provision forbidding AT&T from entering into media businesses for the next seven years.

There are several disturbing features to this story. One is its First Amendment implications; another, its King Canute character. The supporters of Judge Greene's prohibition argue that it does not restrict publishing, since, by the terms of his order, AT&T may publish anything it wishes, so long as the material is not transmitted on AT&T transmission lines. But this assertion is technologically ignorant. If AT&T loads a computer with information and allows access to it by local phone lines (which, under the Consent Decree, will not be its own), there is still no conceivable way to assure that a subscriber in another city has not used AT&T long lines, rather than others such as MCI's, to reach the local exchange.

The naive image implicit in Judge Greene's restriction is that an electronic publisher sends out his information like mail, over some specific delivery channel. In fact, electronic publishing generally works the other way around. The publisher stores the information in a computer. The customer accesses that computer by any channel he or she chooses. The enquiry traffic that flows over the national network of electronic highways leaves no tracks or traces that allow the computer receiving the enquiry to know what circuits were used. It is the enquirer's freedom that Judge Greene is abridging. Furthermore, the First Amendment does not say, "Congress shall make no law abridging freedom of speech or of the press, *except for large corporations*." Its words, rather, are a total prohibition on state control of who may publish and who may not. It wrote into law that injunction against government licensing of publishers for which Milton had pleaded in *Areopagitica*. The denial to the government of the right to license printers and publishers is the heart of the First Amendment.

In a perfect world, the press, in its own defense, would champion the right of AT&T to publish yellow pages or anything else it wished. Only a few rare publishers have made that point, for one, Barry Bingham, publisher of the *Louisville Courier-Journal*, who said, "I break ranks with the publishers group when they say in the name of the First Amendment they're going to abbreviate Bell's right to publish." But publishers are only human, and they find it hard to worry about the First Amendment rights of their competitors. When radio was young, newspapers were among those who sought to hamstring it by censor-

ship. In 1923 the *New York Times* proclaimed that "the radio audience is so large and represents such a varied interest that the censor must eliminate anything which might injure the sensibilities of those listening."[3] Again, in 1924, the *Times* editorialized: "Mankind, so impotent in the presence of the new giant of electricity, must make the control of it, so far as it can be controlled, a function of Government."[4] The ANPA in 1931 petitioned the Federal Radio Commission to ban broadcasting of lottery and gift programs.[5] The press, having acquiesced in, or even encouraged, the establishment of controls on broadcasting, then sometimes cited the somewhat censored condition of radio as a reason for not extending to it the same privileges as those extended to the press. When in 1933 CBS petitioned for admission for its news people to the House and Senate galleries, it was opposed by representatives of newspapers on the grounds that "official recognition of radio broadcasting as a medium of disseminating news would be an official sanction of the censorship of news."[6]

In Britain, too, the press sought government restriction on radio competition. The press favored the formation of the BBC, a government broadcasting monopoly, to prevent the explosion of commercial broadcasting that had occurred in the United States. They successfully brought pressure on the government to limit news broadcasting to a short reading of wire service bulletins. However much the press prizes freedom, it also fears competition.

If newspapers could in fact preserve classified ads for themselves, one might forgive a brief infidelity to principle, in recognition of the fact that an important and valuable institution would be aided by keeping the status quo. But no act of Congress denying a publisher's license to AT&T will keep classified ads from going electronic. Although someone other than AT&T may be the vendor, the convenience for reference material of electronic publishing is such that nothing will prevent the loss of that matter by hard copy printing. America's publishers understand that. Why, then, do they campaign for a violation of the First Amendment? For one thing, a five or ten-year delay in the emergence of a competitor means much to an investor, and that they may achieve. As media conglomerates, *they* may be the ones to provide electronic want-ad service. Newspapers as we know them may shrivel somewhat, but that is a less painful prospect to the publisher if he is to be the one who sells the follow-on information service.

The rhetoric of the newspapers is, of course, more persuasive than that. No one wants the emergence of a monopoly publisher. If allowing AT&T its First Amendment rights meant that *de facto* there would be one publisher with whom no one else could compete, a rational man might say, "Violate the First Amendment to preserve it." But the argument is specious. AT&T is a common carrier: by both common and statute law, a common carrier must serve all comers, *including its competitors*, without discrimination. Western Union gets phone service from AT&T, which sends its bills by mail, and the Postal Service has telephones in its offices. None may deny service to its competitors. Of course, there have been violations, prosecutions, convictions, and suits for triple damage, but the law has proved enforceable; it works.

So while AT&T may publish information, in electronic yellow pages or otherwise, it may not refuse to make its transmission lines equally available to others who have information that they wish to publish. Electronic publishing

over common carriers may be as competitive—or more so—than print publishing has ever been. All that is required is that a stern law compel unconditional interconnection. The situation is no different for print. A free press depends on obliging the postal common carrier to accept everything, including publications against the government, the postal system's owner. An electronic free press depends on an ironclad law requiring carriers to interconnect with everyone, including the carriers' competitors.

If that condition is met, entry to the electronic information market should be easy, easier and cheaper, indeed, than it is in the present era of print. Anyone with a computer and some organized information located on it can offer the information for sale. The customers are as close to the data base as their telephone. If a customer dials the right number, keys in his password, and then keys in his enquiry codes, the information will be returned to his terminal. As far as hardware is concerned, there can be thousands of competing information publishers. Electronic publishing is not a natural monopoly.

Software complicates the picture, in that there *are* natural monopolies. Once an organization has compiled a bibliography of all the chemical journal articles of the past twenty years, no other sane entrepreneur will attempt to duplicate that massive effort. If area real estate agents get together to share a consolidated listing service, no one on the outside can compile as comprehensive a list. If two companies both offer a local consumers information service, listing prices in local stores, their coexistence is unstable; if one is more reliable or more comprehensive than the other, it will draw more customers. Since the cost of compiling the data base is essentially a constant, the larger company can divide that cost over more customers, charge less, draw still more customers, and ultimately become a monopoly. A specialized information base is often a natural monopoly.

Such monopolies, however, are narrow. The chemical bibliography may have both too much and too little information for biochemical engineers; there may be room for a specialized bibliography for them. The real estate agents presumably will not cover rooming houses or hunting lodges; there may be room in the market for the services of specialists. The consumer product service may do a good job on prices for housewives, but fail to give product test quality information.

If AT&T does start publishing electronic yellow pages, that will be a convenience for customers and a money-maker for AT&T, but it cannot do everything for everybody. It will list every business address and phone number, but will the rest of the information be what the businesses themselves supply as ads, or will it be what AT&T as critical editors vouchsafe? Either one would be useful, but it is unlikely to be both. If it takes the advertising route, the information will be partial, presumably free, but uneven. Other publishers will provide vetted systematic information, paid for by the customers. There is room for diverse electronic publications, just as there is room for diverse printed ones.

No one can forecast, with any degree of certainty, just what the electronic information marketplace will look like at any given date and place in the future. What can be forecast is that it will be a complex, changing arena of monopolistic competition, with many players, probably more than those in print publishing today. That is at least possible if public policy does not prevent it.

The ANPA's course is a self-defeating one. The courts are likely to knock down what they propose as an unconstitutional house of cards. And if the courts fail to do that, it will be the press that suffers. If the Congress starts regulating who publishes what, even if the first step is to exclude a large monopoly like AT&T, in the end, regulation, all experience tells us, will be used to restrict, not expand, entry and independent voices.

There is an alternative that will protect the press. Rather than by licensing or placing prohibitions on publishing, the only requirement the law should impose, when a carrier has unacceptable monopoly power, is that it operate as a common carrier and provide access to all would-be publishers. Under First Amendment law, when legitimate public purposes conflict with unfettered speech, the courts sometimes engage in a balancing of considerations. But one principle that the Supreme Court has established is that, when alternative means exist to achieve a desired public purpose, and one means infringes free speech while the other does not, the legislature may not choose the infringing means.[7]

CATV

We have considered at length the misguided debate about electronic yellow pages because it is at present the most actively discussed matter in what will be a crucial issue for the future of publishers, namely their relationship to common carriers. Far more important to the future of publishing, and likely to be vehemently discussed in the coming decade, will be the matter of leased channels on cable television. New cable systems are being built with 54 channels, sometimes 108. Old cable systems are being upgraded to modern standards.

But who needs 108 channels of conventional TV shows? Twenty of those should saturate demand. What are the other channels to be used for? Cities are asking for only a few channels for education and municipal services. They are also often mandating access channels to be used by community groups. All of those uses together may require a half-dozen channels. There is also specialized programming of interest to small segments of the audience who are willing to pay for it: all-news channels, sports channels, children's channels, porno channels, high culture channels. Perhaps we are now up to 40.

Besides those uses, however, a broadband cable system can be used for teleconferencing, for business data communications, and for delivery of some of the electronic publishing services described above. Fifty-four channels is a fairly tight squeeze for what may be demanded; all could be fully occupied well before the end of the fifteen-year period for which a cable system is usually built. Cities that have insisted on twin cable systems are wise.

Cablecasters are quite ambivalent about having extra channels available to lease to others. A cablecaster will be happy to lease channels that do not compete with the pay services he himself offers. He will be happy, for example, to link the branches of a bank on a data channel, or to lease a channel for a teleconference. But what if the cablecaster is offering a pay sports service or home box office, and a rival entrepreneur asks to lease a channel for a competing sports or movie service. The cablecaster will refuse, or if he is compelled to offer

channels for lease, as some franchises require, he will ask an astronomical price.

CATV systems are local monopolies. By all American traditions, they should be common carriers, but they are not being treated that way, and they do not wish to be. The words "common carrier" are a red flag to the cable industry. The industry tried, like the newspaper publishers, to get protective language inserted into the Senate rewrite bill, S898. A series of clauses were quietly slipped in that would have prohibited any level of government—federal, state, or local—from compelling access, and would also have prohibited rate regulation. But in this instance, unlike that of the yellow page clause, a vigorous interest was fighting on the other side—namely, the city mayors. They protested, and Senator Barry Goldwater had those clauses struck by amendment on the Senate floor. The issue of channels for lease remains an open one; it will be a matter of hot debate in the years to come.

For existing publishers, the right to lease cable channels may prove essential. If the local newspaper is to use its reporting and editing capabilities to provide the city with videotex information on the news or consumer services, it will either have to use the phone lines or the cable trunks, and the latter may prove far cheaper if good video quality is to be achieved. If magazine publishers or educational publishers wish to put out their material in electronic ways as well as between covers, they may find it essential to lease channels on CATV systems across the country. But if the cable carriers can pick and choose *which* publishers may publish in these ways, the publishing industry will have reason to protest.

Various structural devices can be suggested to achieve an open market in cable access so that would-be producers or publishers can obtain a channel for their material. The City of Boston cable franchise has allocated a few channels to a public access and programming foundation, which may lease time on those channels to others. The franchise holder thus has an incentive to lease channels at a reasonable fee, for if he refuses, the applicant may go to the foundation and lease a channel there, obtaining the channel with no revenue going to the franchise holder.

Another device for assuring reasonable tariffs for leased channels, without subjecting cablecasters and others to the bureaucratic burdens of rate-of-return regulation, would be arbitration. A franchise could specify that unused channel time must be made available for lease under a tariff card, such that the holder of the lease pays his proportionate share of physical plant, operations, taxes, capital costs, and a reasonable profit (in short, all costs but those of programming). The tariff would be set by the cablecaster without regulation. But if the city believed the rates to be unreasonable, it could ask for arbitration. As in most arbitration, each party would choose one arbitrator, with a mutually agreeable third chosen by both. This is a more lax scheme than having a bureaucracy doing rate-regulation. The cablecaster might earn marginally more, but it would still assure tolerable rates, with the added features of flexibility and no permanent bureaucracy for enforcement.

Whatever the solution chosen, a major issue for the 1980s and 1990s will be how to prevent cablecasters from becoming publishing monopolists in their communities, controlling both the conduit and its contents. It does not seem to be an important issue now, because CATV is still nothing more than a

marginally improved way of delivering TV entertainment, available to a minority of the population. Unless the cablecaster offers good value, you can still watch the same material over the air. But as more and more material migrates onto exclusively pay channels, and if CATV becomes the delivery system for all sorts of local services, it will become important that the monopolist of the conduit not have control over the content it carries.

It seems unlikely that the American public will accept the existence of such a comprehensive monopoly. Yet it will not be easy to change the system once it is established. The franchises now being given are *not* common-carrier franchises, and vested interests are being created that will have to be uprooted.

Technology may offer an important help in making that hard transition. The telephone system in the twenty-first century will probably have the capability to offer substantially the same services as CATV. The cablecaster's monopoly will face a competing system that *does* have the tradition of common carriage. That will not happen quickly, because it depends on the conversion of the $120 billion telephone capital plant to an all-digital system. That is happening, but it is happening first in the switches and in the long-distance trunks. The last part of the system to go from analog to digital technology will be the 29 percent of the plant that is in the local loop extending between the exchange and the home. Yet, even if it is coming slowly, that transformation is nevertheless on the way. When it comes, a broadband multiplex signal will be able to carry simultaneously, into the home, phone conversations, a TV picture, utility and security monitoring pulses, information retrieval, and electronic mail.

Unless those in the cable industry move quickly and aggressively in the next two decades to be on the scene as an effective carrier for multiple services, they will probably be displaced. Even if they do move effectively, they will still face competition. For some purposes, their unswitched plant should be able to compete well; for other purposes, less so. But they will have to compete as carriers serving others, not as entertainment monopolists, since whatever they decline to carry for others, the digital phone network of the twenty-first century will be there to do.

How fast this happens depends in part on regulation. At present, phone companies (except in some rural areas) are not allowed to deliver CATV. Under the proposed 1982 Consent Decree, that restriction continues against the divested operating companies. It should in due course be eliminated. There is no good reason that cablecasters should not face the competition of local phone companies, soon to be independent of AT&T. The cablecasters will fight hard to postpone such a day of reckoning. The phone companies will not try hard to change things soon, for they are not yet ready to install the necessary equipment. But the time for that will come, and King Canute, it is hoped, will not hold back the tides very long.

In the meantime, there may be fifteen or twenty years in which, if leasing of channels is not required by the cities that give cable franchises, existing print publishers will find themselves frozen out of some of the most important electronic marketplaces, which will be controlled by the cable carriers.

Will Paper Die?

Books, magazines, and newspapers are not about to disappear. Their functions and forms may change a great deal, especially those of newspapers, for the instantaneity of electronic media affects them in particular. But as Anthony Smith argues persuasively in *Goodbye Gutenberg*, they have changed before and will change again to survive in a fluid world.[8] There is no basis for predicting that, because books, magazines, and newspapers will face new competition from new media, and become partly electronic media themselves, a hundred years hence there will be nothing around that looks like a book or journal, or that people will have stopped reading. Nonetheless, my contention in this essay is that, for reasons of convenience and cost, publishing is becoming electronic. Using computer logic on arrays of bits, large and complicated patterns can be edited, stored, transmitted, and searched with far more flexibility than is possible with ink records or paper. Millions of words can be searched in seconds and transmitted across the world in minutes. Up to now, however, those conveniences were bought at a price. Electronic text handling was good, but expensive; paper records were cheaper. That is reversing. It is becoming cheaper to handle words electronically than to handle them physically, to the point where the latter may soon become too expensive for ordinary use.

People, however, are not going to stop reading from, or writing on, paper, nor carrying around pieces of paper in their pockets and purses. Nothing on the horizon is the full functional equivalent of that most useful technology. People did not stop talking when they learned to write, and they did not abandon pens when the typewriter came along. So reading from, and writing on, paper is not likely to be given up in the face of any alternative that we anticipate today. Certainly CRTs, TV screens, or microfiche readers are often less comfortable to handle than paper.

But increasingly, the most economical way of moving, storing, and displaying words is electronically, not on paper, the use of which is becoming a luxury. We may distinguish three steps in the processing of words: input-output, including editing and printing; storage; and delivery.

Storage in computer form is already cheaper than in filing cabinets. At the moment, the most promising storage technology is that of videodisks. An optical digital disk pack of six disks, with a total capacity of a trillion bits, or over one hundred thousand books, may be on the market in 1983.[9] At an estimated cost of $51,000 per pack, the cost of storing a book would be forty cents. One hundred disk packs, or the total contents of the Library of Congress, would cost $5 million, and would fit in a medium-size room. Other projections, with different videodisk approaches, are for cost estimates of one cent to a nickel per book.[10] Clearly, the significant costs are not the stored data, but the cost of creating the text, reading it into the medium, and then displaying it when wanted.

For storage, the choice is clear; computer memories are far outdistancing paper in economy. The problem with computer memories is input and output. Larger than storage cost is the cost of getting the microscopic record that is on

tape—or disk or film or bubble memory—back out again to someone who wants it, in a form in which it can be read.

With regard to retrieval, too, electronic means hold the advantage. The cost of labor for finding one sheet of paper in a file containing millions of sheets is rising, while the cost of computer hardware is falling, by a factor of about 40 percent a year. There is little doubt that searching for a record in computer memory and displaying it on a CRT—or even printing it out on paper that can then be thrown away— will become cheaper than finding it manually.

Electronic transmission of the output is also far cheaper than printing it out and carrying it by plane or truck. Compare, for example, Hewlett-Packard's interplant message system cost of about a penny per 100-word average message for domestic transmission with the cost of a first-class stamp.[11]

It is with regard to input that the balance of costs is far less one-sided. Off in the dreamland of inventors is an optical character reader (OCR) that will look at any font of type, or any handwriting, and turn it correctly into digital representation. It does not yet exist, and it is not clear when it will. A great deal of research has been done, but to date, cheap, reliable success has been only with well-defined fonts, such as the curious squiggles that appear on our checks to identify bank account numbers.

Without such a device as an OCR, the entry of text into electronic form requires the manual operation of retyping, and that is extremely expensive. Without an OCR or its equivalent, the Library of Congress will never be put into computer memory. No one will pay the cost of typing it all.

Thus to input records into computer-readable form is rarely economically justified, if the purpose for which it is done is solely the filing of them. Conversely, however, if for some other reason the records need to be so put, it is clearly more economical to file and retrieve them that way than to print them out and preserve them in manual files. Since more and more of everything that is written at some time appears in computer representation, its further handling in electronic form is dictated by economic considerations.

Within a reasonably short future there will be hardly anything published in print that is not typeset by use of a computer. In the not distant future, whatever is done by the present 4.8 million stenographers, typists, and secretaries in America, as well as whatever has been published in print, will exist in electronic form, and will be available for all the advantages of computer storage, transmission, formatting, and editing.

The trends I have described, if they continue to prevail, lead me to anticipate that virtually all handling of text in individual files, and also publishing, will be done within computers, with the text available for display on screens or by voice output. Printing the text onto paper will be for the convenience of the reader alone, and only if his convenience is worth the cost, as indeed it often is. Both file retrieval and publishing will often be done in editions of one, at the moment the reader wants the document. The reader will often throw away the paper copy as soon as it is read and get a duplicate from the terminal if he wants it again later, for it may be cheaper and easier than storing the paper to get the same document on paper many times.

Footnotes and Copyright

Looking further into the future, I predict that electronic publishing may turn out to be more radically different from print publishing than I have suggested so far. I have given reasons for expecting it to be pluralistic, competitive, and cheap, but as for content, I have suggested material only marginally different from what is now in magazines, newspapers, and books. It may start out that way, as early automobiles looked like horseless carriages, but it is unlikely to remain so.

The most important change may be the end of the canonical text, produced in thousands of uniform copies. In some ways, that foreshadows a return in print to the style of the manuscript, or even to the ways of oral conversation. Since Gutenberg, books, articles, manuals, or laws have been available in hundreds or thousands of locations in absolutely identical form. From that followed referencing; if you name the work, edition, and page, anyone anywhere can locate the identical thing. From that also followed catalogues and bibliographies. The identification in the library card catalogue is unambiguous. One can say with some precision that in a particular field the catalogue or bibliography is complete or not.

Contrast that to the world of manuscripts, where every copy was unique, with its own minor variations. These made for a central problem in scholarship, and careers are devoted to inferring the original version. Scribal rituals focused largely on preventing deviation, and in some traditions, error in transcribing a sacred manuscript was a sin.

The contrast is even greater between the modern canonical book and the world of oral dialogue. In Plato's academy, or in a modern seminar, no scholarly procedure allows for cataloguing or referencing of the ideas expressed. There is no fixed unit in which ideas occur. Their flow is amorphous.

Electronic publishing returns to that tradition. A small subculture of computer scientists who write and edit on networks like the ARPANET illustrate what is coming. One person types some comments at his terminal and gives access to it to colleagues on the network. As each modifies, edits, and expands what is there, the text changes from day to day. With each change, the text may be stored somewhere in different versions.

Think about a teacher in the future using computer-aided instruction. The textbook is on line. Like every teacher today, he would like to make modifications in the text. On the computer, he can do so, and does. What is in memory becomes his own version, changing with the years.

Think about a literature or drama course. What better exercise is there than to take a text and try to improve it. Reading can become active and interactive. The penciled scribbles in the margin can become part of the text, and perhaps part of a growing dialogue, as others agree or disagree.

There are problems in that kind of fluid dialogue. One often needs to identify the original, or official, version. Conventions will undoubtedly be developed for labeling variant versions, but there is no way of preventing their proliferation. If one can read a text (from wherever it originates) on one's own terminal, it means that that text has somehow been transmitted to one's own

computer memory. Once there, it can be copied, modified, and retransmitted at will.

The implications of all of this for scholarship are mind-boggling. "Blue-sky" writing on the wonders of the computer age often describe how a scholar at his terminal will instantly be able to call up any book or article from the world's literature. Wrong. The proliferation of texts available in multiple forms, with no clear line between early drafts and final printed versions, will overwhelm any identification of "the world's literature."

The implications of all of this for copyright are horrendous. Indeed, the whole notion of copyright becomes obsolete, for it is rooted in the technology of print. The recognition of a copyright and the practice of paying royalties emerged with the printing press. When numerous copies were reproduced in one place, it became relatively easy to identify the source of the copies and how many had been made; and where they were printed was the practical place to apply any control or fiscal accounting. Indeed, the practice of copyright in Britain, though not the word, began in 1557 when Philip and Mary, in an effort to stop the printing of seditious and heretical books, limited the right of printing to members of the Stationers' Company, and gave the Company the right to search for and seize anything printed contrary to statute or proclamation. Eight years later, the Company, under that power, created a system of copyright for their members.[12] In 1709 the first copyright act for authors was passed by Parliament.

For modes of reproduction where such an easy locus of control as the printing press did not exist, the concept of copyright was not applied under common law. It was not applied to conversation, or speeches, or singing of songs, whether in private or public, at least until quite recently. Copyright was a specific adaption to a specific technology, and to the problems and opportunities that it created.

The law recognized that. The landmark case in the United States was *White Smith v. Apollo.* It denied protection to piano rolls or sound recordings because they were not "writings" in tangible form readable by a human being.[13] That common law concept of copyright excluded from protection many new technologies of communication since 1908. But the motion picture industry, the recording industry, and more recently the broadcasting industry have persuaded the Congress, since the courts were not willing to do so, to extend protection to them. For the earlier new technologies, movies and phonograph records, the logic of the extension was reasonable. Like books, they were physical objects produced in multiple copies in some sort of production plant. The same system as had been applied to printing some centuries earlier was basically workable. However, with the arrival of electronic reproduction, the concept became inappropriate. Electronic publishing is analogous to word-of-mouth communication in the eighteenth century, not to the print shop of that time.

Consider, for example, the crucial distinction in copyright law between reading and writing. To read a copyright text is no violation, only to copy it in writing. How does one apply that to a computer terminal? The only way to read a text that is in electronic memory is to display it on the screen; one writes it to read it. To transmit it to someone else, however, one does not write it, one

only gives them a password to one's memory. If one has not written it, is that a violation?

Or consider the case of a program that generates computed output. Perhaps the program operates on numerical data and generates a report with time trends, averages, and correlations. Perhaps the program operates on manuscript and generates computer-produced abstracts. Certainly, the computer program that does this is a text that can be copyrighted under present law. But what of the text the program and computer generates? Who is the author of that? The computer?

The idea that a machine is capable of intellectual labor is beyond the scope of the copyright statute. Can a computer infringe copyright? In short, in the whole process of computer communication, versions are happening with text that are partly controlled by people and partly automatic. Some of the text is never visible but is only stored electronically; some is flashed briefly on a CRT; some is printed out in hard copy. What started as one text varies and changes by degrees to something else. The receivers may be individuals and clearly identified, or they may be other machines that never print the text out, but only use the information to produce something else. Totally new concepts will have to be invented to compensate creative work. The notion of copyright based on print simply won't work.

I am not proposing a catastrophic thesis. The fact that references, bibliographies, card catalogues, and copyright will not work for electronic publishing in the same way they did for printed books and articles (for which they were designed) does not imply that human ingenuity cannot cope with the problem. For many purposes, canonical versions, catalogues, and also compensation practices are essential. Conventions will be designed to provide these desiderata to some degree, despite the fluid situation of conversational interactive computing. What these conventions will be, I certainly do not know, but I am sure they will not be the present ones.

Communications Revolutions

We have looked at examples of the changes that electronic publishing will bring. It is tempting to describe this as a communications revolution. That is legitimate, but it is a cliché. There are all sorts of revolutions. The transistor radio was a revolution in communication for illiterates in developing countries. The recent Consent Decree is a revolution in the Bell System, forcing it to abandon its hundred-year goal of end-to-end service. "Revolutionary" is an overused word; it means nothing more than that there is system change.

Let me try to put electronic publishing in the context of the most fundamental system changes in the history of human communication. I would single out four of them, four changes that were revolutionary to a far greater degree than others.

The first was the invention of writing some five thousand years ago. Before that, all human communication was face-to-face. Some of it was one-to-one; some of it was mass, as when an orator spoke to a crowd. But there was no way to preserve a message other than for a person to remember it and repeat it face-

to-face. Verse was used to help memorization, for the words would otherwise be lost.

With writing, communication was freed from that constraint. As Harold Innis notes,[14] disembodied information could, for the first time, be moved in time and space. Archives and mail systems were created. Scholars and bureaucrats began to work in written modes.

The second great communication revolution was the invention of printing five hundred years ago. It did for mass communication what writing had done for individual communication. Now mass audiences were no longer limited to those assembled around an orator. Just as writing had enabled singly written messages to be moved around in space and preserved in time, so now tracts, sermons, pamphlets, and essays in numerous copies could spread to scattered audiences and to later generations. Politics and popular movements entered the print culture.

The third fundamental revolution was only a century and a half ago. It was the symbolization of messages by electromagnetic force instead of by marks inscribed on a flat sheet. The first form of electromagnetic communication was the telegraph. Until electricity was used in that way, no message (other than smoke signals or carrier pigeons) could be delivered to a distance faster than a man could transport it. Electricity removed that constraint; messages could be transmitted at a distance at the speed of light.

Electric signals removed one other constraint on human communication. Writing and printing had created mobile storable codes to symbolize words, but devoid of the voice that carried them. With telegraphy, electronic signaling at first also reproduced only text, but with the further invention of phonographs, telephone, radio, and TV, it was found that electric modulation could mimic voice and pictures too. These as well as text could now be preserved over time, and transmitted over space instantaneously. One implication is that electronic publishing is not just print culture; it may merge print, voice, and video culture. A printed magazine today is also a mix of words and pictures. The electronic publication of the future may be a mix of text, voice, and moving pictures.

The fourth revolution is occurring in our own time. Before the computer, every communications medium or device was essentially dumb. If it worked right, it delivered at the far end exactly the message that a human being had put in at the start. There could be noise or attenuation, the paper could tear, but the medium added nothing positive. What a human being put in, a human being could take out, and that was all.

Now for the first time, the message that goes in is not necessarily the message that comes out. For the first time, thanks to digital logic, messages may be modified or even created in the machine.

Let us take a very simple example, the airline reservation system. You tell the clerk you want to change your route. He punches a few letters to identify you, your present reservation, and the one you want. It is a short message and he gets a short message back (composed by the computer) confirming or rejecting your desired reservation. In the process, however, a large number of other messages may have been generated that no human being ever sees. The computer of your airline may enquire of the computer of some other airline about a connecting flight; it gets an answer back; it evaluates the reply and may

have to enquire further. Human beings write and see only a small part of the total traffic.

Artificially created messages are only a small part of electronic publishing today. At the first round, publishing becomes electronic in that a reporter writes his story on a word processor, and editing and page makeup are computer-aided; but what comes out at the end is a newspaper looking just like it always did. That is just the beginning. Electronic publishing as it may become is perhaps more like a youngster playing Space Invaders permeated by lights and sound along with words. The player initiates; the machine answers back. It is an active conversational process. It may be fun; it may be management of daily life; it may be work. Whatever it is, it will probably in the end resemble publishing to about the same degree that the business or product of today's Time-Life conglomerate resembles the scriptorium of a monastery.

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WAYNE C. BOOTH

The Company We Keep: Self-Making in Imaginative Art, Old and New

> A voice comes to one in the dark. Imagine.
>
> —Samuel Beckett, *Company*

> How will literature survive the development of other media of communication? . . . The day when the Book ceases to be the principal vehicle of knowledge, will not literature have changed its meaning once again? Perhaps we are quite simply living through the last days of the Book.
>
> —Gérard Genette, "Structuralism and Literary Criticism"

> It really is of importance, not only what men do, but also what manner of men they are that do it.
>
> —John Stuart Mill, *On Liberty*

The Many Imaginative Worlds We Live In

WHEN I WAS FOUR OR FIVE YEARS OLD, a salesman came to our door and somehow managed to talk my father into buying a set of books he could not afford: *My Book House*. Memory says that we shelved many volumes, perhaps ten or twelve—certainly it seemed to me that there were more than any human being could ever exhaust. All these wonderfully gilded books (I have recently discovered that there were only six), and all for creatures like me! The ones on the right were for little children; the ones on the left were for "when you get older and learn to read."

They were all profusely illustrated, in a style that I now suppose was vaguely Pre-Raphaelite. Splendid knights, on marvelous steeds with flaring nostrils, battled with ugly, but obviously vulnerable, dragons, to rescue sinewy princesses. The princesses quickly became confused in my mind with various "girls of my dreams," creatures of an imagination set on fire by various popular songs then current. We did not hear those songs on any radio; there was no radio in our home in the twenties. The same mother who read to me from the

books bought the sheet music and sang them to us, to her own accompaniment on the piano.

"Art," you see, was already doing its work, creating a kind of culture of the imagination. But it was a highly commercial kind, obviously, most of its work done by salesmen moving door-to-door in the pursuit of profit, culture be damned. And here I am, more than half a century later, able to remember more about the set of illustrated books and those popular songs than I can about anything my parents said or did at the time—except, of course, for negative moments when punishment was vigorous. I can remember making up songs of my own, no doubt borrowed from favorites like "Hello, Central, Give Me Heaven," "You Can't Holler Down My Rain Barrel," and one about the ancient story of a sweet little "babe in the woods" who lay down and died, with her brother.

I asked my mother, in a burst of creative egotism, why nobody ever learned to sing *my* songs, since after all I was more than willing to learn *theirs*. I can't remember her answer, and I can barely remember snatches of two of "my" songs. But I can remember dozens of theirs, and when I sing them, even now, I sometimes feel again the emotions, and see the images, that they aroused then. Thus who I am now—the very shape of my soul—was to a surprising degree molded by the works of "art" that came my way.

I set "art" in quotation marks, because much that I experienced in those early books and songs would not be classed as art according to most definitions. But for the purposes of appraising the effects of "art" on "life" or "culture," and especially for the purposes of thinking about the effects of the "media," we surely must include every kind of artificial experience that we provide for one another. What better word have we than "art" to cover every piece of imitation-life, every experience invented for the sake of supplementing or counteracting or criticizing or evading or enhancing "life"?

In this sense of the word, all of us are from the earliest years fed a steady diet of art, and the quality of our lives at any given moment will, to a surprising degree—some these days would say to an appalling degree—depend on the quality of what we ingest. But the metaphor of nourishment is misleading; it suggests that we are talking about health as some future value, judging food (or poison) only as it might be tested empirically by some medical team ten minutes or ten years later. When we talk in that way about the future effects of art, and especially about what print and video culture are likely to do to us, we disregard the qualities met in the moment of eating, the quality of the meal itself, and of what might be called the aftertaste, the quality of the mind that is full of *this* kind of melody or verse rather than *that* kind.

Was I enjoying a good childhood, *as* I listened or read, sang "real" songs or imagined others? I would sit and dream of those Pre-Raphaelite lords and ladies, sit quietly for hours, singing my songs, dreaming of "my" adventures. I would charge up glass mountains, tiptoe into the chambers of sleeping maidens, their seductive forms—oh, yes!—chastely concealed under "counterpanes" with flowery patterns, like those that illustrated *A Child's Garden of Verses*. Soon I was making my own variations, transforming in imagination characters from my daily round. I found to my delight that, by a simple decision to daydream, I could rescue my current love, Virginia Shelley, from a cloudburst; reaching

down from my seat upon my charger, I would touch her hand and we would at once float up a kind of dry funnel in what was otherwise a terrifying thunderstorm. Out over the threatened streets we flew, just like the magical people in the books, together at last, untouched by the rain, unafraid of the thunder, marveled at by the soggy crowds of weaklings who looked up at us from below.

By then I was able to read some of the stories in *My Book House* on my own. I read them again and again—though some were already almost memorized. I thumbed them forwards and backwards; I chanted them aloud, sitting and dreaming over one page for as long as my dreams required. And sometimes, with lots of time on my hands, I would just ramble from the middle of one story to the next, wondering what would happen if Cinderella got lost in "Puss in Boots."

All Americans of my generation will be able to summon their own memories to dramatize how different our childhood experience was from that of children reared in later years on radio, on movies, on TV. During my hours of dreaming, in the 1920s, nobody from outside my own head ever imposed a flashing series of scene changes on my "screen." Until I had my first radiant "video" experience (not what people now generally call video, but the movie *Ramona*, when I was perhaps eight or nine), I experienced no work of "art" one tenth as exciting, visually, as "Sesame Street" or even the next commercial you will see on the screen. Compared with almost every child in America today, I had a mind that was sluggish and impoverished, awkward in its inferences from visual signs, uninformed about the possibilities for excitement in the world.

Sluggish, uninformed, impoverished. Or was it reflective, independent, uncluttered, tranquil? We are quickly tempted into heavy judgments in these matters, even when we attempt pure description. I must move, before I am done here, to some overt evaluating, but the truth is that we have no established ways of talking about the relative value, as nourishment for a growing child or fading adult, of the various foods offered us in the 1920s or 1980s. Before we explore any such language, it will be better to step tentatively into some more raw description.

On a recent vacation, my wife and I and two friends talked a good deal about two movies of 1981, *Reds* and *My Dinner with André*. We also followed a daily schedule of reading a given short story, each of us privately, and then discussing it later in the day. Our third activity, during those aggressively cultural ten days, was reading aloud for an hour or so from *Ulysses*, and discussing as we read.

Our only plan had been to "do some reading aloud together, and maybe discuss a story or two." But by the time we were done, we had accumulated a complicated variety of experiences with art, none of them quite like those of my childhood.

There were, most obviously, three experiences that might be called direct or primary: the moments spent in direct contact with the work. With the movies, that had of course been a one-time affair, already for some weeks fading in memory. With the short stories, it was time spent alone, transforming words into images and events; but that primary experience was extended by the

secondary experience of discussion, checking memory and refining first impressions. With *Ulysses*, a work that all of us had previously read, or read at, the primary experience was communal and complex. For the most part, it was inextricably combined with secondary artistic experience: analysis, debate, and reflection were intertwined with the reading. But there were also moments that were almost as unmediated by reflection as the most direct and engrossed moments had been when Beatty/Reed faced down the commissars.

About all of the works, then, we engaged in a kind of reflection and debate that had never disturbed my childhood reading. But discussion of the movies was seriously hampered by our fading memories. Reading and rereading the printed stories, alive there before us, we could let them grow under our hands. Thus there was a fundamental contrast between works that were still somehow in process as we discussed and works that offered us only a closed memory of direct experience. The two movies led to discussions that were generally the most animated. Nobody actually struck anyone in anger, as people are said to do about some TV characters, but it was clear that, despite our lifetime commitments to literature, we were more passionately committed to our opinions about those two average movies, weeks after viewing them, than to our contrasting views about *Ulysses* or the short stories we had before us. Two of us "liked" *Reds* much more than did the other two; two of us disliked *My Dinner with André* intensely, while the other two thought it a valuable experiment. "Wonderful that Malle should attempt such a *daring* violation of what makes a 'good movie.' " Because we were free, like my younger self, to "waste" whatever time we pleased, we could talk indefinitely about our reasons for liking or disliking. We agreed that Beatty didn't know how to combine the political and romantic lines of *Reds;* we disagreed about whether André was a pretentious bore or a fascinating, though troubled, pioneer of the spirit. We disagreed about whether anyone responsible had recognized just how superficial and cliché-ridden was the conversation between André and Wally.

But with all our leisure, we soon began to run out of topics derived from memory of the movies themselves, and we might have ground to a halt if we had depended on *their* motive power. The primary experience, after all, was further and further in the past. Even if we had been able to locate another showing somewhere, we could never really "consult the text," though we were aware that certain fortunate students of film have the equipment needed to do so. Again and again some one of us would mention details that the others had overlooked, but there was no way to verify any memory. "Well, I guess I'll just have to see it again," or "I don't *want* to see it again. All I want to see is whether, as you claim, the camera was making that ironic point against André."

With all our variety, there was one experience we did *not* have, sixty miles from the nearest TV or movie theatre, and with no radio, newspaper, or magazines available: a one-time encounter, with no chance to look again at details, and with little chance for discussion or private reflection—that is to say, the most frequent artistic experience in America today. TV programming, the art that is shared more widely than any other, assumes that whatever critical thought occurs will be itself broadcast: an occasional critic on the "Today Show" telling us what to think, in language cleverer than we ourselves could manage; an occasional talk show about "issues" reduced for quick consumption.

Any such intrusion of a reflective voice is followed quickly by a fresh visual sensation: primary experience of a kind so immediate as almost to be called un*media*ted. Whatever one may think about that kind of uncomplicated primacy, we knew none of it as we read and talked.

What Difference Does It Make?

The usual way of taking the media seriously is to talk about their consequences—most often, for the growth of children. We are flooded both with indictments of sex and violence on TV, and with replies that either deny the adequacy of the evidence of bad consequences or that see TV as only a symptom, not a cause. Such debate is not necessarily pointless. If we can finally prove that children who watch a great deal of TV have indeed been maimed, then it is possible—remotely possible—that we may find ways of controlling the medium without sacrificing essential freedoms for all concerned. But studies of consequences suffer from the defects that plague all empirical studies of cause and effect in human behavior: they seem never to be decisive, nor can investigators agree on how to conduct them or on how to evaluate even the most decisive results once they are in. If a given number of children are more violent after watching a given number of programs, how are we to prove that getting their natural violence out of their systems is not a good thing, a kind of vaccination while they are so young that they can't do a lot of harm? If we then turn, in a kind of desperation, to longitudinal studies, we must wait for ten or twenty years to decide whether to act—and meanwhile, the harm, if any, continues to be perpetrated.[1]

But the most serious limitation of consquence talk is that it tells us nothing about the quality of the lives lived *during* a given artistic experience. It is one thing to show that an experience changes people's behavior; it is quite another thing, obviously more important even though more difficult, to show that an experience is desirable or undesirable in itself *as* experience.

Though the distinction tends to get lost in our future-oriented society,[2] we all recognize it when we are thinking, not about other people's development, but about what is for *us* worth doing. Nobody can believe that all ways of "spending time" have equal value. Indeed, it is a constant assumption of our society—of our advertising, of our book reviews and criticism of the arts, of our easy talk about the difference between good spectator sports and bad, good and lousy baseball games, good and bad days—that some hours justify or enhance life, others poison it. And today, as in the past, people talk about our various forms of "art" as more or less adequate ways of providing a "good time." Only when we set out to prove something about good or bad effects do we forget our assumption that, *regardless* of consequences, some moments spent with books and plays and TV and movies are worth living, while others leave us wondering whether the best for man is never to be born.

What kind of "good time" was I leading during my days with fairy stories and folk tales? What is the quality of my life during my three hours and forty minutes attending the movie *Reds*, or my occasional half-hour with Johnny Carson, or my three hours with Agatha Christie's *Curtains*, or the weeks of life spent reading and rereading Jane Austen's *Emma?* If anything is obvious about

each of us, it is that we are very different persons depending on the art we are living with or in. The lives we live *in the moment* of the living are more or less defensible according to whether the worlds we live in prove to be habitable. Difficult as talk about such matters is, surely nothing could be more important than keeping alive the great critical traditions of describing and appraising the quality of experience made possible by different works and different kinds of work. Let others measure consequences, then, as we consider for a while here the quality of induced life that is enjoyed as we surrender to the different media. We can return, in the last two sections of this essay, to talk about consequences in a way that will be somewhat different from asking whether, in a world in which everybody is already violent in one degree or another, more children bop each other after watching a given kind of television.

We have already begun on our task, merely by trying to describe a variety of experiences with different media. Suppose we push farther into this immensely threatening terrain (acknowledging from the beginning that we will overgeneralize), and ask four neglected questions—neglected in talk about *these* matters, though of course we refer to them a good deal in other contexts: *Where* are we—that is, what kind of world or space do we inhabit, as we experience a given medium? *Who* are we, as we read or listen or look? *Who* dwells there *with* us? And—moving slightly in the direction of future consequences again—*what* do we desire, what do we hope for, in the imagined world we have entered?

Where Do We Live Our Imaginative Lives?[3]

To describe where we are might seem an easy task: we are placed into this or that locale—the Bronx, a space station on Aldebaran, a battlefield outside the walls of Troy, an eighteenth century drawing room, the riot-filled streets of the Left Bank in 1968, the ruins of Beirut in 1982, a TV newsroom with weather maps on the walls. But difficulties arise as soon as we distinguish the incidental results of a particular program schedule or library shelf from what is essential to the medium. Our questions then become, Where are we *always* when watching TV or a movie? Where are we *always* when reading a story? If we can answer such general questions, we shall be on our way to locating who we are made to be, since where we live is part of the definition of who we are.

Like all of our questions, this one is ambiguous and difficult. Suppose we take it as asking *where the action takes place.* With all of our immense critical outpouring about the various media, I can find hardly anything about this question put in the form that makes it interesting. And of course we find no experimental data to aid us: "mental experiments" of the kind this piece is built on are for now all we have.[4]

Perhaps it is different for those whose first imaginative experience was with video and not with Grimm, but for me, the action of all TV drama takes place somehow in a physical location behind, or in some sense *in*, the set. At the movies, the action takes place "back there" or "out there," sometimes even out there in Hollywood if I become slightly disengaged: I "see" a set, not a scene. In every case, even when most fully lost in the action, I am somehow outside of it, not responsible for it. It is true that I more easily and uncritically lose all awareness of the "real" world when watching a movie than when reading a book

or watching a play on the stage. (I have heard it said that people brought up on legitimate theater "lose" themselves at a play more than at the movies, but it's hard for me to believe it.) And yet I am by no means as close to any screened action as I am to those actions that occur in my head as I read. The set and the screen are themselves always *located*, with the action taking place on the other side of it. In this sense, all of the screened actions occur *in the same place*, and they occur in total independence of anything I do.

This fixity of location, and the pace of events within a location, are especially striking when, watching TV, I discover that the family and I can circle the set, leave it, tune it out, come back to it, talk to each other over it—and the action carries on, indifferent to us. When we come back, the events in that fixed scene (regardless of whether the imagined "country" is a spaceship or the servants' quarters in an English mansion) have continued inexorably in our absence (unless of course, it was commercial-time, and then it is the commercials that have ignored our absence). Nothing that might have happened to me in the interval could make the slightest difference. The weekly newspaper columns summarizing "What Happened on the Soaps"[5] testify to the radical independence of the box from our own activity; "they" carry on their restless lives, such as they are, hastening toward their predictable doom (death for the minor characters, and for the others, not death, but lowered ratings and final withdrawal), whether I attend or not.

Printed stories are not like that. Though it may sometimes seem that the general outlines of their plots are fixed for all time, in fact they depend on me. Most obviously, the book I read is not itself the physical location of anything that occurs "in" it. The action takes place in a country somehow in my head, yet freed to occur in a space *not* in my head, let alone confined to some box or screen. *I* make the streets, the buildings, the people, the clothing, in a space that is in my head yet is larger than any "set" could ever be. If I get up from my chair and move to the kitchen for a sandwich, that "country" goes with me. In one sense, the action stops until I continue my creative work, yet in another sense, the world "in there" goes on shifting and changing as I munch. The action is, in other words, internal, mine in a way that is not true of the action on, or in, a screen.

No controlled study will ever show whether the effects of this difference are good or bad, but there can be no question about their being immense and complicated. No doubt the very fixities that from my present viewpoint seem troublesome will prove to have values of a kind that now escape me. Anticipating the questions, Who dwells there with us, who addresses us? we might even speculate about the valuable comfort we all find—a comfort not to be found from the fluid narratives of print culture—from knowing that all those TV people, obviously in some sense alive and kicking, are out there going about their incredibly eventful lives, regardless of whether I attend. *Those* lives carry on, no matter what happens to me today; *I am not responsible there*, and the holiday from life they give me is what keeps me going. In their fixities is my peace. Perhaps we have here a new form of religious solace—not an eternal world to look forward to, but at least a world that will prove to be indestructible for my own time, and thus in a way timeless. It may even be that a steady diet of such reassurance will, for people living *fully* in our time, provide a necessary

base for enduring the daily flux, while a steady diet of printed narratives, consumed in private and with a strong sense of personal responsibility, will produce either self-pitying introverts, suffering in elitist isolation from the crowd, or nervous ineffectual worrywarts, miserable about not solving the shifting, ambiguous problems that printed narratives often evoke.

But I am getting ahead of my story. Hard as it is to evaluate the differences, there can be no doubt that they are great. Regardless of what dwelling in the two locations leads me to *become*, I am obviously living a totally different kind of life as I take in or re-create these narratives *now*. And one can hardly make that kind of statement without at the same time worrying about consequences—again to leap ahead a bit—consequences of a kind far more profound than will result from this or that content of any narrative. Our society is in fact conducting, with the new media as with many other technological developments, an *un*controlled experiment of vast proportions, the results of which we will never fully know. After all, we experimenters who might evaluate the results are shifting our natures daily, as our imaginations are schooled to work *this* way rather than *that*. Our way of appraising the results will be itself determined by those results: another reason for speculating about qualities now, without waiting for social scientists to get their act together.

Who Are We?

TOURISTS / SOJOURNERS / NATURALIZED CITIZENS

I have already suggested that we have less opportunity to dwell for long with the movies and TV dramas we enjoy than with narratives in print. It is true that, by taking special effort, the studiously inclined can now turn video tapes into a kind of book, "thumbing the pages," reflecting on forms, discovering ever more profound themes. But by and large, a video drama, like traditional stage drama, expects us to pass this way only once, or at most to visit by chance once again at some future time.

As tourists, viewing everything from a distance as it happens "out there," we are of course not expected to participate in the affairs of state. We have no right and no opportunity to change anything, and no responsibility whatever for what goes on. We are expected to be, not participant observers, but rather sympathetic bystanders. Reading a story, in contrast, I must be engaged with it at every moment, or it simply stops. If I stop moving, I may gain or lose by my shift of attention, depending on what I attend to, but I do not lose any sequence that will have gone on past me, when I return. This country needs me.

PASSIVE RECEIVERS OF FROZEN INPUT / ACTIVE CREATORS

This radical difference in the degree of active control is most evident in the absolute control video exercises over our visual imagery. As the four of us talked on vacation, our images of a given character in the movies were much more precise and—so far as we could tell—much more alike than anything we had derived from our reading. John Reed was vividly and forever fixed as our image

of Beatty; Zinoviev was forever Jerzy Kosinsky; André was forever Malle's André. We tourists had been shown the people of that land once and for all, and with no exercise of our capacity to imagine figures of our own. We could no more substitute a different appearance for Reed than we could imagine a different New York City or Polish-Russian border. Though we were all, as it turned out, quite puzzled about the moral and political intentions of *Reds*, its visual intentions were so powerful that none of us is ever likely to break entirely free of them, no matter how many books we may read about the historical characters. Yet we all knew that the historical Reed and Louise Bryant and Zinoviev must have been vastly different from what we were shown, that the movie made up whatever images it needed to ensure its effect of seeming like history, and that everyone and everything was thus permanently Beattyfied for us.

The experience with all of the printed narratives was in this respect entirely different. Our talk was not only less excited; it included many more moments of silence, and of course it allowed for something entirely excluded by the movies, an unimpassioned reference back to the text, which was, after all, right there in front of us. But in another sense, the story—the events experienced by characters "imagined in our heads"—was not there in front of us, not in the sense or to the degree that the movie had been when we first viewed it. Searching the text could never be a return to see directly what the image in fact *was;* it had to be a search for evidence about what it was still to *become*. Since we as readers had been required to make whatever images constituted our story—images of character, of scene, of sequence—as disputatious but reflective *re*readers we had to continue remaking those images as we discussed. Thus the stories were still in process of being "written," and still are in process now, in my head, as I write this essay; from beginning to end I am schooled in imagining.

This continuing process can affect every part of our "reading": tone of voice, facial expression, the lighting of scenes, the presumed inner feeling of all characters, the significance of what anyone does. On vacation, we were often shocked to discover that our fellow readers had made quite "indefensible" inferences about all of these matters, not only about how a character appeared physically, but about whether a character's experience was tragic or comic, pathetic or contemptible. A given gesture might be seen as angry and defiant by one reader and as pathetically resigned by another, the physical accompaniment entirely different for each. Again and again one of us would say something like, "Oh, the dress is not *that* shade of blue—the point in this story is surely that everything is faded out to pastels," or "But you've overlooked the repeated reference to the shadows. Don't you see that the room must be of a kind that will represent . . ."

In these and other ways, the stories and their characters shifted under our scrutiny. We were, in short, prolonging the primary experience *as* we discussed. Most of the stories grew in stature as we talked; a couple of them shrank before our eyes; but none remained what they had been. The important point is that the change was not only in their "meanings" (shifts of meaning occurred in discussing the movies, too), but that we were steadily engaged in imaginative recreation. The primary experience shifted as we engaged in the secondary

experience. The engagement was thus inherently more sustained and imaginatively active—not because we spent more time (in fact, we spent on no story as much time as we spent originally just viewing *Reds*), but because the different media offered different invitations.

I have heard it said that this striking fixity of image given by the visual media (and the resulting passivity in the receiver) is curable by some sort of "technological fix"—that there can be no theoretical limit to what the new media can do. Perhaps. No doubt technology will continue to improve our access to movies and TV, so that energetic students will increasingly find it possible to do term papers on structure and themes. But even as they do so, the precision of image will be reinforced: whatever happens to other meanings, visual meanings will have been created, once and for all, by the originators. In short, it is hard to see how anyone can eliminate the fundamental difference between media in which some kind of physical reality has established a visual scene *before* the viewer starts to work on it, and those like radio and print that can use only language for description—language that is always no more than an invitation to thought and imagination, never a solid presentation of finished reality.

This point perhaps should be illustrated with a closer look at a printed description. Show me any man or woman on the screen, any screen, and that will *be* forever that man or woman. But what do I do if you tell me, as does E.M. Forster in *Howards End*, that a young man "seemed a gentleman. . . . To a feminine eye there was nothing amiss in the sharp depressions at the corners of his mouth, nor in the rather box-like construction of his forehead. He was dark, clean-shaven, and seemed accustomed to command"?[6] What I must do is to begin some hard work of the imagination. Again: if you show me, on any screen, a given London residential square, it will be forever *that* square. But what must I do if you tell me the following?

> Their house was in Wickham Place, and fairly quiet, for a lofty promontory of buildings separated it from the main thoroughfare. One had the sense of a backwater, or rather of an estuary, whose waters flowed in from the invisible sea . . . . Though the promontory consisted of flats—expensive, with cavernous entrance halls . . . —it fulfilled its purpose, and gained for the older houses opposite a certain measure of peace. These, too, would be swept away in time, and another promontory would rise upon their site, as humanity piled itself higher and higher on the precious soil of London.[7]

What I am required to do by such a passage underlines a further difference in the qualities of mind and heart expected of us when we visit these contrasting kingdoms. The video arts tell us precisely what we should see, but their resources are thin and cumbersome for stimulating our moral and philosophical range. Those who enter Forster's world are expected to be interested in questions that would be almost impossible to raise with any precision in video. How could any screen portray as much moral and intellectual meaning as is packed into the sentence: "These, too, would be swept away in time, and another promontory would rise upon their site, as humanity piled itself higher and higher on the precious soil of London." As sheer thought, this is by no means uncharacteristically deep or rich for fiction, but the concentration of

proferred ideas is intense indeed, as compared with any "information" that could be conveyed by mere visual sequences. Perhaps each of the four major overt ideas of the sentence could be suggested by sufficiently elaborate sequences. Even the notion that the soil is precious could perhaps be given by a series of frames, accompanied with commentary spoken by some character who has been established as speaking reliably for the values of the work. If we became really desperate, we could always fall back on "voice over." But even at best, the result would be relatively indefinite. And meanwhile, the other three claims made by the sentence would remain unspoken. By the time a film maker had worked to convey the meaning of this sentence, any movie would be half over, and most TV dramas would already have been replaced on the screen by three others.[8]

UNLIMITED SENSATION / FOCUSED REFLECTION

We visitors to the realms of gold discover a further curious presupposition about what we will be able and willing to attend to. A full photographic frame presents an unlimited range of points on which one *might* focus attention and from which one could derive "the meaning" of the frame. It is true that skillful directors and cameramen know how to limit that potential infinity. But do what they will, they leave us always with the question, "Of the possible centers of attention here, which one shall I take as significant, and which shall I simply ignore? Does it *mean* something that the hero has a wart beneath his left eye?" In any printed story, a wart under the left eye carries some sort of weight: it has been chosen from thousands of other possible details. Even in detective stories, which depend on planting irrelevancies, the wart means something as a deliberate deflection of attention. But in video, innumerable warts are simply *there*, accidents that even the most skillful director cannot eliminate completely. The result is that we visitors are habituated to a kind of looseness of attention; no detail can mean very much, when some details can mean nothing. And there is always an open invitation for the eye to wander to some further sensation.

Thus reflective study and imaginative inventiveness are to some degree against the grain of the medium. The producers may hope to make the new media as "arty" in this respect as are serious literature and the traditional graphic arts, but they can never go all the way: we continue—even in the most gloomily metaphysical of scenes by Bergman or Antonioni—to revel in the precise and almost infinitely various and rapidly flowing imaginative worlds they have cooked up for us. We do not sit before the object and use it as a stimulus for our own invention of new worlds of our own or reflections about events as they occur[9]—not at least to the degree encountered in reading.

In reading, even of the shoddiest stuff, I am given one word, one phrase, one sentence, one relatively unfixed image at a time, just as the author wrote them—or rather, as the author decided to place them after trying out various orders. Every mentioned detail thus comes labeled: "Attend to *this*." Even the most dramatic label is still visually vague, requiring imaginative work to bring it to life. "Her dress, a bright red silk, was so dazzling that he at first hardly noticed her face." Well, yes, I've seen ladies like that in that kind of dress, so my imagination works one or another of their characteristics into the scene. The

result may be quite inappropriate—a stereotyped bitch, when the author means an angel or a woman who resists such stereotyping? But my mistake may not ultimately matter, not to the essential quality of my activity, because I have time, sitting alone in the light, turning my own pages, to revise my imaginings, to readjust my types, to reclothe the lady, as it were, to study her face, the face that I have myself made. And what I study, when the fiction is any good, is not her face, finally, but her character.

COMFORTABLE STEREOTYPING / RESISTANCE TO SIMPLICITIES

A further expectation about *my* character as visitor to video seems to follow from all of these. I am expected to engage willingly in stereotyping. I am not given time, after all, to engage in anything else.

I stereotype morally: this world consists almost entirely of heroes and villains. It is true that all narrative requires some moral simplifying. But printed fiction has found ways of resisting it, and even stage and film can prod us a bit. But TV, by all the evidence so far, subsists on moral stereotypes.

I stereotype intellectually; there simply is no time to do anything else. The highly particular images presented by particularized actors will be much too confusing to make a story line, unless the issues can be taken in at a glance or word. The screen thus reinforces a general trend in *all* media toward simplification and polarization of the unlimited complexities of our lives. As citizen of the country presented to me by TV, whether that country is literally the United States or some imagined world, I learn quickly that all problems could be solved simply, if only other people would think about them the way I am being taught to do *now*. It is no news to say that anybody who has read a book—any book, even the most distorted—on any subject will be appalled by the simplifications of that subject in any movie or TV program. There are simply no movies or TV programs, regardless of the depth of the chosen subjects, that make intellectual demands of the kind expected of even the most watered-down philosophical or scholarly text, or of the printed fiction that critics take seriously.

It is hard to decide how much of this constriction of mind is inherent in the medium and how much simply in market conditions (the pitch, after all, must be made to the average viewer). We should learn soon, as home-chosen TV becomes more widespread. But what is important here is that, even if the medium were someday to overcome this limitation and become as sustained in its thought as Aristotle, the limitations I am concerned with would remain: the passivity of imaginative engagement, with a resulting simplified emotional engagement.

No doubt there will be great consequences for our future selves from all of these controls over our characters as we enter and leave the video worlds. But we do not know, we cannot prove, what those consequences will be. What we do know, what we need no experimental proof for, is that our lives are lived in *these* ways, sitting now before the screen, and not in other possible ways. The selves, souls, persons, characters that we are likely to become as a result of living in a print or a video culture for decades will matter greatly, but they are unavailable as evidence in our debates. The selves that we *are* now as we live in

these worlds are to some degree known—at first hand. We have met the victims, here in our living rooms.

With Whom Do We Dwell? Who Addresses Us?

Who I *am*, in a given imaginative encounter, is inseparable from the question of the kind of people I'm living *with*. Voices come to me from these screens and from these printed stories. Who converses with me here? What kind of companionship is being offered? What company do I keep?

The voices of movies and TV come to us as we sit in the dark or half-light, sometimes alone, but more often in company. In all emotional drama, whether comic or sad, the company becomes crucial. When those we are with laugh or weep, we are more inclined to laugh or weep. When they remain silent, groan, walk out of the theater or leave for a snack, we are forced, by the company we keep, to modify our listening. We watch differently. The members of the company *in* the screen-world know about all that, play to it, make the comedy or pathos work by "playing" on the audience. In comedy, they provide evidences of amused company in *that* world too: studio audiences or canned laughter. In tragedy and pathos, that won't work so well, and we are given instead shots of minor characters weeping.

The voices of literature come to us, usually, as we sit alone, in the light. (On vacation, the four of us did read aloud some to each other. But how many people do that these days?) Even if someone else is present in the room, we read alone, except for the company of the author.

The new media thus support me, reassure me, provide me with a more visible and lively company. Print puts me on the spot, whispers to me of something only the author and I will understand, threatens me, finally, with loneliness, unless the author is very good company indeed. In the literature I most admire, especially the modern literature, I sense that the author writes specifically to me—there may, at most, be one or two others in this world of mine qualified to catch all the nuances.

It is by no means self-evident that the essentially lone, private experience of reading is a better way to live than to join those new, lively companies provided by video. For me, the most magical transport comes in fact not when reading alone, but when I share art in company—as in classical theater, great music festivals, reading aloud together, playing chamber music. But of course movie audiences—and even more obviously TV companies—do not work quite like that. And when we look at the company we keep *behind* the screen, most particularly the company of producers, the differences become really striking.

As viewer, I am part of a vast company exercising remote control through the ratings, a company that demands an unlimited supply of entertainment. The tube, representing those mostly anonymous producers, will provide—must provide—what I demand of it. The tube will not die: the company I keep as I watch it will go on eternally. Reading any beloved author, in contrast, I know that I dwell with someone whose powers are finite; the "supply" of this precise kind of company will someday come to an end. Though I can return to the author after he or she dies, we share, in our private companionship, a deep knowledge of our precious and poignant limitations.

The tube implies, insofar as it can, that there are no limits. Though producers may give us a few bad programs this season, they cannot afford to let us down, because our company is their bread and butter. If we are to dwell together in a global village, sitting before the screen, it will be a village in which none of the elders ever dies. When death in fact occurs—President Kennedy dies almost before our eyes, Johnny Carson is aging and will someday surely die—it will not finally matter very much, because the tube has promised us that some other show will easily take over the top ratings.

But who are these immortal producers? The company offered to me by the screens is unlimited, immensely varied, and largely anonymous. It is more varied, potentially, than even my library shelves. In the first place, it can draw on the riches of those shelves. What is more, no book can offer me the sheer, joyful gift that a fine juggler, dancer, singer, or gymnast can: TV and movie producers can purchase these gifts for me. No book can possibly duplicate the gift of energy and concentrated courage and abandon of the "performance" of a football or soccer game. The tube offers me, not in its dramatic efforts, but in its images of real people doing what they do best, an endless supply of that supreme gift—the drama of the best that is in one.

The best authors try to do that too, implying: "Here I give you my notion of what living can be—it can be what it is during these moments we spend together." It may seem, then, that we have only to compare the quantity and quality of gifts offered by two equally good companions. And once we say that, must we not recognize that the world is enriched more broadly and variously by the new media than could ever be done by print? Must we not add that print will never provide as much good company from as many cultures—all periods and climes and genres—as TV can?

Something seems wrong in this judgment. The gifts do not really come to us unmediated, on TV or on the movie screen. They have been chosen by a team of directors and associates. The juggler I see on the "Tonight Show" has been *chosen* to entertain me; if I saw him on the street, collection hat in front of him, I would accept or reject this offer of his gift, unmediated. It must be better, for him, to be paid by Carson than to be on the street with only my interest or my charity to depend on. Yet I wonder. Is it only a cheap nostalgia that leads me to see more dignity in a street performer, living in poverty, offering a gift that too many passersby don't even notice, than in the same performance offered (as mediated by teams of organizers) on the screen? The juggler himself has not changed, essentially, but the gift now comes from someone else—the producers. I recently saw a young trapeze artist perform, for the first time ever, four somersaults in a midair pass. It was a marvelous thing to see, but it was packaged in the dulcet tones of one of those "60 Minutes" people, watered down to seem really quite ordinary, the drama of the first three unsuccessful tries reduced to something staged. The total "act" was easy, muffling the immense achievement of the artist himself.

Like all of the questions I have raised, this one about the quality of a proferred gift cannot be answered simply. But a simple distinction operates here that one finds implacably controlling our responses to gifts from friends in everyday affairs. If you offer me a gift of something that you would yourself like to receive, if it is something that you respect as a gift, I accept it with love. If

you offer me something that expresses your contempt for my taste, if you would yourself feel contempt or loathing for what you offer me, I have a right to feel—indeed I cannot help feeling—that the gift is no gift at all. All the evidence shows that most producers of TV shows, unlike that trapeze artist, offer gifts of the second kind. Indeed, they fall all over themselves claiming that they do not themselves watch the kind of stuff they produce, and they claim that they would much prefer a world in which better shows were demanded by the public. Nobody who pays any attention to the public statements of executives can believe that anyone except perhaps the frontline performer is giving his or her best.

One might argue that this blight is not in the least inherent to the medium, but only to our present methods of financing it. After all, our culture seems to produce as much hack work in print as on TV. The producers of a great proportion of our printed matter must surely view it with as much contempt as any TV producer feels for the day's offering. But all evidence so far suggests that the medium of TV itself for some reason *builds in* a contempt for us and our life. When anything we care for passes through its hands, what comes out is a single statement: None of this matters very much.

What Is My Heart's Desire?

DOES ANYTHING MATTER?

There is a sense in which a steady diet of TV, like the printed narratives that most resemble it in brevity and stereotyping, seems to say that nothing matters, really. Whether I like a show greatly or detest it, there are no great consequences for me or for the makers. Just as the news (on both TV and radio, as in their predecessors on the movie screen, e.g., "Time Marches On") reduces every event to the same reductive "spot," so the dramatic fictions are reduced to a few moments in which nothing matters except whether I have not turned the dial.

Defenders of TV can point to fronts of resistance—the various efforts at "in-depth" news, the solemn moments when great classics like *The Scarlet Letter* are given an hour or so of uninterrupted time. No doubt the producers of "60 Minutes" or "Brideshead Revisited" think of themselves as offering matters that matter. Presumably they can sometimes even pass the "hack test": Would I watch this show if someone else had produced it? And they manage to persuade many viewers that serious issues are being addressed seriously, and significant theatre being produced artistically. But somehow they can never escape the effect of the medium, its short attention span, its sheer quantity of appeals, its easy fixations of vivid imagery. One emerges from any extended viewing period, whether of the "best" or the worst, in a state of floating indifference.

The most obvious exceptions are those momentous public events when we all have the wrenching illusion that we are there, as during the week following President Kennedy's assassination. That whole event mattered a great deal to every viewer. As Robert Stein says, "In my own memory, John Kennedy's funeral is as *real* as anything that happened to me in combat during World War II." Given the existence of such moments and our convictions about them, we

can hardly say that "nothing matters" to us as we watch TV. Indeed, the more deeply we consider the question, the more obvious it becomes that to the steady viewer, whether in times of crisis or during the innumerable crises in the dramas, a great deal matters. The interesting question is what and how it matters, considering the trivialization of subjects and the casual indifference of viewers about what they watch—provided they can watch *something*.

WHAT DO WE DESIRE IN THE NEWS ABOUT "REAL LIFE"

Print culture allows for, though by no means ensures, sustained attention to issues. Books, articles in *Daedalus*, presuppose readers willing to spend not just the time necessary to read a discussion but the impulse to compare contrasting and sustained views. Video culture is, by contrast, a culture of the superficially informed, the hasty, the indifferent.

Consider one of the more "serious" shows about issues, "60 Minutes." It will each week present four or five melodramatic vignettes, of perhaps ten or twelve minutes each, all in a form requiring me to make up my mind on issues of world-shaking importance. Indeed, I find that I *do* make up my mind, all too easily. They have given me the stereotypes that I need in making up my mind: the villainous insurance executive, obviously cheating the sensitive victim in the wheelchair, suffering while holding the cute child in his lap; the snarling prime minister of the contemptuously treated little country down under; the helpless old woman facing the impersonal forces of the bureaucracy—all followed by a cheery little vignette, in the final few moments, about the surprisingly widespread use of horses still in our modern age. The result: since everything matters equally, nothing matters really. Or rather: what matters is narrowed to a range chosen from among the available favorable outcomes; what matters is to move fast to the reward waiting at the end.

And what is the reward? A sense that somebody out there, *in* there, is taking care of these issues in quick order. Though for some viewers the effect may be despair, as the melodramas pile up, supported as they are by the nightly picture of mayhem throughout the world, the general effect is to reassure me about quick fixes in the world, and to make me sick with desire for similar quick fixes in my own troubles. What I am taught to desire is *relief*, as instantaneous as that promised in the analgesic ads; I have been taught to expect it, as the images of trouble shift refreshingly and painlessly from moment to moment.

LESSONS OF DESIRE IN NARRATIVE

Like traditional ethical criticism of literature, conventional criticism of drama in the new media, from the earliest movies on, has usually focused on the overt content as decent or indecent, virtuous or vicious. Virtue presented and properly rewarded thus earns a favorable judgment, vice triumphant is anathema. (Note that even the most avant-garde critic is likely to work in the same scheme, simply substituting up-to-date terms for virtue and vice: a "mind-shattering, no-holds-barred, devastatingly mischievous exposé of bourgeois pieties" is of course virtuous.) Since the creation of mass culture, some critics have worked on a simple scheme of highbrow versus lowbrow. A production of

The Scarlet Letter financed by the National Endowment for the Humanities is of course good, even if deadly boring and shorn of all the complexities that Hawthorne cared for; while anything pop is by definition to be rejected. Though most actual examples of such well-meant judgments are absurd, the reaction of some political liberals who, for fear of encouraging censorship, have rejected all ethical, moral, or political judgments, is equally absurd. Surely the trick is to find some way of talking about the ethical and political effects of art that will get beneath a given surface image; even the most "objectionable" image may or may not be hurtful even to a child, depending on what is done with it *in the whole formed experience of the work.* Though there may be some specific images that are good or bad in themselves, I can think of none. It is our experience of the form into which each image fits that determines the quality of our deepest habits of desire.

Such "aesthetic habits" (call them that, though to do so obscures their being simultaneously aesthetic and practical) are built out of two kinds of formal experience. The first is the experience of a pattern of desire played upon, inevitably, by any temporal story. You simply cannot make an interesting story without playing upon patterns of hope, fear, and anticipation. The typical fairy tale leads us to desire (and to expect) a happy outcome through a combination of the protagonist's efforts and some kind of fantastic intervention, the happiness consisting in the possession of some conventional good: gold, a prince or princess, revenge, security. The typical nineteenth century popular novel teaches us in much the same way to desire, through many hours of trials and tribulations, a happy ending that is again defined in conventional terms: for the women in the story (and hence for us readers, male or female), it is marriage to the ideal male; for the men, it is such a marriage combined with some sort of public honor, defined as wealth or fame or power. The typical highbrow novel of the modern period teaches us that it is wickedness and folly to seek such conventional goods, and that what we should desire is some deeper quality like maturity, self-knowledge, artistic integrity, or moral courage. Though there is obviously a great range in the quality of the experience offered by different exemplars of all of these "plottings of desire"—ranging from the cheapest form of a Horatio Alger-like grab for success to the subtleties of Stephen Dedalus's struggle for artistic independence and power—the basic pattern of *reliance on future payoff* is reinforced by all.

The same values are of course reinforced by most dramas on TV or movie screen. To build a successful plot, the most obvious requirement is that the designer create a strong desire for some payoff that is just barely conceivable as within reach, given the probable length of the work in hand. When I begin a 300-page book called a novel, I can expect a long series of variegated instabilities to be faced and overcome before the final chapter. When I go to a movie, I can expect two hours, more or less, of frustration of desire before reward comes. When I turn on a TV drama, my usual expectations are for at most an hour of seeming-pain before joy reigns. And finally, when I experience the little thirty-second dramas offered me in the commercials, my hopes and fears, scratched into almost instant irritation, must be assuaged (though only partially, or I will not go out and buy) with an almost instant image of happy reward. These patterns, I must repeat, are entirely independent of the content; the differences

would remain even if the characters in the novel found their bliss in final possession of a Mercedes-Benz, while the stick-characters on the thirty-second sales pitch found *theirs* in learning how to live right by reading the complete works of Plato. What we are talking about is habits of desire, expectations about how desires and their fulfillment work.

One modern definition of "the aesthetic" consists of a simple—if not simple-minded—repudiation of the entire domain of desire. Whenever we seek some good in the future, we violate the domains of art, where pure aesthetic contemplation reigns supreme. The definition has done great harm in the critical world, by leading to a denigration of *all* appetites and satisfactions; the rapid impoverishment of the palette that has resulted, in all the arts—though not, praise God, for all artists in *any* of the arts—makes one of the weirdest instances in history of the triumph of abstract theory over the plain teachings of everyday experience. (Yes, I am thinking of the "interesting" and impoverished experiences offered by John Cage and his successors, and of most other minimalists I know.)

But we need not repudiate all habits of desire to recognize a great qualitative difference between those arts that work to make the journey as valuable as the destination and those that "have no time" for anything but increasing hope for final success. Though the typical nineteenth century novel may have been excessively goal-oriented, helping to build generations of success-mongers, the form of the novel allowed, even encouraged, an entirely different message: it is not where you go that matters but how you get there. You have time, we are told by those mammoth novels that Henry James called "great fluid puddings," time to pause now, to savor, to elaborate, to look at your surroundings. Though you care, as I the novelist care, about achieving a final happiness for our Pip, our Dorothea Brooke, our Emma Woodhouse, our Richard Feverell, you and I both care even more about the quality of their souls, the quality of what they say and do as we travel with them. We are thus encouraged, as we read, to linger, to reread, to extract parts and reflect on them, just as we all were led to reflection by the stories of our childhood.

I have just finished reading Paul Theroux's *The Mosquito Coast*. A few months ago I read Russell Hoban's *Ridley Walker*, and a few weeks before that, Wright Morris's autobiographical account, *Will's Boy*. In each work, a pre-adolescent narrator-hero grapples with a decayed or decaying adult world, trying to understand people and impersonal forces that adults themselves do not understand. In all three accounts, everything en route matters as much or more than the outcome. Not only does every detail count in one's picture of the "worlds" presented; not only does each moment of the work build toward another moment that makes the first one matter more. In all three, we quickly learn that what happens to *this* boy should matter very much to everyone. After thirty pages I care more about the quality *now* of Ridley Walker and Charlie Fox and the young Wright Morris than I have ever cared about any imagined man, woman, or child on TV.

I am not making the sentimental point that they all made me weep; they did not. For the most part they made me laugh, often in ways close to my laughter in *Huckleberry Finn*. No, the point is that they made me care, made me care about what they cared for: about making sense out of a baffling world, surviving

the incomprehensions and cruelties of adults, moving through troubled youth to mature decision—and above all, discovering how to act well in the world. Even the "two-hour forms"—traditional drama, modern movies, an occasional drama on PBS—are to some degree able to resist, in a similar way, the mindless pursuit of quickly fulfilled desire. There is, after all, time enough, time for soliloquy, for experiment with camera angle, for exploring a secondary character, for moving into a beautiful setting with a deliberate savoring of detail.

But we are now in general repudiating all that. Our culture seems to have "decided" to specialize in short spans, dividing experience into breathless desire-fufillment patterns lasting from less than fifteen minutes to under an hour. What the decision means, we all know at first hand. Most of us fight it as best we can, either by refusing to watch or by obtaining the new network-free devices that take us back to the time span of traditional drama. But meanwhile the dominant culture of most Americans, the art we live by (many of us for scores of hours each week), teaches not simply the short attention span that educators have long noticed in children who have been "boxed in" from birth, but an attention to quick (though of course future) gratification. Here is the image, "real," fixed, lacking in only one simple thing to complete its happiness: a mate, a promotion, a killing of the bad guys, *anything* that can stand for a happy outcome. The dramatic resources of video seem permanently suited to imaginations of desire that are relatively scrappy, relatively passive, relatively frozen by the pre-imaginings of the makers, relatively resistant to reflection and reconsideration. Such patterns can be used, obviously, in the service of any uncomplicated surface value whatever. Any Christian preacher can use them to tout a desire for a particular brand of salvation, as some sects have long since discovered (though their cheap vignettes-of-easy-salvation do not get onto prime time: try early Sunday morning). Any political system, program, or candidate can use them to push a given sloganized ideology. Any moral majority or well-heeled minority can use them to combat any given wicked thought or action. What they cannot be used for is to celebrate the possibilities of life lived *now* or of leisurely reflection about life in all its complexities.

Commerce, Consequences, Remedies

Though my main subject here has been those features of the media that are largely or entirely independent of differences in content, the subject of the quick fix requires a brief look at the effect of commercials and of commercial pressures on a content that might, in an ideal world, be radically different.

When I began this exercise in speculation, I was determined not to load the dice against TV. Too many indictments seem to me to be conducted on a level that would condemn the sex and violence in the Bible or Shakespeare as much as anything found in the most blatant rip-off. But I have now arrived at what looks like a highly pessimistic judgment indeed—pessimistic because I see no way that we can effectively "go back"; no hope that we are going to decide, now that we know something about the effects of the grand experiment, to cancel it; no real chance that we can reverse the disastrous effects, on print culture itself, of the patterns of desire taught us by video culture. Even knowing how chancy all predictions about the future of various media have been in the past, I feel fairly

confident that the dominance of video will increase, not diminish, and that its shattering effects on who we are will become more evident as the new forms of computer-video triumph. *They* are obviously even shallower than the older forms, which at least made gestures toward portraying people, while the new multibillion dollar art form, Pac-Man and its siblings, reduces our imaginative world to the precharted ravages of gaping mechanical maws and exploding metal.

In short, I suspect that the sheer visual excitement made available by video is too much for the race to resist. But there is one by-product of the discovery of this art-domain that we could modify if we decided that it was important to do so. Clearly, there is no absolute bond linking video and commercial corruptions. And it is equally clear that some of the worst ravages of scrappiness, frenzy, and greed result, not from anything inherent in video, but from how we have chosen to use it. As we witness a growing separation of home viewing from the imposed choices of network programming and the studios' quest for blockbuster movies, it is important to recognize just how much is at stake. Though nothing we can do will enable either video or print to match each other's effects, it seems probable that if video artists could be freed from their present bonds the worst losses might still be reversed. Our best hope for that, obviously, and our chief defensive weapon, in a culture that promises, at least in the short run, to become increasingly "videotic," is a developed practice of ethical criticism—by which I mean, of course, not a criticism that pushes a given moral creed, but one in which critics, in a sense dwelling together "in company," reflect on how the media shape the "ethos" of selves and societies.

What direction might such criticism take, when turned upon those brilliant flashing commercials that fill our nights and days?

Most traditional narrative has relied on imitating the seemingly natural form: "roused appetite—fulfilled appetite." But one prominent subgroup of narratives has always rivaled this pattern, the kind that rouses appetites and refuses to gratify them *within the form*. Pornography is the most obvious example, but every sensual pleasure and every passion can be exploited in what could be called the "pornographic structure": maximizing the desire and then cutting short the form, leaving the reader or viewer to complete the cycle in the real world. Satiric works are always in this form: people or institutions taken from the real world are made as contemptible as possible, leading us to desire their punishment, comic or serious, and to express our scorn actively in the real world. Literary works in themselves can only properly punish types and images, not real persons, but they can lead us to desire or detest real persons of a similar type. Some verbal descriptions (and many video portrayals) of food express the same pattern, leading us toward the refrigerator rather than toward any formal resolution in the art work. These pornographic patterns all depend on the fact that words can never satisfy actual hungers, whether for sex, revenge, or food. They are thus all essentially in conflict with the central enterprise of this essay—the search for experiences so valuable *now* that consequent actions seem, let us say, inconsequential.

If we think about advertising in general as depending on this same pattern—an inherently half-completed form leading to extraformal modes of completion—then we can see more clearly the staggering scope of the revolution that

we have all undergone in this century, first in print, then in radio, and now in video.[10] Except for underground works of sexual pornography and satire, pre-video narrative culture provided all who shared it (whether literate or not) with completed forms (printed advertisement, the obvious exception, lacked the resources of narrative). It is no doubt true that those forms were in one sense still not shut off from effects in the practical world. Their consumers could be left with a strong desire for "more of the same," or with fantasies about finding a real "girl of my dreams" to match the figures of romance. Still, nothing in pre-advertising times, and nothing in printed advertising, came even close to the specialization in frustration that TV culture has achieved. It could be said, of course, that not just TV ads, but the whole of modern culture leads to the "I want, I want . . ." that Saul Bellow attributed to Henderson. But TV culture makes previous "want-makers" seem puny. Even those who in effect make their living by proving, with their criticism, that they are too smart to be taken in by such stuff, are in fact strongly influenced by it, both its content (though that is not our main concern) and its repetitive form.

It would be tedious, unnecessary, and in itself unpersuasive, to describe any chance sampling from the day's fare. Every viewer knows from experience that the essential form of these tidbits is what I am calling pornographic: unlike even the shoddiest TV drama or talk show, the commercial is obviously and blatantly organized to leave itself uncompleted, to make us desire something that by definition the present moment cannot supply. The activity that its imaginings would stimulate is not an activity of the imagination at all, but an activity of possession. If I imagine anything, it is only the steps I must take to go downtown and get my hands on that new possession.[11]

It would be flatly against the purposes of such an art to provide any sense that this experience in itself, or repetitions of it, or reflection about it, will be enough. Many commercials do indeed these days come perilously close to violating their own purpose; it may turn out to be more fun to sit and watch these clever little dramas than to go shopping. While waiting for the glorious day when TV thus gives us everything we might conceivably want, suppose we look closely at the qualities of the primary experience of watching one of the most successful of these, the AT&T spot that Michael Arlen follows, brilliantly and relentlessly, in *Thirty Seconds*.[12] Arlen's interest is different from ours. With great patience and quiet irony, he traces an immensely painstaking and expensive path from conception through months of labor to thirty seconds of TV time, every second designed to make us want to "reach out and touch someone far away. Give 'em a call."

There is nothing subtle or disguised about the message, and its overt ethical content is quite unobjectionable. Each episode is designed to carry the same moral: telephone calls can bring joy to your life by enabling you to "reach out" to someone far away. (The company, Arlen tells us, originally stressed a theme of giving pleasure to others by calling them, but it soon caught onto the need to stress the pleasure taken by the caller.) "From the beginning, AT&T wanted us to overcome the negative emotions associated with long-distance," one of the advertisers tells Arlen. "For years, there has been a definitely *negative*, *uncasual* quality to a lot of long-distance calling. AT&T wanted us to emphasize the *casual*, *positive* aspect: long-distance is fun, it's easy, it's cheap." The ad is

designed to move "the twenty-five-to-forty-nine age bracket, and the tilt is definitely toward the female, seeing that women initiate sixty percent of all residence long-distance phone calls."[13] Nothing wrong here, so far: surely the more long-distance calling among friends and relatives, the better. Here is how they design vicarious experience to increase our loving calls:

1. Open on older man in a "show-biz" setting. He's standing while listening, perhaps with his eyes closed, on phone. [Note association with fun, vitality.]
2. Cut to living-room scene with the corner of the rug thrown back. Little girl is tap-dancing with shiny new tap shoes. Proud father holds phone down near tapping as mother beams proudly. [Continuity of generations; parental pride.]
3. Cut back to elderly man as he smiles more widely and begins to impulsively dance to the same step himself. [The phone makes you want to dance; it expresses your love for family.]
4. Cut to brand-new Army recruit with brand-new short haircut. He's rubbing his head [and phoning home about it: when lonely you can keep in touch].
5. Cut to barber friend or dad sitting in his own barber chair; laughing. [Troubles shared by phone give joy.]
6. Cut to gal standing on head in yoga position. She's on the phone. [Phone is useful in all positions, situations, ages. And it's fun because funny.]
7. Cut to another gal doing the same. [Share, share, share.]
8. Cut to young man in cowboy getup—hat, jeans, etc. He has just competed in a rodeo, still has number on back and chest and is a little the worse for wear. . . . He's on the phone and happy [because he's sharing news of his victory; the phone brings good news, not bad].
9. Cut to young woman in jockey outfit just fresh from the race. She's full of mud. She's talking very happily on the phone. [More victory, more joy.]
10. Cut to locker room with hockey player waiting on phone. Lots of bustling around him. [Victory? Slight suspense.]
11. Cut to toothless little boy on phone in same uniform, whooping it up [about his father's victory; more victory, more joy].
12. Cut back to locker room as champagne is poured over his head and he breaks into a big toothless smile. Freeze on smile [identical to his son's: the phone thus identified with father-son love, with triumph in life].[14]

The final version adds some features; it gets a baby and a black girl into the act. (Why did it take them so long to think of a baby?) But it is essentially still a cluster of sentimental moments associating the telephone with the viewer's desire for love and victory and laughter. The makers rightly assume that we all desire these things, and if we can be made to desire them even more, and then to associate the desire with the next telephone call as fulfillment, we will make more long-distance calls.

All this is perhaps obvious, and we might be tempted to say that such superficial dramas are not worth our attention; nobody takes them seriously, except perhaps some of the hundreds of "artists" who make each one, and the

advertisers themselves. But it takes no very deep analysis to show that they are among the primary forces shaping modern American character, as we have defined character.

What are the qualities of the imaginative experience provided by such an intensely crafted piece as the AT&T ad?

1. Like all video, the ad is of course visually intense, requiring considerable quickness and sophistication of inference, not from verbal but from visual signs. It tends to deflect our attention from the words. Yet it is accessible to every experienced viewer, however "illiterate" in other media. Mastery of this language apparently comes as naturally as learning to talk. In this, such mastery is unlike learning to read, which is a highly artificial process that in one sense is never fully mastered.

2. It assumes a passive level of *mental* attention (if we can contrast the mental to what the mind does in processing visual imagery); redundancy is thus essential, redundancy about every point. Each episode must mean exactly the same thing.

3. It allows for no ambiguities, either of image or of meaning. Moral values are either suppressed entirely or taken for granted (i.e., it is a good thing to "reach out and touch someone").

4. It forbids reflection. Both within the ad and in the movement from ad to ad we see one immediate sensation replaced quickly by another immediate sensation. To study the sequence, to think about anything at all, may increase one's admiration for the maker's skill, but it will always be subversive of the "artist's" true intent.

5. It identifies our deepest human emotions—love of family, desire for success, enjoyment of laughter, joy in dancing—with a material acquisition. In doing so, it denies every possible context for such emotions except instant gratification.

6. It requires me to view all people as stereotypes. In the invention of quickly recognized types, it is more resourceful than any previous art form except perhaps the comic strip. Raw types can be the only sort of "persons" taken in at such speed.

7. It portrays the goal of life as victory at the end of the day, not as conducting an effective or proper life en route. There can *be* no route, only *want*, followed at once by gratification. In this world, the winners are the ones who use those phones. There are no losers. Nobody calls mother for comfort after loss; nobody calls to tell of unexpected death or the loss of a job. The phone company would, of course, refuse to sponsor an ad that appealed to losers; losers will not have the money to make long-distance calls. All pain and all sense of struggle must be eliminated from this world.

Of course, there is nothing inherent in the nature of brief spots that requires mindless good cheer; they could just as well convey a mindless repetition of despair and emptiness, like some modern fiction, or a mindless repetition of political slogans, as happens both at home and abroad. In a sense, these short

forms are as ideologically neutral as a computer—except for the fundamental ideology of repeated desire. The primary experience will always be of the same general kind, whether the product advertised is a new edition of Shakespeare's works, to make your family cultured, a new form of meditation or exercise, to make you serene or healthy, or a new deodorant or pantyliner to keep you fresh all day.

8. The company I keep (not of course the stick figures in the stories but their creators) do not respect me; they are not companions, but manipulators. Insofar as I am inclined to admire them, I do not admire their human depth or warmth or wisdom but their raw skill. If I infer an "author" or team of authors responsible for the presentation, I cannot think of them as friends who are themselves captured by any message conveyed. Unlike the implied authors of great fiction, they are admirable at most as instructors in technique: I can learn from them how to do this clever stuff. Or I may envy them their pay. As everyone knows, the actor in the ads get paid more than the actors in the programs; it is evident to anyone who watches for a few hours at almost any time of day that more attention and money have gone into the ads than into the shows they *seem* to interrupt. Yet we also know, from the statements of those executives who write about their experience, that they do not themselves respect their art as art. No one of the creators has ever claimed that he (I've seen none by women) so admired a given ad that he could not resist going out at once to buy the product. At most, they will say that they admire what they know to be mastery of a set of tricks.

In commercials, then, we encounter primary experience that seems the antithesis, in every conceivable respect, of the kind of imaginative experience that children encounter in fairy stories, or that we adults find in reading what we call literature. "Thirty Seconds" is a relatively benign version of the creature: "Reach out and touch someone" is no doubt a more humanly defensible message than "Why do *you* use Preparation H?" or Steve Allen pretending that he can play a piano in a Ford. But the specific content, I must repeat, doesn't matter much as compared with the patterns of desire conveyed by the form: happiness is identified with something more or less costly, to be obtained in the immediate future; the makers are paid to portray this something, not to give us good company in an otherwise troubled world. The whole enterprise could not be better designed to produce a restlessness of spirit antithetical to reflection or thoughtful analysis. Whatever analysis we perform will be, like Arlen's book about this one advertising program, entirely divorced from, and ultimately hostile to, the ends sought by the work itself. The best printed narratives have always stimulated criticism that *appreciates* their value, in several senses of the word. The best TV criticism, and certainly the best criticism of the commercials, seems always to engage in *de*preciation.

To say all this is not quite the same thing as simply reviving McLuhan's slogan, "The medium is the message." It is to say that the effects of the medium in shaping the primary experience of the viewer, and thus the quality of the self during the viewing, are radically resistant to any elevation of quality in the program content: as viewer, I become *how* I view, more than *what* I view. And

the gloomy conclusion must be that, unless we can change their present characteristic forms, the new media will surely corrupt whatever global village they create; you cannot build a world community out of misshapen souls.

A Hint at Conclusion: The Problem of Evaluation

Such speculation, much of it going far beyond any conceivable testing with hard evidence, "raises more questions than it answers"—a bit of socialscientese that I detest when others resort to it. About the only point that is beyond question is the immense power of the new voices to shape us anew. Difficult as it is to evaluate the differences, we are differently shaped by "Rumpelstiltskin," by *Ulysses*, by Johnny Carson, by "Dallas," by "Sesame Street," and by those thirty seconds.

Unfortunately for my case, the question of whether a given change in our habits of self-making is to be judged for better or worse cannot be answered quite as simply as I may have suggested. It is not at all hard to think of complicating objections. There are, for example, surely as many threatening corruptions of the printed word these days as of video. Certainly the print culture that I see disappearing nevertheless spawns today about as much hackwork, contemptuous of me as company, as does video culture. Indeed, the characters in the average soap or commercial are treated with relative respect, as compared with the monstrous abuses that now fill the pages of magazines like *Penthouse* or of many a best-selling book. Second, it is by no means as easy as I have implied to decide whether a given quality in current offerings—in any medium, new or old—is inherent to the medium or an accident of our times and economies. Nothing I have said can settle the old controversy about whether the awfulness of TV, and of the kinds of printed fiction that are now produced and distributed like toothpaste, are causes or effects of this or that social reality. What's more, print itself was never—as Plato pointed out—an unequivocal good for souls or cultures. And finally, it is not obvious that we ever had a print culture of the kind my comments tend to idealize; indeed it may well be that ours is really no less a print culture than was mine as a child. And even in that culture, was not my imagination being fixed, not only by the illustrations of those lovely books, but by romantic patterns as potentially harmful as those that poor Emma Bovary imbibes from what Flaubert considers the dreadfully destructive romantic novels read in her childhood?

Wherever we may come out when we face such complexities, we cannot doubt that each of us grapples daily with a barrage of "art" unmatched in quantity and (potentially) unequaled in range by anything known to previous generations. Whether our lives make sense, then, whether we can in any way offer a defense of our works and days within this culture, depends more than ever before on our developing two great traditional arts: the art of rigorous selection from the offerings of all comers, friends, hacks, and con men; and the art of engaging together in the kind of critical talk that alone can protect us from selections that are arbitrary and dogmatic. By sharing our grounds for selection, we can create moments that turn even the trashiest offering into a genuinely *good* time. In short, whether the time spent with any medium is redeemed or wasted is not entirely in the control of the masters; we still have some choice about who

we are to be, exercised whenever we choose how to talk about our would-be pushers and shapers.

It is by no means fashionable to talk as if a person's choice of artistic company could make the difference between a good life and a bad one, *now*. Obviously I am saying something as offensive as that. But must we not recognize that to keep company with all the suitors our society sends to our door will be to ensure, as times are, a life of frenzy if not of despair?

REFERENCES

[1]In May 1982 a study by the National Institute of Mental Health concluded that there is now "overwhelming evidence of a causal relationship between violence on television and later aggressive behavior." Letty Cottin Pogrebin, in *Growing Up Free: Raising Your Child in the 80's* (New York: McGraw Hill, 1980), gives a disturbing summary of the quantitative role of TV in our children's lives. I quote here her scary extracts from various studies, but not the documentation she provides for each claim: "More American homes have television than have heat or indoor plumbing. The average TV set is turned on for 6½ hours per day. Most children begin watching television at 2.8 *months* of age. Three- to five-year-olds watch TV 54 hours a week. By the time a child enters kindergarten, she or he has spent more time in the TV room than a four-year college student spends in the classroom. By the time a child graduates from high school, he or she will have spent less than 12,000 hours in front of a teacher and more than 22,000 hours in front of a television set. By age seventeen, each child has seen 350,000 commercials." She reports one survey that found 20 percent of children aged four to six preferring television to their mothers and 44 percent preferring it to their fathers. Junior high-school students, another study claims, "believe television" more than they believe their parents, teachers, friends, or books, radios, or newspapers (p. 393).

[2]I find it curious that in our time one has to labor to explain this distinction. In the nineteenth century, even hardheaded utilitarians like John Stuart Mill took if for granted as fundamental in all deliberation about how a society should be run. In *On Liberty*, for example, Mill again and again distinguishes between the consequences that a policy might have for society and the quality of life that it might encourage or discourage in individuals. In arguing for the importance of allowing citizens to exercise free choice, he says, "It is possible that he [the citizen] might be guided in some good path, and kept out of harm's way," without cultivating his personal qualities. "But what will be his comparative worth as a human being? It really is of importance, not only what men do, but also what manner of men they are that do it" (Chapter 3, "Of Individuality," par. 4).

[3]Having defined "art" in the broadest possible way, I am here narrowing the definition of "imagination" somewhat, bringing it closer to its roots. In what follows, I am thinking for the most part of what is quite literally "imagined" in our minds, "imitations"—though not of a separately existing reality. The term necessarily expands outward from specific colored shapes to include those shapes *in action*, and finally, it spills over to the moral qualities of those shapes: *that* woman, dressed *that* way, is a sympathetic image, while that other one is hateful, or puzzling, or doomed.

[4]Our best performers of such mental experiments have been Marshall McLuhan and Father Walter Ong. It is unfortunate that McLuhan's love of highjinks and his frequently absurd praise for TV obscured the immensely imaginative way in which he opened up new domains for criticism of the media. Though I hope to say something more than that "the medium is the message," it is unlikely that I would be talking in this way if McLuhan had not written, again and again, sentences like this: "We still cannot free ourselves of the delusion that it is how a medium is used that counts, rather than what it does to us and with us. This is the zombie stance of the technological idiot." The other sharpest influence I am aware of is Lessing, though I only scratch the surface of what would follow from taking him seriously in matters like these.

[5]Perhaps readers of *Daedalus* do not follow these weekly summaries with the assiduity they deserve, so I shall quote one of the fourteen that appeared in the *Chicago Tribune* on May 29, 1982: " '*All My Children*'—7—noon—Erica returned to Brandon's arms, then was miffed that he had accepted a Hong Kong job offer. Cliff exploded when Nina hired Mrs. Gurney as a live-in nursemaid and when Nina also accepted the presidency of Courtland Computers. Palmer's fake medic, Dr. Bentley, warned Donna she would die if she continued her pregnancy. Jesse played up to Angie after she caught him smooching Vera, who he later dumped. Angie's ma was dismayed by Jesse's appearance and manner. Phoebe flaunted the fact that she prefers Melanie over Carrie for Chuck. Harry enticed Benny to continue gambling even though Benny did not have enough money to keep searching for Estelle." If you have doubts about some of the locutions here, do not blame me; the quotation is accurate.

[6]1921, chapter 3.

[7]Ibid., chapter 2.

[8]I resist talking here about the many thematic connections—"only connect"—that this passage suggests with other parts of the novel; such patterns are equally accessible to any dramatized version, except, of course, for the implacable restrictions provided by the uninterrupted pace of the stage or screen.

[9]At first sight, it might seem that traditional drama is precisely like the new scenic media in these respects. After all, plays are designed to be viewed once, with no conventional opportunity for any "reader" to slow the pace, return to reconsider earlier parts, or to sit and muse on what is meant. And the visual effect of theater seems as fixed by the director and actors as it is in a movie or TV drama.

But there is, as many critics have pointed out, a great difference between our experience of the visual reality in the theater and on the screen. In the theater, not even the most naive spectator ever loses a sense of living in a double world: the world of the stage and the world that the stage portrays. Olivier is both Olivier and Othello, and the pleasure of watching "them" interact, as it were, is an essential part of our primary experience. In contrast, photographic media, though obviously less "personal" or "human" in that the screen is imposed between spectators and flesh-and-blood human beings, just as obviously "mediate" less; directors have always known that we tend to identify screen roles with real life. When naive viewers send gifts and telegrams and long personal letters to the "good" characters portrayed on TV, and threaten real violence to the villains, they are really responding precisely as the medium asks them to. The fullest success, for any TV series, is to have one or another character become so real to the viewers that their minds are as fully occupied by his or her troubles as they would be by troubles in real life. But the fullest success for a "legitimate" actor is to be known as capable of an impressive range of characters—and thus identifiable with none.

[10]It is not generally remembered on what a high pitch of public service radio broadcasting was launched. Robert Stein summarizes the story in *Media Power: Who Is Shaping Your Picture of The World* (1972): "The channels were owned by the people and licensed by the government. In return for using the public airwaves, broadcasters were pledged to 'serve the public interest, convenience or necessity.' At the start, serving and selling were not considered compatible. Addressing the first conference of broadcasters in 1922, Herbert Hoover, then Secretary of Commerce, declared: 'It is inconceivable that we should allow so great a possibility for service, for news, for entertainment, for education and for vital commercial purposes to be drowned in advertising chatter.' In 1930 William Paley of CBS told a Senate Committee that during a recent week on his network 'the actual time taken for advertising mention was seven-tenths of one per cent of all our time."

[11]Many shows are plainly pornographic in another sense: the thing to be possessed is a stick-woman reduced to the mindless essentials of male gratification—the nicest toy in the display case. But to dwell on that kind of corruption would lead us back to the subject that I have been trying—with only limited success—to rule to one side for a while: the appalling *content* of too many current *artistic* experiences, whether in video or print).

[12]New York, 1980.

[13]Ibid., pp. 12-13, 47.

[14]Ibid. pp. 69-70.

RICHARD POIRIER

Literature, Technology, People

FROM THE OUTSET, I will be involved with four terms, so large that it seems presumptuous to contend with them in an essay of this length. The terms are *Literature*, *Technology*, *People*, and, by implication, *power*. It would be foolhardy to proceed as if it were possible ever to come into firm possession of one, much less all of these words. Each has a radically different meaning in different historical periods and within different cultures. For energetic inquiry, their mere lexical definition, accompanied by lists and dates of variation, is almost useless. In addition, any one of the four wobbles in an argument whenever it approaches any of the others. Their hierarchical order is pretty much up for grabs. Indeed it soon becomes evident that it is their very instability, variability, and looseness that has made them indispensable to centuries of cultural and social controversy.

To describe this controversy in its various mutations with some degree of concision, I want to indulge in a bit of allegorization, to treat Literature, Technology, and People as persons. (I do not allegorize power because it is not an active agent; it is produced by the various interactions of the other three.) Let me begin with an observation so obvious that to ignore it, as do most pietistic devotees of Literature, is in itself an exercise of extraordinary cultural presumption: for nearly all of human history, practically no People could read. Literature included such People as subjects, compliant to the comedy and idealization in which Literature likes to indulge, but People seldom knew they were being "used," unless they happened in on a masque or a play or the oral transmission of, say, the *Iliad*. Except for an extremely small number, that is, People did not count as an *audience* for Literature. The author did not have to think of People as readers. Literature was a minority enterprise, and it exulted in its minority status. It was read and supported entirely by the economically and politically privileged classes; it was written by them, for them, and under their patronage.

As everyone knows, the situation has changed. Literature now finds itself worried about and worried by People. There are, for one thing, so many of us. Sanitation, agricultural methods, transportation, medicine, and manufacturing—all these forms of Technology have allowed a fantastic growth in the production of People and in the prolongation of life. There are now 4 billion People, and the current increase among illiterate and semiliterate peoples is

approximately twice what it is among the largely literate ones. But in respect to Literature, People are different from what they were, not simply because they are more numerous, but because nearly all of them, at least in the industrialized world, can now read. It would seem to follow from this that People are at last able to assert an authority over a Literature that heretofore did not need even to speak to them.

People have acquired enormous cultural power, but they do not exercise it by reading. Their cultural power is expressed by their choosing, as they could never have done before, *not* to read, or at least, not to read Literature. This should surprise no one. The system of mass education that began to take root only about a hundred years ago was not created or motivated by a desire to make Literature more available, but to make goods and services more abundant, and as an instrument for civic regulation. The same Technology that produced billions of People also created an economy that required a mass of skilled and relatively docile labor. The literacy they acquired had nothing necessarily to do with Literature—and there is no reason it should. Literature is no more now for everyone than it ever was, at least not Literature in my sense of the term. But I want to say very directly that in being exclusive about Literature, I am not thereby being condescending to People. In fact, I would hope to see People wholly liberated from the notion that a productive relationship to Literature brings with it some moral or ethical benefit not otherwise available. Literature is a form of life, among others, and it cannot be demonstrated that it is *more* morally or ethically enhancing than, say, sports or bird-watching. Nor is it observable that those who read and write Literature, especially as a profession, are as a result in any way morally or ethically superior to those who cannot read or write at all. It often seems that the reverse is true. In my view, Literature is preeminently an activity, an example of what I have called elsewhere "the performing self" or, with respect to Frost, "the work of knowing."

The "work of knowing" can go on in many other places. In Literature, it is most successful when it creates still more work, when it leads not only from density or concealment into clarification, but out of clarification into still other densities or concealments. But there are ways of knowing that have nothing to do with the writing or reading of Literature. Literature itself says as much, for it is forever finding in these other ways analogues to its own compositional acts. It locates metaphors for literary composition in the act of love (Frost or Herbert or Donne), in farming (Thoreau), in sports (Hemingway), in exploration and scholarship (Frances Parkman), in money-making (Dreiser), in social manipulation (Henry James), in intrusions and expropriations (Wordsworth). Literature allows these analogies between itself and other activities, however, only with a proviso: the lover or explorer or athlete must be committed to his task with a dedication, a genius, a discipline worthy of a great writer. Should Literature be *more* available, say, than Thoreau's harvest of beans? "I was determined," he tells us, "to know beans." Why should not Literature in fact be a less available harvest, since we cannot ever merely watch it grow. We cannot reap it. The performance of Literature is complete neither in the writing nor in the reading. Reading *is* writing in that it produces language; writing *is* reading in that it interprets the possibilities in what has already been written, for what can be written. The "work" required by Literature is in that sense never finished and

cannot be. I would therefore define Literature, in anticipation of later discussion, as any written text whose points of clarification, whether these occur by local or by larger design, bring you only to densities always different from, but flexibly related to, those from which you have just previously emerged. Literature is that writing whose clarities bring on precipitations of density.

This can be said, I think, of the Literature of any period. But for the last hundred years or so Literature has become, to an unprecedented degree, self-conscious and defensive about its own complications. It has developed a sort of bunker mentality, and begun to insist not only on its necessary density, but on its necessary difficulty. *Moby Dick* is an obvious instance, *Bleak House*, an only somewhat less obvious one; and by the beginning of the century, Henry James directly attributes the causes to what he calls "monstrous masses." Literature, he says, cannot catch the life of the modern city or touch its inhabitants, a deduction expressed both in *The American Scene*, with respect to New York, and, with respect to London, in the Prefaces, especially to *The Altar of the Dead*. "The general black truth," he remarks, is that "London was a terrible place to die in":

> It takes space to feel, it takes time to know, and great organisms as well as small have to pause, more or less, to possess themselves and to be made aware. Monstrous masses are, by this truth, so impervious to vibration that the sharpest forces of feeling, locally applied, no more penetrate than a pin or a paper-cutter penetrates an elephant's hide. Thus the very tradition of sensibility would perish if left only to their care. It has here and there to be rescued, to be saved by independent, intelligent zeal; which type of effort, however, to avail, has to fly in the face of the conditions.

What is imagined here is not a mere standoff between "monstrous masses" and "the tradition of sensibility." James proposes some more drastic and intransigent alienation. If the "tradition" is to be saved by "independent" effort, then both the effort and the independence call for the abdication by Literature of public power in its earlier forms. Instead of applying its forces "locally"—instead, that is, of creating "vibrations" within a civilization known to be susceptible—Literature must now "fly in the face of the conditions," and these are nothing less than the civilization's "imperviousness." James's aeronautical image suggests confrontation, when in fact he and other late Edwardian writers, specifically including the line from Pater to Joyce, were to fly less in the face of, than away from, or over, these "conditions." If the "tradition of sensibility" is to be rescued, then it will be by embedding it within stylistic fortifications made intentionally and necessarily intricate. James perceived nearly twenty years before T.S. Eliot, in "The Metaphysical Poets," that Literature "in our civilization, as it exists today, must be *difficult*." Let it be remembered that Literature by its very nature would have excluded even a solicitous semiliterate People. But even a literate People are in James's account grown elephantine in size and thickness, and his own later novels are an instance of the stylistic release from any obligations to them.

All this suggests some reasons why in England, from about 1900 to 1914, modernist characteristics began to manifest themselves in Literature. It had happened earlier in America, during the decade before the Civil War, with Hawthorne and Melville. These are the times, significantly, when demographic

and educational developments in both countries helped to produce James's "monstrous masses." In both countries—in America first, because of extraordinary growth in the economy, in compulsory education, and in land-grant universities—there emerged great numbers of People who could read and write and make unprecedented demands on cultural production. But the "tradition of sensibility," the preserve of Literature, was not necessarily a tradition for them. Literature was forced to extemporize an audience *out of itself.* The critical enterprise of F.R. Leavis and *Scrutiny* magazine was nothing less than an effort to show how this might be done. It was proposed that the Literature of "the great tradition" offered us not so much ideas as an experience of reading. The experience was to be available only to those who could enter most fully into Literature's vital, dramatic, and exploratory uses of the English language, who could reenact what it was like to have lived within "the tradition of sensibility." Reading, carried out with this particularly strenuous kind of intensity, was an implicit critique and rejection of the new civilization of People, who read, but in quite other ways. At the same time, no such reader of Literature was allowed to think that the traditions of sensibility could exist in this civilization except in remnants, redoubts, pockets of resistance. Lawrence was, and is, the necessary hero of this effort; more so, for Leavis at least, than Eliot, who was, by nationality and by the nature of his religious feeling, rendered incapable of understanding the culture Lawrence represented. More so, too, than Joyce, in the sense that Lawrence insisted that a viable culture, indigenous to the English language, still did precariously exist. But we need not here indulge in Leavisian refinements. The form of James's "tradition of sensibility" became, when it expressed itself in the twentieth century, grotesque in appearance and in sound, and it was rendered as such whether you were reading Joyce or Lawrence, Eliot or Faulkner. It was innovative, unconventional, and experimental, in order, paradoxically, that it might affirm a tradition. It was radical and reactionary.

Distortions of form and dislocations in language were meant to restore certain kinds of life that had presumably been displaced by the emergence of People. Literature was not to be a mirror of contemporary life held up to People; they would not have recognized what they saw. It was, instead, an extraordinarily difficult inquiry into certain resources for life that still existed in language and in the mythological correlations to literary form. It was unpopular; it was ignored by People; it was read and understood only by an elite. And yet Literature was at the same time claiming for itself a degree of historical and cultural significance that it had never before, so explicitly and under such compulsion, been required to claim. Literature assumed an enormous historical mission—to record the demise of the cultural traditions that sustained it—precisely in the act of abdicating its traditional centrality, its place in the community. At the moment of its exile, Literature said to People "I banish *you*," and then set about, as Coriolanus never could, to build another empire for itself.

Literature feels, if anything, even more embattled now. It found itself after World War II confronted with People still more indifferent, as if Literature were not there at all. Starting with radio early in the century, then with recording mechanisms, tape machines, television, and the miniaturization of these, Technology, which created vast numbers of People to begin with, provided the equipment that allowed People to become, to a degree they could

never before have expected, both visible and articulate *to themselves*. Visibility and articulateness had, till recently, been exclusively in the selective giving of the literary minority, who chose to represent the illiterate classes (and the natural scene) to suit its own aesthetic and political sense of things. For the first time in history, People who in earlier centuries had no way to register their existence at all, except in church records, no way to tell anyone what it was like to be as they were day by day, could record, could re-present themselves.

Having created a new mass of People, having then removed literacy as a prerequisite for demanding a place of sustained significance in historical narrative—a prerequisite that in the past made the preterite masses, as they might be called, relatively powerless, malleable, and silent—Technology thereby induced Literature to become still more inaccessible. And this happened, remember, at exactly the time when People were disposed in any case to ignore Literature. Literature was required to re-present the consequences on People of Technology's power, to show what it is like to live under the aegis of media other than Literature, media that threaten wholly to appropriate and subvert the resources of language, and to accelerate and thereby exhaust human consciousness. What Henry Adams suspected, Thomas Pynchon was brilliantly to confirm.

Nor was this the only challenge to Literature from Technology. New processes for the reproduction and storage of sound and of video images, advanced methods for color reproduction, the proliferation of portable radios, small tape recorders, duplicating machines, and the development of word processors—by these means Technology has begun to appropriate, fracture,and disperse even the image of high culture's rarification of itself. The time was not far back when to hear one concert, to look at a single painting, even to get hold of a book—James in his study of Hawthorne gives a touching glimpse of the excitement of the arrival of books from Europe—required considerable patience, energy, money, and the time and endurance for travel. Now musical compositions are immediately on demand in the living room, played by several different orchestras and rearranged to suit the vagrant mood of the listener. On video recorders, the plays of Shakespeare and the ballets of Balanchine can be edited, put into slow motion or cut to the viewer's taste. Reproductions of paintings by a dozen artists from as many centuries can be arranged at pleasure or spliced into collages. The very idea of authorial prerogatives is under constant assault, and an undeveloped sense of plagiarism among some young people is at least in part attributable to their knowledge that the musical groups they listen to on tape are continually assisted by electronic dubbing, by the substitution of anonymous replacement performers for advertised stars, and by the ready availability of anonymously authored "soft wear" from computers. While Technology has brought to thousands of people the delights of high culture they would not otherwise have had, it can also be said to threaten the condition of relative inaccessibility on which the vitality of high culture, and especially of Literature, depends. The vast museum shows of Picasso and Matisse and Cezanne are a further instance, wherein art is deployed so that thousands of people can be force-marched at short intervals to look at several hundred works in the time insufficient for the proper appreciation of a few. What Walter Benjamin called the aura of high culture has thus been substantial-

ly reduced, and with this has gone some of the self-esteem and conviction of centrality that animates the work even of minor writers and artists. Sounds pretty grim, does it not?

But if we have arrived at a point in the story where it is possible to feel sorry for Literature, give thought, also, to a few historical contradictions and peculiarities. Before Technology struck back, or even had the capacities for doing so, it had, for the centuries before it got its growth, been the whipping boy of Literature. Consider as an instance Book II of Spenser's *The Faerie Queene*. Book II was given to the printer in 1589, but it will be important to my argument that it describes itself as an "antique" mirror of a faery land. The past for which it is an image has always been an imaginary past. Near the end of that book, Sir Guyon descends from the open fields and virgin lands of chivalric England into the Cave of Mammon. The Cave has ascribed to it the detailed horrors of what would later be called an industrial-factory system, along with many of the blandishments of finance capitalism. For one thing, it is filled with currency that reproduces its own value without in the process contributing to the growth of anything other than money, filthy lucre. The Cave is a perversion of nature in the interests of financial and industrial progress. Guyon is so appalled—or tempted—that he nearly faints when he reaches the surface. He returns to knight errantry, to the pursuit of heroic ideals that even in the sixteenth century was already recognized as antiquated, a kind of Don Quixotism.

Literature, that is, from some of its earliest and now classic instances, seems *always* to have been nostalgic for something that has been lost. What can be the origin of a loss that was always there? It was to meet such a logistical and logical gap that Literature introduced Technology as a villain. It is obvious, again, that I am using the term Technology to describe manifestations whose early forms are quite unlike later, more familiar ones. Literature did not wait for Mark Twain or Lawrence or Pynchon before it ascribed demonic and destructive powers to what can be called Technology. Nearly from the beginnings of English literature, images of exploitative control over environment are, embryonically, images also of industrialization. Usury is an aspect of this, of money that begets only money, until, as in the opening of *Volpone*, accumulated wealth rivals the sun, the source of natural energy and generative power. In writing of this development, R.H. Tawney implies what I want directly to address—the paradoxical dependence of Literature on Technology: "Behind the genii of beauty and wisdom who were its architects"—he is speaking of the emergence of the modern from the feudal world—

> there moved a murky, but indispensable figure. It was the demon whom Dante had met muttering gibberish in the fourth circle of the Inferno, and whom Sir Guyon was to encounter three centuries later, tanned with smoke and seared with fire, in a cave adjoining the mouth of hell. His uncouth labors quarried the stones which Michael Angelo was to raise, and sank deep in the Roman clay the foundations of the walls to be adorned by Raphael.

To read Tawney is to be reminded that electronic media are, for Literature, only the most recent version of an imagined threat to cultural health and

continuity. With precedents for which there are forever other precedents, Literature has always asked us to be nostalgic for some aspect of the human and the natural, whose essential purity is revealed by the very fact that it begins to perish under Technology's pressure. So much so, that it seems as if the ideal forms of the human and the natural do not in fact or in reality ever actually exist; as if when they appear, even in re-presented life, they can be no more than fleeting and pitiable remnants, like Sir Guyon, or shepherds, like Melville's Starbuck or Wordsworth's Michael, like Lawrence's Mellors or Joyce's Bloom. One might call it the Cordelia syndrome—these creations of a nostalgia for human goodness uncontaminated, a nostalgia so strong that its embodiments emerge from the doom that awaits them.

Again, why has Literature persuaded itself, and us, that this should be so? When a villain is hard to find, there is always, after all, "original sin." But original sin is one likely source of Literature itself. Original sin was probably invented to explain and relieve some feeling in each of us that we lost something, abandoned someone, betrayed our natures in the process of becoming human. We love our cats and dogs with a certain pathos, a sense that we have betrayed them, left them behind, along with other creatures, in an inarticulateness that once was ours. The Fall of Man, according to Emerson, "is the discovery we have made that we exist." We fall from the womb into the terrible consciousness of unitary existence. Literature, one of our great human creations, is in this view one compensation for the Fall. It offers consoling evidence of a community of loss but also—and this is implicit in the shaping powers of language itself—a promise of corporate creation. Without the Fall there would be, as Milton tells us, no *Paradise Lost*. What, then, has compelled Literature to invent yet another instrument of loss and call it Technology?

To ask this question is to become suspicious of Literature in a way not at all offensive to great writers and artists, though it might be so to their more pious interpreters. Literature, especially in its idealized images of the human and the natural, is a reparation for its own transgressions—this much is already admitted by and in Literature itself. I would like to go further and suggest that the transgressive nature of Literature, and Literature's own awareness of it, helps explain why it needed to displace its inevitable anxieties onto Technology. Literature's own operations are peculiarly akin to those exercises of technological power that it writes against. Like Technology, Literature appropriates, exploits, recomposes, arranges—within inherited, but constantly "modernized," mechanisms of form—materials that all the while are also said by Literature to belong mythologically to something called "life." This concern for the power of technique in Literature is especially pronounced in the English romantics—in Coleridge's "Odes" and *The Ancient Mariner*, in such poems of Wordsworth's as "Nutting" and Book I of *The Prelude*, where, as David Ferry and others have shown, human intrusions, acquisitive destructiveness, or theft, all of them visited upon an otherwise silent, awe-ful, and serene nature, are a metaphoric equivalent for the poet's own seizure of objects for use in poetry. Wordsworth includes in his poetry the criticism later made of him by Lawrence, that he was "impertinent."

The dialectic concern for form as against fluidity, for figuration as against fracture, for structured selves as against fragmented selves—these are not,

however, original to the Romantic or modernist self-consciousness about the transgressive nature of writing. They are everywhere in Literature, expressions of a concern for order that is always—and also—an anxiety about its possibly brutal and deforming rigidities. More recent literature is especially useful for illustration, however, because it tends to treat earlier writing as if in itself it were a kind of Technology, as if it had created forms and predictable movements that have become reified and potentially deadening.

Literature's distaste for Technology reveals a squeamishness about its own operations—this is perhaps most evident in a characteristic peculiar to a species of the human that Literature tends to idealize. I refer to people who are themselves almost never interested in Literature. Here we come to a crux: in some central instances—and I realize there are many exceptions to this—the most admired and admirable characters in works of genius, especially since 1800 or so, are either unliterary or positively suspicious of Literature. The worthy rustics of pastoral poetry, no less than Faulkner's enduring Dilsey, could hardly be expected to *read* about themselves. Indeed, you might say that they are examples to the rest of us, for the very reason that they do not engage in the exploitative enterprise of reading and writing. While Leopold Bloom can, of course, read, would anyone expect him to read *Ulysses?* Literature, that is, seldom includes among its implied readers the kind of people it most admires, and when it includes literary people, they are often a shady or tortured lot. This has been the case long before such "ordinary" people were presumably corrupted by, or lost to, Literature by the TV screen. A little of such literary demography might dampen the high culturalistic bravado of, say, Anthony Burgess, who seems to assume, in his study of Joyce, that since Literature makes such redeeming use of ordinary people, it follows that ordinary people can make redeeming use of Literature.

It seems quite generally assumed that because ordinary people are available to Literature as a resource, they are also available to it as an audience, had they not been otherwise seduced. How else explain the voluble and confused disparagement visited, in the name of print culture, on television? But if critical competence in the reading of Literature requires some sort of productive engagement with difficulties made inevitable by the nature of language itself, then it requires some measure of critical *in*competence to go about complaining that Literature should or could be in competition with TV for the attention of the general public. Many avid readers of Literature spend, as I do, a great deal of time watching television, but it doesn't follow that the reverse might also be true, that inveterate watchers could care about Literature and language in ways they can rewardingly be cared about. Leaving aside the masses in the world who cannot read at all, it is evident that reading citizens, wherever they are, would not necessarily read more, or read better, if they watched television less. And much of what they do read in newspapers, magazines, and what passes for good fiction is often lacking in the nuances (because more neglectful of the human voice) that can be heard on certain TV shows, like "Kojak," or remarkable situation comedies like "Taxi," and on certain talk shows like Johnny Carson's, not to mention "Masterpiece Theater." The argument that the emergence of TV is largely responsible for the decline of reading or literacy is no more tenable than the wistful suggestions that the so-called art of conversation

(never a conspicuous feature in the TV-less childhoods of people my age) disappeared from the family circle because of the intrusion of the tube. To judge from the endless conversational murmur in movie houses, which used to be much quieter, people have been convinced by TV that they can and should become more, not less voluble before any available screen.

There is a habit of phrasing that neatly epitomizes the confusions I am trying to sort out. You may have noted how on occasion all instruments of expression *except* literature are referred to as "the media," often with the omission of such qualifiers as "electronic" or "mass." The implications are especially glaring in linked phrases like "print and media culture." What is suggested by that phrase is that video is one of "the media" and that print is not; that print, and especially literature, are exonerated from the contaminations associated with media.

The implication, not dispelled by any amount of critical theory, however ancient, is that language and literature are "natural" while all other media, like TV, are not. This is at the heart of the confusions and expectations of those who assume that Literature might compete with video for a general audience. What seems to be forgotten is that language is in itself a mediation, another point that cannot be emphasized enough, no matter how embarassingly obvious. Every word is a form of re-presentation. And Literature, by virtue of its formal conventions and the conscious struggle by which it appropriates language into poetry or the novel, is yet another, still more formidable example of media and re-presentation. It is likely that language and Literature are the most indispensable and resilient cultural resources that human beings have made available to themselves. And yet, no matter how inherent the human facility with language is judged to be, language is obviously an artifact in large part created and fashioned by all kinds of social, religious, economic, and political pressures. Perhaps the tendency to believe otherwise, to believe that language partakes of nature, is a result of the quite understandable desire to believe that language and Literature should be identical with the *kinds* of nature and humanity that they idealize and preserve. It is a very costly mistake, however, a fatal concession to vulgarians, mediacratic or literary. It concedes that culture, in its literary or high artistic manifestations, can be absorbed in the way TV is absorbed, that somehow, in its competition with popular culture, high culture has gotten not less, but more readily available than it has ever been in history.

Language is not virgin "nature," available as fully to video or to radio as it is to Literature. It is a resource that Literature, more effectively than any other media, can productively mine and develop. The cultural threat of video in its effect on the general public has been exaggerated precisely to the extent that the possible effects of Literature on the general public have been idealized. Régis Debray's recent remark that "the darkest spot in modern society is a small luminous screen," is a sample of the kind of Gallic silliness that passes for thinking on this subject. What has happened—and for a variety of reasons, whose source lies deeper than any developments in Technology—is that there have been, in the last hundred years or so, some accelerated changes and displacements in ideas of the natural, the traditional, and, especially, the human. These ideas, which are in part the invention of Literature, are essential to its prosperity and to the prospect of its being able to maintain some degree of

its ancient cultural-social power. But this is not to say that Literature ought to preserve any particular image of nature, the human, or the past. The very existence of Literature, in the sense in which I have ever tried to define it, depends on its capacity to question what at the same time it proposes, to challenge in one period—in one phrase—the images predominant in another, and to expose as a figuration any term, like "human" or "natural," that the culture at large may want, for its own political or historical convenience, to institutionalize. What is truly threatened by Technology, in the form of electronic media, is exactly that play of dialectical complication that is inseparable from the act of literary creation.

What I have been implying can now be said more directly. A feature of Literature essential to its value is quite simply its refusal to offer, in the parlance of TV, a clear image; and the obvious implication of electronic media is that Literature's kind of opacity is inessential, evasive, and obscurantist. This also, to expose the full and tortuous ironies of our cultural situation, is customarily the charge leveled against Literature itself by elements of the literary-critical establishment—who are of course extremely anxious also about the effects of TV—whenever the canon is disrupted by the appearance of experimental or theoretical work. "Inessential," "evasive," "obscurantist"—this has at some point been said of nearly every innovative writer (and critic) in recent history. Those who want Literature to be widely available, on the assumption that it is socially and morally enhancing, generally oppose TV on the grounds that it is socially and morally injurious, but their criteria are as simplistic in the one case as in the other.

We are left, nonetheless, with the task of finding some way to describe best the various ways in which Literature, unlike TV, manages to put itself out of focus, no matter how hard we try to bring it into focus. I said a bit earlier that Literature is a kind of writing whose clarities bring on precipitations of density. At other times I have used the word "difficulty,"[1] instead of density, to characterize an essential aspect, particularly of modernist literature. I want very briefly to discuss these terms and their utility in the larger argument being made here. Density is a useful term, particularly with respect to a kind of Literature that gives a more or less direct access to pleasure but that becomes, on longer acquaintance, rather strange and imponderable. Shakespeare is a good example, as is Marvell or *Paradise Lost* or *Middlemarch*. Another kind of writing may, on first encounter, seem quite bristly, resistant, difficult. If somehow, maybe with the help of notes and annotations, you master the difficulty—you cannot in the same sense master density—you may then find that there is little or no density behind it. Stephen Dedalus's tortured prose in the Proteus section of *Ulysses* is, for me, a case in point, as are the episodes like Oxen of the Sun and Ithaca, where formal mechanisms, more than any information carried by them, rather statically communicate the significance. To put it very crudely, the Joyce of "The Dead" is more dense than is the Joyce of *Ulysses*, where he is being both difficult and dense; *Ulysses*, generally speaking, is difficult, while *Women in Love* is dense; Pound is difficult, Frost is dense.

Twentieth century criticism and theory tend to prefer difficulty to density. Difficulty gives the critic a chance to strut his stuff, to treat Literature as if it really were a communication of knowledge rather than a communication of

being. Difficulty also carries with it a lineage of theoretical, historical, and cultural justification. George Chapman had religious theories about the virtues of obscurity in poetry, but in this century, difficulty has been made to seem the inescapable social and political responsibility of the artist. You are already on notice that when something is hard to read, there are Big Reasons for its being so, and that *you*, reader, had better shape up. Density is another matter. No guide book will help you. It does not announce itself in Literature, anymore than it does in some of our most intimate conversations, and it can go unnoticed in either case by those who do not care to encounter it. Density is very often something that happens to the ear rather than to the eye; it is often something you hear happening to voices as they modify words and phrases that, at another point, seemed quite clear or casual. The genius of Shakespeare manifests itself in this way, as we hear one voice more or less deconstructing the vocabularies used by some other voice, and then reconstructing it for other purposes. One need only trace out, for example, what happens to the words "space," "gap," and "arch" in *Antony and Cleopatra*.

I began with one question, and have produced a couple more. At the outset the question was this: Is there a threat to literary culture posed by electronic media, this latest manifestation of Technology, Literature's ancient enemy? In response I have been arguing that the threat is in part no more than a continuing effort to secure for Literature, and for the written word generally, an immense prestige, and with it an equally immense cultural power and hegemony over the illiterate masses and over the human imagination of itself. Furthermore, I have argued that Literature often disguises its transgressive ambitions, its desire to take over where life begins and ends, and that it does so, first, by ascribing these ambitions to Technology—which it then condemns—and second, by offering, in its idealizations of the human and the natural, compensations for its own technological ambitions as manifested in acts of composition. I have then proposed that, because of these inner contradictions, and for reasons still to be explored, Literature is characterized by a degree of difficulty or density that does not allow very many People, relatively speaking, to appreciate what it does. The unavailability of Literature was not a problem, but a social and historical advantage, so long as the small minority, to whom it *was* available, was also dominant, empowered, and articulate—so much so, that it could determine the shape of culture and of its visible and audible evidences. It also determined what could *not* be seen or heard.

By this line of argument I have arrived at a position that would seem to put into question the things I regularly do as a literary person. Am I not disputing the cultural centrality of Literature and of the written word? And would it not follow that Literature has either very little historical relevance or only such relevance as would disallow most of the large claims made for it by traditional criticism? Finally, in putting such stress on Literature's difficulty—Fielding? Thackeray? Dickens? Wordsworth? Tennyson? George Eliot?—am I not saying that it is, by and large, unyielding and obscure to nearly everyone? Can it be said that Literature pretends to send messages that it never delivers, even while thousands of people swear that they are receiving them?

I must put these questions to myself, because for twenty-five years I have given a course to all sorts of students on how best to ask questions of the classic

texts of English and American literature; because the poet who is to me one of the most interesting of this century so far, Robert Frost, is also the most popular of the great poets who might be compared to him; and because I am involved in the founding and development of The Library of America, a project designed to make the best of American writing permanently available to the common reader in a form equivalent to the French Pléiade. How, it must be asked, can anyone engaged in these activities say that Literature is so essentially "difficult" or "dense" that it is somehow unavailable to the majority of People?

But these questions only arise, indeed only exist, because of prevalent assumptions, to which my opposition is already clear, about the nature of Literature and of how it is to be read. The questions are generated by humanistic traditions having to do with the way language works or ought to work in Literature. These traditions have been everywhere promoted for over a century in the teaching of Literature and in the kind of criticism that follows from that teaching. The tradition unites Arnold and Eliot, despite the latter's disclaimers; it includes Trilling along with the Southern contingent of the New Criticism, however much they may have wanted to differ; and it has set the conditions even for the challenges made to it in the past decade or so, challenges that in any case do not sufficiently acknowledge the political consequences of how one chooses or is taught to read Literature. Its emphases are epistemological, its stress is on knowledge and referentiality as essential effects of the language of Literature, and it is committed to moral and humanistic hierarchies that have proved strong enough to determine how readers, even deconstructive ones, trace out the activities of language in a text.

In opposition, I have proposed here and elsewhere that, while such hierarchies cannot be dispensed with or ignored by Literature, and are indeed its sustenance, the writer's or the reader's *proper* commitment to them is akin to the acrobat's commitment to his trapeze, the dancer's commitment to the floor or a partner, something to play against, to use opportunistically, as a candidate for office, himself a species of writer, will use language—less because *he* believes in it than because *it* is believed in: "The play's the thing / Wherein I'll catch the conscience of the King." The pleasure in Literature, whether of the writer or the reader, would thus involve, as does the pleasure of vital conversation, an attention to how words, by their interplay, their interfusions, their transformations, can, moment by moment, create and decreate structures of life and being to fit an occasion however large or small. The performing self exults in the use to which it can put the most sacrosanct or the most obscene of terms. Falstaff is one of the most obvious, Cleopatra the most subtle, of practitioners, and Shakespeare is more indifferent to sincerities than either one of them.

To read with an ear to the edifying/de-edifying movements of language in Literature is to put yourself in a position to listen, with an equivalent alertness, to the political movements of language in life, which includes the politics implicit in the making of cultural discriminations. Literature can become more, not less historically and culturally important once the reader is freed from the compulsion to treat it as a representation of life. Life already is re-presented in words, to repeat an already obvious point, and Literature is best taken as a dramatization of the career of words as they try to fulfill their impossible, their poignant and comic obligations.

Reading, in that sense, is the discovery of the movements by which certain words, including those I have been using here, like technology, life, literature, people, find a place in a hierarchy that is continually altering itself as surrounding circumstances change, as contexts evolve. I owe something here, obviously, to Kenneth Burke and, in proposing that words in a text act the way people act in life, to Leavis and his phrase, "the dramatic use of language." Initially the words are simply *there*, in a first paragraph, a first scene, an opening line, looking more innocent than they possibly can be, given the history they inescapably bring with them. Then, almost at once, they find themselves in a crowd of other words within which they discover affinities and antagonisms, the inclination to seek support or give it, the power to attract or the desire to subvert. This drama of words, as in a play by Shakespeare, can make us acutely aware of how even the most culturally revered and necessary words like "God" or "Nature" are, if you attend carefully enough, subject, even in daily usage, to extraordinary transformations, dislodgements, and jokes, no matter how unassailable they are officially meant to be.

Reading, if cultivated in this manner, can make us uncommonly attuned to the linquistic techniques outside of Literature by which social, sexual, and political hierarchies are insinuated, by which dominations are established, and by which they may possibly be resisted. However, the kind of contemporary fiction that overtly offers a self-conscious, self-referential reading of itself, carried out within the text, the kind of fiction that, in doing this, is anxious thereby to show that life and history partake of the fictional process of Literature—this kind of exercise seems to me dreary and naive. The most instructive and pleasurable occasions for reading occur, I think, when Literature is seduced by the life it proposes to create, when it half resents the fact that its powers of invention and beguilement have already been exceeded by nature's. A "classic," in Frank Kermode's sense, allows perennially for its own reformations, and it does so by *not* forcing upon us, in the manner of a Borges or a John Barth, the proud evidence that the author has already exhausted the possibilities for analysis or is giddily overwhelmed by them. The trouble with a Literature that is intent on displaying its own hermeneutical powers is that it is too simple; it is a puzzle that drops dead when you solve it. By contrast, the most popular of what can be called great Literature is also quite often the most ordinary-seeming and the most dense, without being difficult. The Bible, Shakespeare, Dickens, Wordsworth, Lawrence, Frost—these are, at last, always interesting to return to, because they offer so much and offer it so readily that they evade analysis. Each dares to take language on trust, like a handshake before a game of some sort. They are, as it were, prompted by the platitudes of language, by its pieties, its familiar shapes and idioms. They all freely indulge in a language that makes us feel at home in the world. It is just because they do hold to a course that belongs to the natural bias of the language that they get involved in mystifications and multiplicities of meaning that threaten to cancel one another out but never quite do so.

This drama of words—this struggle by which they arrive at some only momentary stay against confusion—is really what the common reader finds exciting about Literature, and it gets expressed, too, in a taste for detective stories and the engrossing irresolutions of soap opera. Literature enacts the birth

and troubled destiny of life as it is created in language, and it should remind its readers that something of the same intense obscurity can lend substance, pleasure, and promise to our daily talk. "Ordinary language is all right," Wittgenstein assures us—though of what, exactly, we cannot be sure. His sentence, like some of Thoreau's, becomes dazzingly mysterious the more we repeat it. It is so familiar-sounding that it reverberates with tones that haphazardly pun on one another. The marvel of this, and of the writers I have mentioned, especially Shakespeare, is that ordinary discourse, the *sound* of it, is never sacrificed to the extraordinarily elusive (and allusive) movements of the words that are suspended within it. Shakespeare *is* sound, the sound of English idiom as it creates and sustains the terminological agitations and blurrings that are its essential life.

REFERENCE

[1]For particular relevance to this essay, see my article "The Difficulties of Modernism and the Modernism of Difficulty," in *Humanities and Society* Fall 1978, pp. 271-82.

STANLEY CAVELL

The Fact of Television

OF COURSE THERE ARE interesting facts *about* television, facts about its technology, about the history of its programs, about the economic structure of the networks that produce it. Most of these facts I do not know, but I think I know what it would be like to learn them, and to start to learn what they add up to. By speaking of the fact of television, I mean to call attention to something else, something I do not, in the same way, think I know how to learn more about, something like the sheer fact that television exists, and that this existence is at once among the most obvious and the most mysterious facts of contemporary life. Its obviousness is that television has conquered, like the electric light, or the automobile, or the telephone. Its mystery is twofold: first, *how* it has conquered; and second, how we (we, for example, who write for and read *Daedalus*) have apparently remained largely uninterested in accounting for its conquering. (What it has conquered, I wish to leave, or to make, a question, part of the mystery. Has it conquered as a form of popular, or mass, entertainment? Popular as opposed to what? And what happened to the forms over which television triumphed?)

The twofold mystery comes to a twofold assumption, with which I begin, that there is something yet to be understood concerning both the interest in television and the refusal of interest in it. The latter half of the assumption is that the absence of critical or intellectual attention to television—both in kind and extent—is not satisfactorily understandable as a straightforward lack of interest, as if the medium were inherently boring. Individual intellectuals will, of course, straightforwardly find no interest there, as they may not in film. But the absence of interest in the medium seems to me more complete, or studied, than can be accounted for by the accidents of taste. That the absence is not accidental or straightforward is epitomized, I think, in the familiar disapproval evinced toward television in certain educated circles. Members of these circles would apparently prefer not to permit a TV set in the house; but if unable to hold to this pure line, they sternly limit the amount of time the children may watch, regardless of the content. If this line has in turn been breached, and the choice is between letting the kids watch at home or at a neighbor's house, they are apt to speak guiltily—or at any rate awkwardly—about their and their children's knowledge of its programs. As if in reaction, other intellectuals brazen out a preference for commercial over public television.

Such behavior suggests to my mind a fear of television for which I have heard no credible explanation. Sometimes people say, loosely I suppose, that television is addictive. And of course it would be a plausible explanation of both television's attraction and its repulsion if it were credible to attribute addictive powers to it, to believe quite literally that the tube is not only in the service of boobs, but that it turns otherwise useful citizens into boobs. (I will cite such a view toward the end of these remarks.) But I have no acquaintance with anyone who treats television in all seriousness as if it were the equivalent of, say, heroin. Even if marijuana presented a more analogous level of fear, no adult worried about its effects would make it available to their children, even on a strictly limited basis, unless perhaps they were already dealing with addiction. Nor does the disapproval of television seem to me very close to the disapproval of comic books by an earlier generation of parents, described so well by Robert Warshow in "Paul, the Horror Comics, and Dr. Wertham."[1] Like any concerned parent who wants to provide his or her children with the pleasures of cultivation, and who does not underestimate how exacting those pleasures are to command, Warshow was worried—having investigated and dismissed as groundless the then fashionable claim that comics incited their readers to violence—about the sheer time comics seems to steal from better things. But he decided that his son's absorption would pass and that less harm would be done by waiting it out than by prohibiting it. The difference I sense from the disapproval of television may be that Warshow was not himself tempted by a craving to absorb himself in comic books, so that he had firsthand evidence that the absorption would die naturally, whereas adults today may have no analogous evidence from their own experience of television, fearing their own addictiveness. Or is there some surmise about the *nature* of the pleasure television provides that sets off disapproval of it, perhaps like surmises that once caused the disapproval of novel-reading or, later, of movie-viewing? If this were the case, one might expect the disapproval to vanish when television comes of age, when its programs achieve an artistic maturity to match that of the great novels and movies. Is this a reasonable faith?

Certainly I have been among those who have felt that television cannot have come of age, that the medium *must* have more in it than what has so far been shown. True, I have felt, at the same time, that so much money and talent have been lavished on it, that *if* there is anything more in the medium, it could hardly have escaped discovery. From this thought, one of two conclusions may be drawn: that there is indeed nothing more to be discovered and that the medium is accordingly one of poverty and boredom (I once found myself in a discussion of these matters impatiently observing that television is no more a medium of art than the telephone, the telegraph, or the telescope); or, since this is not quite credible, that the poverty lies not in the medium's discoveries, but rather in our understanding of these discoveries, in our failure as yet to grasp what the medium is for, what constitutes its powers and its treasures.

Since I am inclined to the latter of these conclusions, to speculate on what might constitute a better route of understanding is what I conceive my task here to be (together with some speculation about what kind of issue "the understanding of a medium" is). This means that I accept the condition of both conclusions, namely that television *has* come of age, that *this*, these programs,

more or less as they stand, in what can appear to be their poverty, is what there *is* to understand. For suppose we agree that television's first major accomplishments can be dated no later than 1953, the time of the coverage of the first Eisenhower Inauguration. In that case, it has had thirty years in which to show itself. If Griffith's major films around 1915 are taken to date the birth of film as a medium of art, then it took only ten more years to reach the masterpieces of Chaplin and Keaton; and over the next fifteen years, America, to go no further, established a momentum in producing definitive movies—movies that are now among the permanent pleasures of art theaters, of museum programs, of film studies programs, and of late night television—that was essentially slowed (or so the story goes) only with the help of the rising television industry. One of our questions should be: Did television give back as good as it took away?

The acceptance of television as a mature medium of art further specifies what I mean in calling my subject here the fact of television. A further consequence of this characterization, or limitation of my subject, is that I am not undertaking to discuss the progress and results of experimental video artists. This is not meant to imply that I am uninterested in what might be called "the medium of video." On the contrary, it would be a way of describing my motive here as an interest in what television, as it stands, reveals about this medium. I do not mean to assume that this description captures a topic of assured significance or fruitfulness. I do hope, rather, that it is one way of picking up the subject of this issue of *Daedalus*, concerning the supposed general influence of video on our culture at large, on a par with the influence of print. In developing my contribution, I will take my bearings from some thoughts I worked with in speculating about the medium of film in *The World Viewed*.[2] That book also addresses what I am calling the nature of the medium, by asking what the traditional masterpieces, or successes, among movies reveal it to be, not especially what experimental work finds it to be. It is a guiding thesis of that book that major films are those in which the medium is most richly or deeply revealed. (This remains controversial. A reviewer of my recently published *Pursuits of Happiness: The Hollywood Comedy of Remarriage*[3] found that book pretentious and sometimes preposterous, in part because he cannot believe that even the best of Hollywood films are as self-reflective, or intelligent, about their source in the medium of film—if, in a sense, less explicit—as is the work of "modernist self-referential artists" like Godard and Antonioni. Hollywood is a mythical locale, part of whose function is to cause people to imagine that they know it without having taken its works seriously, like America.)

An immediate difference presents itself between television and film. To say that masterpieces among movies reveal the medium of film is to say that this revelation is the business of individual works, and that these works have a status analogous to traditional works of art: they last beyond their immediate occasions; their rewards bear up under repeated viewings; they lend themselves to the same pitch of critical scrutiny as do any of the works we care about most seriously. This seems not to be true of individual works of television. What is memorable, treasurable, criticizable, is not primarily the individual work, but the program, the format, not this or that day of "I Love Lucy," but the program as such. I say this "seems" to me to be so, and what I will have to say here depends on its being so. But my experience of television is much more limited

than my experience of movies and of pretelevision radio, so my views about the treasuring of television's works may be especially unreliable. Still, I think that people who have been puzzled by the phenomenon of television as I have been—evidenced by being more grateful, if grudgingly so, to some of it, than familiar aesthetic concepts will explain—must commonly have had the thought, or intuition, that its value is a function of its rule of format. My speculations here are intended as something like experiments to test how far one would have to go to follow this intuition, with reasonable intellectual satisfaction, through the aesthetic range of the phenomenon we know as television.

I have begun by citing grounds on which to deny that the evanescence of the instance, of the individual work, in itself shows that television has not yet come of age aesthetically. (Even were it to prove true that certain television works yet to be made become treasured instances, as *instances,* such as the annual running of *The Wizard of Oz*—which serves to prove my case, since this is not an object made by and for television—my topic here remains television as it stands in our lives now.) But movies also, at least some movies, maybe most, used to exist in something that resembles this condition of evanescence, viewable only in certain places at certain times, discussable solely as occasions for sociable exchange, almost never seen more than once, and then more or less forgotten. For many, perhaps still for most people, this is still the fate of film. (It is accordingly also true that some people, perhaps still most, would take it as true of movies that individual works do not bear up under repetition and criticism. That this is a possible way to take film, I was just asserting, and I was implying that it is also partial. I will give a name to this way of taking it presently.) But from the beginning of the art of film, there have been those who have known that there was more to movies, more to think about, to experience, in their ordinary instances, than met the habitual eye. In recent years, this thought is becoming increasingly common (though not at all as common, I believe, as certain people living on the East and West coasts and in certain other enclaves imagine); whereas, as I have indicated, my impression is that comparatively few people maintain an aesthetic interest in the products of network television. A writer like Leslie Fiedler asserts a brazen interest in network television, or perhaps it is a sterling interest. But he insists that the source of his interest lies precisely in television's not producing art, in its providing, so to speak, a relief from art. And then again, it seems to me that he has said the same thing about movies, all movies, anyway all American movies. And if someone did appear to take the different interest, my question would persist: What is it he or she is taking this interest in?

A further caution—as it were, a technological caution—also conditions the remarks to follow. If the increasing distribution of videocassettes and disks goes so far as to make the history of film as much a part of the present experience of film as the history of the other arts is part of their present—hence, in this dimension, brings film into the condition of art—it will make less respectable the assumption of the evanescence of the individual movie, its exhaustion under one viewing, or always casual viewings; or rather, it will make this assumption itself evanescent, evidently the product of historical conditions, not inevitable. At the same time, if the distribution of videocassette recorders and cable television increases, as appears to be happening, to the size of the distribution of

television itself, or to a size capable of challenging it, this will make problematic whether television will continue to exist primarily as a medium of broadcasting. I am not so much interested in predicting that such developments will actually come to establish themselves as I am in making conceptual room for understanding the aesthetic possibilities of such developments.

To say that the primary object of aesthetic interest in television is not the individual piece, but the format, is to say that the format is its primary individual of aesthetic interest. This ontological recharacterization is meant to bring out that the relation between format and instance should be of essential aesthetic concern. There are two classical concepts in talking about movies that fit the requirements of the thing I am calling a format, as it were, an artistic *kind:* the concepts of the serial and of the genre. The units of a serial are familiarly called its episodes; I will call the units of a genre its members. A thesis it seems to me worth exploring is that television, for some reason, works aesthetically according to a serial-episode principle rather than according to a genre-member principle. What are these principles?

In traditional terms, they would not be apt to invoke what I mean by different principles of composition. What is traditionally called a genre film is a movie whose membership in a group of films is no more problematic than the exemplification of a serial in one of its episodes. You can, for example, roughly *see* that a movie is a Western, or gangster film, or horror film, or prison film, or "woman's film," or a screwball comedy. Call this way of thinking about genre, genre-as-cycle. In contrast, in *Pursuits of Happiness*, the way I found I wanted to speak of genre in defining what I call the Hollywood comedy of remarriage, I will call genre-as-medium.

Because I feel rather backed into the necessity of considering the notion of a genre, I feel especially in need of the reader's forbearance over the next half dozen or so paragraphs. It seems that the notion of a genre has lately been receiving renewed attention from literary theorists, but the recent pieces of writing I have started to look at on the subject (so far, I realize, too unsystematically) all begin with a sense of dissatisfaction with other writing on the subject, either with the way the notion has so far been defined, or with the confusion of uses to which it has been put, or both. I am not interested here in joining an argument but rather in sketching the paths of two (related) ideas of a genre; it is an interest in coming to terms with what seem to me to be certain natural confusions in approaching the notion of a genre. In *Pursuits of Happiness* I was letting the discussion of certain individual works, which, so far as I know, had never been put together as a group, lead me, or push me, into sketching a theory of genre, and I went no further with it than the concrete motivations in reading individual works seemed to me to demand. With that in mind, in the present essay I am beginning, on the contrary, with certain intuitions concerning what the general aesthetic powers of video turn upon, and I am hoping to get far enough in abstracting these powers from the similar, hence different, powers of film, to get in a position to test these intuitions in concrete cases. (I may, however, just mention that two of the books I have been most helped by are Northrop Frye's *A Natural Perspective*[4] and Tzvetan Todorov's *The Fantastic.*[5])

Before going on to give my understanding of the contrasting notions of a genre, I should perhaps anticipate two objections to my terminology. First, if there is an established, conventional use of the word "genre," and if this fits what I am calling genre-as-cycle, why not keep the simple word and use some other simple word to name the further kind of kind I am thinking of, the kind I am calling genre-as-medium—why not just call the further kind a set or a group or a pride? Second, since film itself is thought of as a medium (for example, of art), why insist on using the same word to characterize a gathering of works *within* that medium? As to this second objection, this double range of the concept of a medium is deployed familiarly in the visual arts, in which painting is said to be a medium (of art, in contrast, say, to sculpture or to music—hardly, one would think, the same contrast), and in which gouache is also a medium (of painting, in contrast to water color or oil or tempera). I wish to preserve, and make more explicit—or curious—this double range in order to keep open to investigation the relation between work and medium that I call the revelation, or acknowledgment, of the one in the other. In my experience, to keep this open means, above all, resisting (by understanding) the temptation to think of a medium simply as a familiar material (for instance, sound, color, words), as if this were an unprejudicial observation rather than one of a number of ways of taking the material of a medium, and recognizing instead that only the art can define its media, only painting and composing and movie-making can reveal what is required, or possible (what means, what exploits of material), for something to be a painting, a piece of music, a movie. As to the first objection—my use of "genre" in naming both of what I claim are different principles or procedures of composition—my purpose is to release something true in both uses of the word (in both, there is a process of generating in question), and to leave open to investigation what the relation between these processes may be. The difference may be consequential. I think, for example, that it is easier to understand movies as some familiar kind of commodity or as entertainments if you take them as participating not in a genre-as-medium but in genres-as-cycles, or if you focus on those movies that *do* participate, without remainder, in genres so conceived. Movies thought of as members of genres-as-cycles is the name of the way of taking them that I earlier characterized as evanescent. The simplest examples of such cycles used to be signaled by titles such as *The Son of X*, *The Curse of X*, *X Meets Dracula*, and so on. Our sophistication today requires that we call such sequels *X II*, *X III*, and so on, like Super Bowls. It is part of Hollywood's deviousness that certain sequels may be better than their originals, as perhaps *The Bride of Frankenstein* is, or Fritz Lang's *The Return of Frank James*.

Still another word about terminology, before going on to consider the thesis that television works according to a serial-episode rather than a genre-member principle. In picking up the old movie term "serial" to mark the contrast in question, I am assuming that what used to be called serials on film bears some internal relation to what are called series on television. But what I am interested in considering here is the idea of serialization generally, wishing again to leave open what the relations are between serials and series (as I wish to leave open, hence to recall, the occurrence of serialization in classical novels, in photographs, in paintings, in music, in comic strips). One might find that the closest equivalent on television to the movie serial is the soap opera, since this shares

the feature of more or less endless narration across episodes, linked by crises. But in going on now to consider a little my thesis about serialization in television, I am exploring my intuition that the repetitions and recurrences of soap operas bear a significant relation with those of series, in which the narrative comes to a classical ending each time, and indeed that these repetitions and recurrences are modes of a requirement that the medium of television exacts in all its formats. A program such as "Hill Street Blues" seems to be questioning the feature of a series that demands a classical ending for each instance, hence questioning the distinction between soap opera and series. Similarly, or oppositely, the projected sequence of movies instanced by *Star Wars* and *The Empire Strikes Back* seems to be questioning the distinction between a serial and a cycle by questioning the demand of a serial (a narrative that continues over an indefinite number of episodes) *not* to come to a classical ending before the final episode. This would bring the sequence closer in structure to literary forms such as (depending on individual taste) the King Arthur legends, the Shakespeare Henry plays (perhaps in a Lamb-like retelling), or Tolkien's *Lord of the Rings* trilogy.

A genre, as I use the notion in *Pursuits of Happiness*, and which I am here calling genre-as-medium, behaves according to two basic "laws" (or "principles"), one internal, the other external. Internally, a genre is constituted by members, about which it can be said that they share what you might picture as every feature in common. In practice, this means that, where a given member diverges, as it must, from the rest, it must "compensate" for this divergence. The genre undergoes continuous definition or redefinition as new members introduce new points of compensation. Externally, a genre is distinguished from other genres, in particular from what I call "adjacent" genres, when one feature shared by its members "negates" a feature shared by the members of another. Here, a feature of a genre will develop new lines of refinement. If genres form a system (which is part of the faith that for me keeps alive an interest in the concept), then in principle it would seem possible to be able to move by negation from one genre through adjacent genres, until all the genres of film are derived. Hitchcock's corpus provides convenient examples: his *North by Northwest* shares an indefinitely long list of features with remarriage comedies, which implies, according to my work on the subject, that it is about the legitimizing of marriage. In this film, as in other adventures, by Hitchcock and by others, legitimacy is conferred by a pair's survival together of a nation-saving adventure.[6] But that film can further be understood as negating the feature of the remarriage genre according to which the woman has to undergo something like death and revival. When this happens in Hitchcock, as in *Vertigo*, the Hitchcock film immediately preceding *North by Northwest*, it causes catastrophe. In *North by Northwest* it is the man who undergoes death and revival (and for a reason, I claim, having to do with the structure of the remarriage form). A dozen years earlier, in *Notorious*, Hitchcock compensates for the feature of the woman's death and revival (hence, maintaining the happiness of a remarriage ending) by emphasizing that her death and revival are not the condition of the man's loving her, but the effect of his failure to acknowledge her (as happens, seminally, according to my discussion of the genre, in *The Winter's Tale*).

The operations of compensation and negation are meant to specify the idea of a genre in *Pursuits of Happiness*, in contrast to what I take to be the structuralist idea of a genre as a form characterized by features, as an object is characterized by its properties, an idea that seems to me to underlay, for example, Todorov's work on the fantastic tale.

> An alternative idea . . . is that the members of a genre share the inheritance of certain conditions, procedures and subjects and goals of composition, and that in primary art each member of such a genre represents a study of these conditions, something I think of as bearing the responsibility of the inheritance. There is, on this picture, nothing one is tempted to call *the* features of a genre which all its members have in common (p. 28).

Such operations as compensation and negation are not invoked either in genre-as-cycle or in serial-episode procedure. So I am saying that they are made by serialization as opposed to the generation in genre-as-medium. But in neither sense of genre are the members of a genre episodes of a continuing story or situation or setting. It is not the same narrative matter for Frankenstein to get a bride as for Rhoda (in a popular television series of a few years ago bearing her name) to get a husband. The former is a drama on its own; the latter serves a history, a before and after.

In speaking of a procedure of serialization, I wish to capture what seems to me right in the intuition of what are called narrative "formulas." When theorists of structural or formal matters speak of "formulas" of composition, they are thinking, I believe, of genre-as-cycle or of serial-episode construction, in which each instance is a perfect exemplification of the format, as each solution of an equation, or each step in a mathematical series, is a perfect instance of the formula that "generates" it. The instances do not compete with one another for depth of participation, nor comment upon one another for mutual revelation; and whether an instance "belongs" to the formula is as settled by the formula as is the identity of the instance. (Such remarks are really recipes—most untested—for what a formula would look like; hence, for what would count as "generation" in this context. I am taking it that no item of plot need be common to all the episodes of, say, "Rhoda" so that the formula that does the generating is sufficiently specified by designating the continuing characters and their relations with one another [characters and relations whose recurrent traits are themselves specifiable in definite ways]. This is the situation in the situation comedy. A certain description of the situation would constitute the formula of the comedy. Then the substitution of the unknown new element to initiate the generation, the element of difference, can be any event that alters the situation comically—Rhoda develops a rash; her sister is being followed by the office lothario; her mother's first boyfriend has just showed up; and so on. A minimum amount of talent is all it takes to write out the results of the generation competently—which of course does not necessarily mean salably; a much higher order is required to invent the characters and relations, and cast them, in such a way as to allow new generations readily and consistently to be funny.) Whereas in genre-as-medium none of this is so. In what I call the genre of remarriage comedy, the presence or absence of even the title feature of the genre does not insure that an instance does or does not belong to the genre. Belonging

has to be won, earned, as by an argument of the members with one another; as adjacency of genre must be proved, something irrelevant to the existence of multiple series, which, further, raise no issue of the definition and refinement a genre undergoes. ("Belonging has to be won, as by an argument. . . ." Here is an allegory of the relation of the principal pair in such comedies. In their adventures of conversation, the pair are forever taking each other by surprise, forever interesting each other anew. To dream up these surprises and interests demands an exercise of talent that differs not only, or primarily, in its degree of energy from the energies I imagine in connection with developing a series, but differs in its order of deployment: here, the initiating idea is next to nothing compared with the details of the working out, which is what one would expect where the rule of format is, so to speak, overthrown. Here, what you might call the formula, or what in *Pursuits of Happiness* I call the myth, is itself under investigation, or generation, by the instances.)

What difference does any of this make? I expect no simple or direct answer to the question of the difference between generation and serialization. Perhaps they name incompatible ways of looking at human activities generally, or texts. It might be thought, for example, that a series and its formulas specify the construction of the popular arts, whereas genre-as-medium and its arguments specify the construction of the higher arts. John G. Cawelti's *Adventure, Mystery, and Romance: Formula Stories as Art and Popular Culture*[7] perhaps suggests this. Charles Rosen's *The Classical Style*[8] states a related distinction within high art, between the great and the mediocre, or between the original and the academic. Vladimir Propp's classical analysis of the fairy tale virtually declares that you would not expect a sophisticated work of art to obey formulas in that way.[9] But this merely transfers the question: What is "that way"?

One wants to answer by saying something like, "Mechanically or automatically (or formulaically?)." But maybe this is specific to fairy tales, not to all forms you might call popular. Are black-figure and red-figure vase paintings less formulaic? And are they less than high art? American quilts of the nineteenth century are surely not less formulaic, yet the effect of certain of them is breathtaking, not unlike the directness of certain nonobjective paintings. Like those paintings (I think of certain works of Rothko, Louis, Noland, Olitski, Stella), these examples exist essentially as items of a series. It would follow that the concept of existence in a series, of being composed according to a serial-episode principle, does not distinguish popular from high arts, only if, for instance, one accepts such painting as high art, something not everyone does. And it would follow only if the concept of a series in painting (or quilts) captures the same thought as the concept of a serial in film and a series in television. So far as the thought is one of establishing a formulaic relation between instances, the relation between paintings in a series certainly seems at least as strong (as, so to speak, mechanical) as the relation of episodes to one another. In fact, the relation between the paintings seems *too* strong to yield works of art: here, the instances seem purely generated, or determined, by a format with finite features, each of which can be specified and varied to yield new items. (I think here of Stella's Z-forms, or Noland's Chevrons or Ribbons, or Louis's Unfurleds.) The relation between members is exhaustively constituted, one may say, by their mutual differences, as if to illustrate a linguist's vision,

or that of the more advanced of today's textualists, according to which language, and meaning, and hence whatever replaces or precedes art, is constituted not by signs (inherently) possessing or containing meaning, but by the weave of the relation of difference among them (say their synthesis of distinctive features). But at the same time, the idea of the series can be taken to dispute the linguistic or textualist appeal to difference, since this appeal generally accompanies, even grounds, a claim that the sensuous properties of the signs themselves are arbitrary. What painting in series argues is rather the absolute *non*arbitrariness of format, because the artistic discovery is precisely that *this* synthesis of features generates instances, each of which maintains itself as a proposal of beauty. The achievement may be felt as something like an empirical discovery of the a priori—not unlike a certain aspiration of philosophy. (The implications of the fact of series for modern painting's disputing of received ideas of craft and style and medium, and its proposal of surprising consequences for thinking about the relation of painting and photography, is the subject of a pivotal chapter, "Excursus: Some Modern Painting," in *The World Viewed.)*

Another home of the idea of the formulaic is jazz, whose improvisations over most of its history are explicitly made possible by shared formulas, say of riff and progression. But the role of the formulaic in improvisation is familiar in other arenas of performance—in other regions of music (say, in improvising cadenzas), in other recitations (say, the singing of epics), and in other theater (say, Commedia dell'Arte). When people say they miss television as it was when it was produced live, what they may be missing is the sense of the improvisatory. And it may be that the diminished role of improvisation on television is an instance of a familiar process in certain phases of the history of performance, during which the scope of improvisation is progressively diminished in favor, let us say, of the literary; in which, for example, it is no longer open to the performer to fill in the continuo part or to work out his or her own cadenza, for these are instead written out, fixed. Yet room remains for the improvisatory in television's formats, which I will specify after saying something about what those formats are, or are of. I note here that the idea of improvisation has internal, and opposite, associations with the idea of serialization. In movie serials and in soap operas, the sense of suspense turns on the necessity for improvisation, of manner as well as of plot—humanity as expressed by the power and the readiness to improvise, as much as by the power and the readiness to endure. The issue is how the hero and heroine can survive *this*, this unprecedented precipice; how the authors can get themselves out. The issue has its comic equivalents, emotional and intellectual. It may be this connection of serialization with improvisation that links serialization with the idea or the fact of the popular. Contrariwise, serialization in music and in painting are as if made to reduce improvisation to a minimum, as if to prove that necessities can be found that are as beautiful in their consequences as contingencies can prove to be.

The point of going into the distinction of two modes of composition was to get at television's way of revealing its medium; it represents an effort to get at something one can see as the aesthetic interest of television. That there is such an interest invited by it, related to, but different from, an interest in what we

call its economy, its sociology, and its psychology, and that this interest is still insufficiently understood—which contributes to an insufficiently developed critical tradition concerning television—is the way I am taking the issue of this issue of *Daedalus*. It is the point from which any contribution I may make to it is apt to proceed. If it proves sensible to locate television's aesthetic interest in a serial-episode mode of composition, as contrasted with a genre-member mode, then an investigation of the fact of television ought to contribute to understanding why there should be two principles of aesthetic composition.

What I have said they are principles of is the revelation (I habitually call this the acknowledgment) of an artistic medium. I specify this revelation in *The World Viewed*, by way of articulating what I call there "the material basis" of film. While I propose to continue here to be guided by such an idea, I do not mean just to assume that this idea makes good sense. I claim at most merely that what I am saying here makes sense *if* the procedures of *The World Viewed* make sense. This is far from certain, but there is more evidence of their working out there than anything I can provide here.

About halfway through *The World Viewed*, I give a provisional, summary characterization of the material basis of movies, apart from which there would be nothing to call a movie, just as without color on a delimited two-dimensional support there would be nothing to call a painting; I call the basis *a succession of automatic world projections.*[10] To capture my intuition of the comparable material basis of the (aesthetic) medium of television, I begin by recurring to the one remark about television that crops up in *The World Viewed*. The moment is one at which I am at pains to distinguish the fact of movies in relation to the fact of theater, on the blatant ground that in a theater the actors appear in person and in a film they do not. I quote a response André Bazin gives to this blatant ground,[11] one in which he downplays the difference in question, denying that "the screen is incapable of putting us 'in the presence of' the actor": Bazin wishes to say that it relays the actors presence to us as by mirrors. My response is to note that Bazin's idea here really fits the fact of live television, in which what we are presented with is happening simultaneously with its presentation. This remains reasonably blatant, anyway unsurprising. What surprised me was to find myself going on to object: "But in live television what is present to us while it is happening is not the world, but an event standing out from the world. Its point is not to reveal, but to cover (as with a gun), to keep something on view" (p. 26).

Taking this tip, I will characterize the material basis of television as *a current of simultaneous event reception*. This is how I am conceiving of the aesthetic fact of television that I propose to begin portraying. Why the ideas of *a current* and of *simultaneity* fit here in place of the ideas of *succession* and of *the automatic*, and why that of *event* than of *world*, and why *reception* than *projection*, are not matters decidable in advance of the investigation of each of these concepts. The mode of perception that I claim is called upon by film's material basis is what I call viewing. The mode of perception I wish to think about in connection with television's material basis is that of *monitoring*. The cause for this choice, initially, seems to be that, in characterizing television's material basis, I have not included transmission as essential to it; this would be because I am not regarding broadcasting as essential to the work of television. In that case, the

mysterious sets, or visual fields, in our houses, for our private lives, are to be seen not as receivers, but as monitors. My claim about the aesthetic medium of television can now be put this way: its successful formats are to be understood as revelations (acknowledgments) of the conditions of monitoring, and by means of a serial-episode procedure of composition, which is to say, by means of an aesthetic procedure in which the basis of a medium is acknowledged primarily by the format rather than primarily by its instantiations.

What are the formats, or serializations, of television? I mean to be referring to things perfectly, grossly obvious: sitcoms, game shows, sports, cultural coverage (concerts, opera, ballet, etc.), talk shows, speeches and lectures, news, weather reports, movies, specials, and so on.

A notable feature of this list is the amount of talk that runs across the forms. This is an important reason, no doubt, for the frequent description of television as providing "company." But what does this talk signify, how does it in particular signify that one is not alone, or anyway, that being alone is not unbearable? Partly, of course, this is a function of the simultaneity of the medium—or of the fact that at any time it might be live and that there is no sensuous distinction between the live and the repeat, or the replay: the others are *there*, if not shut in this room, still caught at this time. One is receiving or monitoring them, like callers; and receiving or monitoring, unlike screening and projection, does not come between their presence to the camera and their presentness to us.

I recognize that even in the present sketch of a way to approach matters, this appeal to the idea of "no sensuous distinction" between the live and the repeat, or the replay or the delayed, and the connection of this distinction with a difference in modes of presence and presentness, is going too fast over consequential issues. It doesn't even include the fact that television can work in film as well as in tape. William Rothman has suggested to me that since television can equally adopt a movie mode or a video mode, we might recognize one dimension of television's "company" in the understanding of the act of switching from one mode to another as the thing that is always live, that is, effected simultaneously with our watching. This points to the feature of the current (suggesting the contemporary as well as indicating the continuous) in my articulation of this aesthetic medium's physical basis. It is internal to television formats to be made so as to participate in this continuity, which means that they are formed to admit discontinuities both within themselves and between one and another, and between these and commercials, station breaks, news breaks, emergency signal tests, color charts, program announcements, and so on, which means formed to allow these breaks, hence these recurrences, to be legible. So that switching (and I mean here not primarily switching within a narrative but switching from, say, a narrative to one or another breaks, for a station or for a sponsor, and back again) is as indicative of life as—in ways to be specified—monitoring is.

(I think in this context of the as yet undefined aesthetic position of commercials. Foreigners to commercial television often find them merely amusing or annoying interruptions [or of course, in addition, marks of a corrupt civilization]; native explainers will sometimes affect to find them more interesting than the so-called programs they interrupt. Surely, ordinary people,

anyway people without either of these axes to grind, can feel either way on occasion. Nor do I doubt, in all soberness, that *some* commercials just are more interesting than *some* programs. What the effort, or claim, to favor commercials over programs suggests to me is that the aesthetic position of commercials, what you might call their possibility—what makes them aesthetically possible rather than merely intolerable—is not their inherent aesthetic interest [one would not sit still, with mild interest, for periodic minute-length transmissions of, say, a passage of Garbo's face or of a Chaplin routine: these glimpses of the masterful would be *pointless*], but the fact that they are readable, not as interruptions, but as *interludes*. Of course they can be handled all but intolerably, like late-night used car ads, or offers of recordings "not sold in any store." But even in these cases, the point of tolerability is the requirement of live switching—life, moreover, that is acknowledged by the habitual invitation at these peculiar late hours to "come on down" or to order by writing or by "calling now." Where there's life, there's hope.)

The fact of television's company is expressed not simply by the amount of talk, but by the massive repetitiveness of its formats for talk. Here I am thinking not merely of the shows explicitly *of* talk, with their repetitious sets and hosts and guests. Broadcasts of sports events are embedded in talk (as sports events are), and I can see the point even of game shows as providing occasions or covers for talk. Of course these shows are reasonably exciting, visually and aurally, with their obligatory jumping and screaming; and even, some of them, mildly educational. But is this excitement and education sufficient to account for the willingness to tune them in endlessly, for the pleasure taken endlessly in them? Nor am I satisfied to cite the reputed attractions, or fantasies, of striking it rich—anymore than, in thinking about the attractions of Hollywood thirties comedies, was I satisfied to account for their popularity by the widespread idea that they were fairy tales for the depression. I am struck by the plain fact that on each of the game shows I have watched, new sets of contestants are introduced to us. What strikes me is not that we are interested in identifying with these ordinary people, but simply that we are introduced to them. The hardest part of conversation, or the scariest part, that of improvising the conventional phrases of meeting someone and *starting* to talk, is all there is time for on these formats; and it is repeated endlessly, and without the scary anticipation of consequences in presenting the self that meetings in reality exact. The one who can get us perennially acquainted, who faces the initiation time and again, who has the power to create the familiar out of strangeness—the host of the show—is heavily rewarded for his abilities; not, indeed, by becoming a star, but by becoming a personality, even a celebrity, famous for nothing but being visible and surviving new encounters.

The appearance just now, or reappearance, of the idea of improvisation indicates the principal room I said was left for the improvisatory in television's persistent formats, its dimension of talk. I would not wish exactly to say that improvisation is localized there, since the dimension of talk is itself all but universally present; but each format for talk will have its own requirements or opportunities for improvisation. The most elaborate of these are, naturally, presented by talk shows themselves, with their monologues, and hence the interruptions and accidents that expert monologues invite, and with their more

or less extended interviews. Here, the fact that nothing of consequence is said matters little compared with the fact that something is spoken, that the momentarily famous and the permanently successful are seen to have to find words for their lives, even as you and I. The gift of the host is to know how, and how far, to put the guests recurrently at ease and on the spot, and to make dramas of overcoming the one with the other, and both with his or her capacity at any time to top what has been said. This is not the same as turning every event into a comic routine, as Jonathan Winters and Robin Williams have the talent and imagination to do. They are too anarchic to entertain guests, or too relentlessly absorbed by their inventions, as if inhabited by them, to invite and prepare for conversation. Johnny Carson is so good at taking conversation near, but not over, the abyss of embarrassment, he has made so good an alliance, not to say conspiracy, with the camera, that he can instruct his audiences' responses with a glance in our direction (i.e., in the direction of the camera)—a power the comedian shares with the lion tamer. Again, it is rather beside the point that the so-called color commentaries for sports events are not particularly colorful, since the point of the role is rather the unpreparedness of response itself. So hungry are we for the unrehearsed, the unscripted, that the persons at news desks feel obliged to please us by exchanging pleasantries with each other (sometimes abbreviated to one of them pleasantly speaking the other's name) as transitions between stories. This provides a primitive version of the complex emotion in having an actor step outside his or her character as part of her or his performance—as, for example, in Bergman's *The Story of Anna*, or Godard's *Two or Three Things I Know About Her*. Since the practice of exchanging pleasantries reveals that the delivery of news is a form of acting (it may, I suppose, have been meant to conceal the fact)—hence, that for all television can bring out, the news itself is as likely as not to be fictional, if only because theatricalized—there must be something else television brings out that is as important to us as the distinction between fact and fiction, some matter of life and death. This would be its demonstration that, whether fact or fiction, our news is still something that can humanly be responded to, in particular, responded to by the human power of improvisation. But what news may be so terrible that we will accept such mediocre evidence of this power as reassuring? I will at the end give an answer to this question.

A more immediate question is this: If I am right in taking improvisation to be as apt a sign of human life as we have to go on, and a sign that survives the change from live to taped production, why is it that people who miss the live on television do not recognize where the quality of the live is preserved? It may be that they miss the life primarily of television's old dramatic productions. But it is not television's obligation to provide its audience with the experience of live theater—beyond going out into the world to bring us worthwhile actual performances (live or on tape). Why is the live not seen where it can still be found, and first of all in the improvisations of talk, of exchange? Is this region too tawdry for those who have pictures of something higher? I do not deny a certain paradoxicality in finding life in what is reputedly the dullest, deadest feature of television, namely the omnipresent "talking head." Then the question for us should be: Where did this feature get its deadly reputation?

The remaining category of the material basis of television, after current and simultaneity and reception, the category of the event, is equally to the point here, but to bring out its significance, it will help to look first at the formats that are not made primarily for talk—for example, sports and cultural coverage. These make up the bulk of the television fare ingested by many of my acquaintances (and, except for movies, by me). The characteristic feature of these programs is that they are presented as events, that is to say, as something unique, as occasions, something out of the ordinary. But if the event is something the television screen likes to monitor, so, it appears, is the opposite, the *uneventful*, the repeated, the repetitive, the utterly familiar. The familiar repetitions of the shows of talk—centrally including here situation comedies—are accordingly company because of their embodiment of the uneventful, the ordinary.

To find comfort or company in the endlessly uneventful has its purest realization, and emblem, in the literal use of television sets as monitors against the suspicious, for example, against unwanted entry. The bank of monitors at which a door guard glances from time to time—one fixed, say, on each of the empty corridors leading from the otherwise unattended points of entry to the building—emblematizes the mode of perception I am taking as the aesthetic access to television.

The multiplicity of monitors, each linked to a more or less fixed camera, encodes the denial of succession as integral to the basis of the medium. In covering a sports event, a network's cameras are, similarly, placed ahead of time. That their views are transmitted to us one at a time for home consumption is merely an accident of economy; in principle, we could all watch a replica of the bank of monitors the producer sees. In that case, we might speak of television's material basis by putting simultaneity into the plural. When there is a switch of the camera whose image is fed into our sole receiver, we might think of this not as a switch of comment from one camera or angle to another camera or angle, but as a switch of attention from one monitor to another monitor. Succession is replaced by switching, which means that the move from one image to another is motivated not, as on film, by requirements of meaning, but by requirements of opportunity and anticipation—as if the meaning is dictated by the event itself. As in monitoring the heart, or the rapid eye movements during periods of dreaming—say, monitoring signs of life—most of what appears is a graph of the normal, or the establishment of some reference or base line, a line, so to speak, of the uneventful, from which events stand out with perfectly anticipatable significance. If classical narrative can be pictured as the progress from the establishing of one stable situation, through an event of difference, to the reestablishing of a stable situation related to the original one, serial procedure can be thought of as the establishing of a stable condition punctuated by repeated crises or events that are not developments of the situation requiring a single resolution, but intrusions or emergencies—of humor, or adventure, or talent, or misery—each of which runs a natural course and thereupon rejoins the realm of the uneventful; which is perhaps to say, serial procedure is undialectical.

As I do not wish to claim that generation and serialization exhaust the field of narration, so I do not wish to claim that they are exclusive. So in saying that

television organizes its formats in ways that explore the experience and the concept of the event, and hence of the experience and the concept of the uneventful, I am not saying that film lacks an analogous exploration, only that each medium will work out its stabilities in its own way. The ways will be as close as monitoring is to viewing, and to define such a closeness, and distance, is the sort of task my remarks here are meant to interest us in doing. For example, film and video may occupy themselves with nature, but if the distinction I have pointed to between viewing and monitoring is a valid one, then our experience of nature, its role in this stretch of our lives, should split itself over the different presentations. In *The World Viewed* I suggest a sense in which

> the film frame generally . . . has the opposite significance of the frame in painting. Following Bazin's suggestion that the screen works as much by what it excludes as by what it includes, that it functions less to frame than to mask (which led me to speak of a photograph as of a segment of the world as a whole), I interpreted the frame of a film as forming its content not the way borders or outlines form, but rather the way looms and molds form (p. 200).

In such a light, I was led to say, "we are told that people seeing the first moving pictures were amazed to see the motion, as if by the novelty. But what movies did at first they can do at last: spare our attention wholly for *that* thing *now*, in the frame of nature, the world moving in the branch. . . . It is not novelty that has worn off, but our interest in our experience" (ibid.). Now, sparing our attention and expending it wholly is not a characterization of monitoring, which is rather preparing our attention to be called upon by certain eventualities. The world is not in the monitored branch, whose movement is now either an event (if, say, you are watching for a sign of wind) or a mark of the uneventful (a sign that the change has not yet come). The intimacy of such a difference prompts me to emphasize that by monitoring and viewing, I mean to be calling attention to aspects of human perception generally, so that film and video will not be expected to capture one of these aspects to the exclusion of the other, but rather to stress one at the expense of the other—as each may be stressing different aspects of art; video of its relation to communication, film of its relation to seduction.

My use of the concept of the uneventful is produced by my understanding of the *Annales* historians' interest in getting beyond the events and the dramas of history to the permanencies, or anyway to the longer spans, of common life.[12] This is worth making explicit as a way of emphasizing that the concepts in which I have been speaking of the phenomena of television and movies are as much in need of investigation as are the phenomena themselves. Everything seems to me so doubtful, or intangible, in this area. I would like to have useful words in which to consider why the opera and the ballet I have seen on television in recent years have seemed to me so good, whereas films I recall of opera and of ballet have seemed to me boring. Is it that television can respect the theatricality or the foreign conventionality of those media without trying, as film greedily would, to reinterpret them? And is this well thought of as television's ability to respect the independence of the theatrical event? I did like Bergman's *Magic Flute*, but I also felt that the piece looked like a television production. The question is this easy to beg. And does the idea of respecting the

event go into the reason puppets and muppets are at home on television in a way they are not in movies?

Here an answer suggests itself to a question my assumption of the primacy of format might at any time raise: Isn't the television "special" an exception to the rule of this primacy, since, by definition, a special occurs uniquely? The answer is not merely that uniqueness proposes a television format (like farewells, awards, roasts) that any number of stars and celebrities can occupy, and occupy again and again, so long as not regularly, that is, serially. The answer has also to specify what the format is that can occur outside a series. Take the fact that the entertainment special, designed to showcase a star or celebrity, familiarly takes the form of a variety show. The fittingness of the variety show format for television I can now attribute to the fact that a variety show just is a *sequence of events*, where events are interpreted as autonomous acts or routines constituted by incidents of excitement that are understandable as essentially repeatable, in another show and in another town. The concept of event here captures the sense of the variety and the discreteness—that is, the integrity—of the items of such shows, as it does in naming the items of track and field meets, and of bouts on a fight card.

The broadcasts of cultural events may also seem another set of exceptions to the rule of format, other instances of unique occurrences. But what is unique here, and what is above all memorable, is the performance itself, say of Balanchine's ballet on Stravinsky's *Agon*, the performance at which the pair of dancers of the difficult canon passage got off to a false start and had to begin again. Beyond the performance, the television presentation itself may be of interest, perhaps because of its novel camera installations, which make for a greater fidelity to the details of the performance, or because it was the first to use subtitles in a particular way. But these features of the presentation form an essentially repeatable format, usable and refinable in future broadcasts of ballet performances. If, however, the television presentation becomes so integral to the performance, the performance itself having been designed to incorporate the possibilities of presentation into its own integrity, that the ideas of "repeating" the format or of refining such things as camera "installations" no longer make clear sense, then the television format would have been led to the condition of genre-as-medium. I have seen too little in the way of such works to have any useful response to them. They must in any case be part of the realm of experimental video art, which, as said, I am here leaving out of account.

I note that the variety format also fit the requirements of radio in its network days. It is, I think, commonly said that in its beginning, television "took over" many programs, or ideas for programs, from radio. Empirically or legally, no one could deny this, but ontologically, so to speak, or aesthetically, it should be wondered why radio was so ready a source for television. The better thought may be that television took its formats from many of the same places radio had taken them, for example, from vaudeville, and that the reason they could share these sources is that both are forms of broadcasting and monitoring, that is, currents of simultaneous event reception. Since one of these currents is made for the ear and the other also for the eye, it may be wondered what ratio of these senses is called upon by various events. Why, for example, is the weather given its own little dramatic slot on news programs, whereas the performance of the

stock market is simply announced? Does this have to do with the weather's providing more visual interest than the market, or with its natural involvement in drama, or with its perennial role as a topic of conversation between strangers, or with its being an allegory of our gathering frame of mind, or simply with the fact of interest in predicting it (as if retaining some control over the future)? If the interest in predicting it were exhausted by its practical bearing on our plans for the days ahead, announcing it would serve as well as dramatizing it or making a little lecture about it. Prediction is of interest with respect to the stock market only, on the whole, to those who have a specialized connection with it, those, for example, who play it, for whom not just a day's outcome, but a day's events of fluctuation or stability, matter.

Of more fateful interest concerning the format of news is its invitation of the television item I have perhaps most notably omitted in my more or less informal itemizing of formats, namely, that of the event shaped expressly for the possibilities of television coverage itself, something that came upon most viewers' consciousnesses most memorably with the civil rights and antiwar demonstrations of the sixties, and subsequently with the staging of terrorist actions. In citing the theatricality of scripted news recitation, and in emphasizing television's tropism toward the event, I am indicating what the possibilities of the medium are that shaped events seek to attract; but the fact of television no more explains the occurrence of such events than it explains the effects of weather on our consciousness. For what would have to be explained, as my reference to the *Annales* historians is intended to register, is exactly our continued attraction by events, our will to understand our lives, or to take interest in them, from their dramas rather than from their stabilities, from the incident and the accident rather than from the resident, from their themes rather than from their structures—to theatricalize ourselves. But this is something that Thoreau, for one, held against the interest in reading newspapers a century and a half ago, an interest he described as amounting virtually to an addiction.

The *Annales* historians' idea of the long time span oddly applies to the altogether extraordinary spans of narrative time commanded by serialization. The ultimate span is that commanded by successful soap operas, in which the following of its yarns can go on off and on for years. I said a while ago that serial procedure is undialectical. Here I might add that the span of soap operas can allow them to escape history, or rather to require modification of the concept of history, of history as drama, history as related to the yarns of traditional novels. The lapse of fictional time in a soap world can be immeasurably shorter (or slower) than that of the span of time over which one may watch them. (Forty or so years ago my mother frequently tuned the radio to a fifteen-minute serial called "Helen Trent," as she and I were getting ready to go off, respectively, to work and to school. The idea of the serial was announced each morning by asking whether a woman can find romance after thirty-five, or maybe it was forty. I can imagine that this serial still persists. But if so, Helen Trent must still be something like thirty-five or forty years old.) However dire their events, they are of the interminable everyday, passages and abysses of the routine, which may help explain the ease with which members of their audience take their characters (so it seems) as "real." Without attempting to account for the

specialized features of the stories and audiences that make soap operas possible, I call attention to the fact that the most prestigious, even sensational efforts originating on television in recent years have been serials—either the snobby sort the BBC has patented ("Upstairs/Downstairs," "The Forsythe Saga," "Tinker Tailor," "Brideshead Revisited"), or the antisnobby American sort ("Roots," "Dallas"). Here I am merely assuming, without argument, that eleven weekly hour-length episodes of, say, "Brideshead Revisited" command an order of time incommensurate with film time. It is equivalent in its effect neither to something on film that would last eleven hours, nor to something that would last eleven weeks (whatever such things would be), nor, I think, to eleven films of an hour each. Not only does an hour signify something in television time that has no bearing on film time, but it is internal to the establishment of its formats that television obeys the rhythm, perhaps even celebrates the articulations, the recurrences, of the order of the week, as does Genesis. The way in which it celebrates this, by further dividing and repeating the day in terms of minutes and seconds, would be a function of television's establishment in industrialized societies, with their regimentation of time.

It may be thought that one of the formats I listed earlier itself proves that one should make much less of the differences between film and video than I am inclined to make, or rather proves the emptiness of the differences: I mean the perfectly common format of running movies on television. Of course, no one would claim that the experience of a movie is just the same run on television as projected on a screen, and everyone will have some informal theory or other about what the difference consists in—that the television image is smaller, that the room is not otherwise dark, that there is no proper audience, hence that the image is inherently less gripping, and so on. But how much difference do such differences make? It seems to me that subtleties here can be bypassed or postponed, because a difference, sufficient to give us to think, between the medium of film and that of video is that, in running a film on television, the television set is (interpretable as) a moviola; though unlike a moviola, a monitor may be thought of as a device for checking a film without projecting it. A way to begin characterizing the difference, accordingly, is that the experience of a film on television is as of something over whose running you have in principle a *control;* you are not *subjected* to it, as you are by film itself or television itself.

But to go further with this line of difference would require a theory of the moviola, or editing viewer; I mean a theory of the relation between the experience of this way of screening a film and that of its full or public screening. The moviola may be thought of as providing a reproduction of the original, or as a reduction of it. In the latter case, we need to think, for example, that a piano reduction of a symphonic score is not merely a reduction of physical scale; perhaps it should be thought of as an extreme case of reorchestration. Equally, a piece for piano can be transcribed for orchestra, and so on. Are there analogous intermediate and reciprocal operations lending comprehensibility, or perspicuousness, to the relation between small and large screens? (Naturally, it may seem that the relation between small and large screens, being merely mechanical, should be clearer than the relation between transcriptions and their originals. My point is that as a matter of fact, of the fact of experience, this is not so.) In the former case, that of reproduction, we need a theory of the

reproduction, which can cover everything from a black-and-white half-page photograph in an art book of a fresco a hundred times its size, to a duplicate cast of a statue.

It is a contrary of the long time span that applies to individual episodes, whose events are, however dramatic, transient. So the aesthetics of serial-episode construction comes to a suggestion that what is under construction is an argument between time as repetition and time as transience. Without considering that this is a way of characterizing the thinking of Nietzsche's *Zarathustra*, and following that, of Heidegger's *What Is Called Thinking?* I surmise that something had better be said, in conclusion, about what these speculations seem to add up to.

I go back to the fear or repulsion or anxiety that I have found television to inspire in what I called educated circles, and I ask whether the considerations we have been assembling provide a realistic level of explanation for this fact of television. To indicate the depth of the level required, I mention a book recommended to me by several sources as I was casting about for touchstones in starting notes for my present remarks, *Four Arguments for the Elimination of Television* by Jerry Mander.[13] The book wishes to convince its readers that television, like "tobacco, saccharin, some food dyes, certain uses of polychlorinated biphenyls, aerosols, fluoroscopes and X rays to name a few" may cause cancer and for that reason alone ought to be banned. And there are plenty of other reasons: it is addictive, and "qualifies more as an instrument of brainwashing, sleep induction and/or hypnosis than anything that stimulates conscious learning processes"; it is a form of sense deprivation, causing disorientation and confusion; it suppresses and replaces creative human imagery; it is an instrument of transmutation, turning people into their TV images; it contributes to hyperactivity; "it accelerates our alienation from nature and therefore accelerates the destruction of nature." Is this a disturbance merely of style? Perhaps the most astonishing stretch of what I have been able to read of this book is its section in praise of Victor Tausk's description of the "Influencing Machine." Mander is convinced that television *is* the realization of the ultimate influencing machine. But the point of Tausk's extraordinary paper is that to think there are in reality such machines is symptomatic of schizophrenia.[14] I cannot tell whether Mander knows this, and whether, if he does, he is declaring that he is schizophrenic, and if he is, whether he is claiming that television has driven him so, even as it is so driving the rest of us, and perhaps claiming that it is a state in which the truth of our condition has become particularly lucid to him. Without telling these things, I am still prepared to regard this book, the very fact that numbers of reasonable people apparently take it seriously, as symptomatic of the depth of anxiety television can inspire.

The depth of it seems to me also expressed in the various more or less casual hypotheses one hears about, for example, the role of television in determining reactions to the Vietnam War. Some say it helped end this war, others (understandably) that it made the war seem unreal. One of the most haunting images I know from television is the footage of the Vietnamese priest immolating himself in protest against the war. Bergman considers this image in *Persona*, as if considering at once the refuge there is in madness and its silence,

and the refuge there is in television. The maddened, speechless heroine stares at the burning priest both as if she has been given an image of her pain, even a kind of explanation of it, and as if she is the cause of such pain in the world, as of its infection by her.

But the role of television in explanations of catastrophe was in preparation before the war in Vietnam. Consider that the conquering of television began just after World War II, which means, for the purposes of the hypothesis I wish to offer here, after the discovery of concentration camps and of the atomic bomb; of, I take it, the discovery of the literal possibility that human life will destroy itself; that is to say, that it is *willing* to destroy itself. (This, too, had been in sufficient preparation; it was realistically described by Nietzsche. In my taking this as a lesson of the Second World War, the lesson there seems no way for us to learn realistically, I detect the lingering effect, for all its excess, of a once well-known essay of Norman Mailer's, "The White Negro.") And the conquering continued with the decline of our cities and the increasing fear of walking out at night, producing the present world of shut-ins. Not to postpone saying it any longer, my hypothesis is that the fear of television—the fear large or pervasive enough to account for the fear of television—is the fear that what it monitors is the growing uninhabitability of the world, the irreversible pollution of the earth, a fear displaced from the world onto its monitor (as we convert the fear of what we see, and wish to see, into a fear of being seen). The loss of this inhabitability would mean, on Heidegger's view, the loss of our humanity, whether or not we remain alive. Of course children may not have contracted the fear; and the child in us is capable of repressing the fear, ambivalently. My hypothesis is meant to respond to the mind's demand of itself to take up the slack of mismatch between the fact of television and the fact of our indifference to its significance—as though this slack were itself an expression of the fact that a commodity has conquered, an appliance that is a monitor, and yet that what it monitors, apart from events whose existence preceded its own (cultural coverage, sports, movies), are so often settings of the shut-in, a reference line of normality or banality so insistent as to suggest that *what* is shut out, that suspicion whose entry we would at all costs guard against, must be as monstrous as, let me say, the death of the normal, of the familiar as such.

I am not unaware that the charge of psychosis may well now be shifted in my direction. If so, it should have been leveled at me at least a decade ago, when *The World Viewed* appeared, since the concluding paragraph of that book prepares such a hypothesis:

> A world complete without me which is present to me is the world of my immortality. This is an importance of film—and a danger. It takes my life as my haunting of the world, either because I left it unloved or because I left unfinished business. So there is reason for me to want the camera to deny the coherence of the world, its coherence as past: to deny that the world is complete without me. But there is equal reason to want it affirmed that the world is coherent without me. That is essential to what I want of immortality: nature's survival of me. It will mean that the present judgment upon me is not yet the last.

The development I have introduced here lies in the thought that the medium of television makes intuitive the failure of nature's survival of me.

I suppose it is a tall order for the repetitions and transiences of television, the company of its talk and its events, to overcome the anxiety of the intuition the medium embodies. But if I am right, this is the order it more or less already fulfills, proving again the power of familiarity, for good and ill, in human affairs; call it our adaptability. And who knows but that if the monitor picked up on better talk, monitored habitually the talk of people who actually had something to say, and if it probed for intelligible connections and for beauty among its events—who knows but that it would alleviate our paralysis, our pride in adaptation, our addiction to a solemn destiny, sufficiently to help us allow ourselves to do something intelligent about its cause.

REFERENCES

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[1]In *The Immediate Experience* (New York: Anchor Paperback, 1964).

[2]Enlarged edition, Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 1979.

[3]Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 1981.

[4]New York, Columbia University Press, 1965.

[5]Translated by Richard Howard (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1975).

[6]I spell this out in "North by Northwest," *Critical Inquiry*, Summer 1981.

[7]Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1976.

[8]New York, Viking, 1971.

[9]*Morphologie du conte*, translated by Marguerite Derrida (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1970).

[10]P. 72; this is taken further and modified to characterize cartoons in "More of The World Viewed," pp. 167ff.

[11]*What Is Cinema?* translated by Hugh Gray (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1967), p. 97.

[12]See, for example, the essays collected in Fernand Braudel, *On History*, translated by Sarah Matthews (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980).

[13]New York, Morrow Quill Paperbacks, 1978, pp. 348, 394.

[14]An English translation of Tausk's paper, "On the Origin of the 'Influencing Machine' in Schizophrenia," originally published in 1919, is included in *The Psychoanalytic Reader*, edited by Robert Fliess (New York: International Universities Press, 1948), pp. 31-64.

MICHAEL SCHUDSON

The Politics of Narrative Form: The Emergence of News Conventions in Print and Television

TELEVISION IS A CENTRAL LOCUS OF ACTIVITY in American culture and American politics. It is often cited as a dominant force in changing our political structure—and for the worse, by turning a system of parties into a contest of personalities, shifting a concern with ideas and policies to a preoccupation with images and styles. Further, critics argue that the erosion of congressional government and the growth of the imperial presidency are due in part to television's obsession with the image of a single hero astride the globe. But television has not changed our conception of politics; rather, it crystallizes and expresses a transformation of political narrative that was well established in the print media decades before television appeared.

Speaker Sam Rayburn's decision in the 1950s to keep television cameras out of the House of Representatives was an act of great significance—or so David Halberstam believes—

> making the House less able to compete with the executive branch, and diminishing its importance in the eyes of the public. . . . Characteristically, the only time the Congress of the United States appeared on television in this era was when the President of the United States came to the House to deliver his State of the Union speech. Then the congressmen could be seen dutifully applauding, their roles in effect written in by the President's speech writers.[1]

But this credits television with having far more influence on the political system than it actually had. Press treatment of the State of the Union message *did* change dramatically, to emphasize the president at the expense of Congress, but this happened seventy-five years ago, in the days of Teddy Roosevelt, William Howard Taft, and Woodrow Wilson. Conventions of covering the presidency established then continue to shape not only the way print journalism covers the president, but how television does it as well.

The evidence I will present in this essay, however, cannot resolve the debate surrounding the influence of television—the debate between those awed by its power and those inclined to discount it. Instead, it changes the question at issue. While it is true that a new technology can condition politics and society, a new technology appears and comes into use only in certain political and social circumstances. The way the technology is used has a relation to, but is not fully determined by, the technology itself. In light of this, it is somewhat off the mark

to ask about the impact of television on the presidency, since there is no way that question can conceivably be answered. We must ask, rather, What is the impact of *this* television, *our* television? To answer that requires more than understanding the new hardware, more even than understanding the social role of the TV set in America's living rooms, dens, and bedrooms. It requires an examination of the national networks as business enterprises; the uneasy relationship of a visible, regulated industry to government agencies; the traditions of American journalism that have shaped the preconceptions and intentions of network news departments; and the decades-long traditions of relations between the president and the press. Our television has a life of its own that plays a role in presidential politics; it is part of the environment that any new development in American politics will be related to. But the form television takes in covering the presidency has been foreshadowed, if not foreordained, by earlier changes in the relationship between print journalism and the presidency.

In this paper, I will show the changes that have taken place in the way print journalism has treated the presidency since the early days of the Republic, changes that reflect new developments in both politics and journalism. I will suggest that the power of the media lies not only (and not even primarily) in its power to declare things to be true, but in its power to provide the forms in which the declarations appear. News in a newspaper or on television has a relationship to the "real world," not only in content but in form; that is, in the way the world is incorporated into unquestioned and unnoticed conventions of narration, and then transfigured, no longer a subject for discussion but a premise of any conversation at all.

Generally speaking, people do not see news as it happens; rather, they hear or read about it. Parents do not experience their child's day at school directly, but learn of it as it is narrated, turned into a story by the child. Children learn that the accounts of their experiences, like the stories and legends they are told, must have certain formal qualities. A child I know told his older sister the following story: "Once upon a time there was a small boy who went out into the forest. He heard a sound. A lion jumped at him and ate him but he tore out the lion's stomach, killed the lion, and dragged it home. The end." Then he told the story again: "Once upon a time, a small boy went into the forest and a lion tried to eat him, but he killed the lion. The end." Then once more: "Once upon a time, a boy killed a lion in the forest. The end." And at last he said: "Once upon a time. The end."

The child had learned something important about form.[2] Journalists know something similar. They do not offer boys, forests, and lions raw, but cook them into story forms. News is not fictional, but it is conventional. Conventions help make messages readable. They do so in ways that "fit" the social world of readers and writers, for the conventions of one society or time are not those of another. Some of the most familiar news conventions of our day, so obvious they seem timeless, are recent innovations. Like others, these conventions help make culturally consonant messages readable and culturally dissonant messages unsayable. Their function is less to increase or decrease the truth value of the messages they convey than to shape and narrow the range of what kinds of

truths can be told. They reinforce certain assumptions about the political world.

I want to examine in detail the emergence of a few of these conventions:

1. That a summary lead and inverted pyramid structure are superior to a chronological account of an event
2. That a president is the most important actor in any event in which he takes part
3. That a news story should focus on a single event rather than a continuous or repeated happening, or that, if the action is repeated, attention should center on novelty, not on pattern
4. That a news story covering an important speech or document should quote or state its highlights
5. That a news story covering a political event should convey the meaning of the political acts in a time frame larger than that of the acts themselves

All are unquestioned and generally unstated conventions of twentieth century American journalism; none were elements in journalism of the mid-nineteenth century, nor would any have been familiar to Horace Greeley, James Gordon Bennett, or Henry Raymond. Unlike reporters today, the nineteenth century reporter was not obliged to summarize highlights in a lead, to recognize the president as chief actor on the American political stage, to seek novelty, to quote speeches he reported, or to identify the political significance of events he covered. How, then, did the conventions emerge, and why?

A study of reports of the State of the Union message[3] demonstrates that these conventions, among others, incorporate into the structure of the news story vital assumptions about the nature of politics and the role of the press. They make it plain that American journalists regard themselves, not as partisans of political causes, but as expert analysts of the political world. They make it equally clear that, although as journalists they hold to principles of objective reporting, they nevertheless view their role as involving some fundamental translation and interpretation of political acts to a public ill-equipped to sort out for itself the meaning of events. Further, these conventions institutionalize the journalists' view that meaning is to be found, not in the character of established political institutions, but in the political aims of actors within them. The journalist's responsibility, as they see it, is to discover in the conscious plans of political actors the intentions that create political meaning.

The Constitution of the United States provides that the president shall report to Congress "from time to time" regarding the "state of the Union," and every American president, following the custom inaugurated by Washington, has delivered a message on this subject at the beginning of each winter's congressional session. While the event itself—the way in which the annual message is presented—has changed in some significant respects in the past two centuries, it still provides a reasonably good basis for a comparison of news reporting, having remained more or less constant over the years. Changes in the way the message is reported, therefore, cannot be attributed simply to changes

in the event itself, but must be linked to changing precepts in journalism about the nature of politics and what a news story should be.

I

Reports of the State of the Union message have taken three basic forms: the stenographic record of congressional business, from 1790 to about 1850; a chronology and commentary on congressional ritual, from 1850 to 1900; and the report of the message, with an increasing emphasis on its content and its long-range political implications, from 1900 on. Despite journalism's vaunted objectivity, the reporting of the presidential message in each successive period became more interpretative, more divorced from what an ordinary observer could safely assert the message said or that Congress itself heard. This has not made reporting less truthful, but has widened the scope for the journalist's discretion—indicating that, over time, the journalistic function has served rather different intentions.

Early newspaper reports of the message printed it in its entirety, framed as part of congressional proceedings. The report of Washington's 1791 message by the weekly *Boston Gazette*, for instance, appeared on page two under the heading, "Columbia. Congress of the United States. (First Session—Second Congress). House of Representatives. Monday, October 24." The item notes that a joint committee of the Congress waited on the president, who agreed to meet with the Congress the next day in the Senate. Then, in the same column, under the heading, "Tuesday, October 25," there is a one-sentence account of the president's arrival in the Senate Chamber. The reader is then referred to the paper's last page for the full message, and the account moves on to proceedings in the House of Wednesday, October 26. The *Gazette* followed this pattern for all of Washington's messages, although in most years, the speech followed under the first heading. But in no case was there any commentary on the speech.

The most significant change in the message as an actual event was initiated by Thomas Jefferson, who felt that for the president to address Congress in person was too imperial a gesture, and so chose to give his State of the Union message in written form. It remained so until Woodrow Wilson reverted to the Federalist precedent of a personal appearance. Despite Jefferson's change, the message continued to be printed in full, either without any reported context or as part of a briefly sketched list of the day's proceedings in Congress. Any commentary on the message was confined entirely to the editorial column, where from the early 1800s on, the message was discussed at length, and the president's statements praised or castigated from an engaged and partisan stance.

By midcentury, and especially after the Civil War, the news report of the president's message was set in a much fuller discussion of Congress. The frame for the message continued to be provided by the congressional ritual of appointing a committee to wait on the president, announcing its readiness to hear a written communication from him read by a clerk. But two additional elements became standard. The first was the coverage devoted to the "spectacle" of the opening of Congress, which typically provided the beginning of the

news story. As early as 1852 we read in the *New York Times:* "It is a bright and beautiful day, and the galleries of the House are crowded with ladies and gentlemen; all is gaiety." In 1870 the *Times* story began, "A beautiful Indian summer sun, a balmy atmosphere, and crowded galleries, resplendent and brilliant hues of gay toilettes, greeted the return of Congress to its chambers." The press noted, sometimes in great detail, the cordial greetings across party lines as Congressmen reassembled. Reports described the lavish bouquets of flowers on the desks of Senators and Representatives, gifts from loyal supporters.

The second change, which became standard from 1870 on, and which was more notable in the long run, was the attention given to congressional reaction to the president's message—several decades before reporters took it upon themselves actually to *report* what the message said. Where at first only the general response to the message was noted on House and Senate floors, in 1870 the *Times* reported that two or three Democratic Senators "appeared to go to sleep" when the portion dealing with foreign relations was read. In the 1870s, reporters typically confined themselves to observations of Congressmen's behavior on the floor, though they sometimes attempted a general characterization of the congressional response, as in the *Times* in 1874: "It may be said there is little fault found with the President's message as a whole, though some of its views find strong and special opposition." Occasionally, notable Congressmen were singled out. A *Times* reporter observed in 1870 that when the message discussed revenue reform, many people looked at Carl Schurz, "whose consciousness of the fact caused a faint smile to play over his face." In 1878 the *Times* reported that the message's mention of investigating people who disfranchise Southern voters "gave encouragement to the Republicans while the Democrats exhibited unmistakable signs of disapprobation" and caused a "scowl . . . to overspread the faces on the Democratic side."

In the late 1870s and the 1880s, journalists interviewed individual Congressmen. Reporters on the *Chicago Tribune* and *Washington Post*, for example, did interviews at the reading of the message in 1878, as these papers and others began to publish separate news stories on congressional responses to the message. The *Post*'s story in 1886 began: " 'Didn't hear a word of it. Must wait until I see it in print.' That was the general response made by Congressmen to any question asked about the President's message, after it had been read in both houses." This was typical. Rarely did the Congressmen in these accounts regard the interview as an opportunity for publicity; rather, they seemed irritated that they had been asked questions.

Stories of congressional response to the message grew more elaborate in the 1880s and 1890s. Occasionally there were stories of the response of other bodies, particularly editorial comments in foreign newspapers. But by the end of the century, the attention given to the splendor of the opening of Congress, so prominent in the 1860s and 1870s, seemed to wear on the press. The *Washington Post* drily observed in its December 3, 1878, report that the public showed curiosity at the opening of Congress, "as if it were a new thing." The *Chicago Tribune* teased in its headline of December 4, 1894, "Toil of the Solons / Makers of Laws Resume Business at Washington." Evidently bored, the Washington *Evening Star* announced in its 1890 story, "Here We Go Again."

Thus, at the same time that the press took Congress as its beat, and regarded the opinions of individual Congressman more and more seriously, its respect for the ritual and spectacle of office declined, and it began to delight in the lampooning of congressional affairs. The change taking place in the relation of journalists to officials was part of the new view that journalists took of their own purpose. They began to strain at the tradition of reporting normal occurrences and everyday proceedings. No longer the uncritical reporters of congressional ritual surrounding the reading of the message, they became increasingly uneasy about writing of something that happens again and again, year after year. The uneasiness came out in humor or in self-conscious commentary about how everything is the same as ever but people get involved nonetheless. The notion that the journalist should report original events and not record ongoing institutions grew stronger as the journalists of the 1880s and 1890s found themselves torn between two modes of activity, one might even say two forms of consciousness.

By 1900 the news story had been partially transformed, as the strictly chronological account of the reopening of congressional proceedings gave way to a descriptive account of the reopening of Congress, with a summary lead focusing on the spectacle of Congress, and some affectionate, jocular remarks about the reassembly of the group. The president's message remained buried within the story on Congress, though always printed in full on another page. The account, beyond the descriptive overview in the lead, tended to be chronological, but it was not as dry and formal as it had been in the early part of the century.

With the establishment of the summary lead as newspaper convention, it becomes clear that journalists began to move from being stenographers, or recorders, to interpreters. Still, in 1900 there was no mention of the content of the president's message in the news story, nor was the president mentioned by name, but referred to simply as "the president." Although he was the author of the message, attention in newspaper reports continued to focus on Congress. Journalists stayed in the here-and-now, reporting on congressional reactions on the floor, and turning to interviews only to supplement the central work of observing the event itself.

After 1900 all of this changed: the president's message, not congressional response to it, became the subject of the lead paragraph, and the president became the chief actor. The highlights of the address were summarized before noting congressional response to the address, as reporters increasingly took it as their prerogative to assert something about the larger political meaning of the message. Although these changes did not happen in all papers simultaneously, or with utter consistency, the trend is unmistakable.

Take, for example, the 1910 account of William Howard Taft's message. The main *New York Times* news story begins: "In the longest message that has been sent to Congress in many a day President Taft today announced the practical abandonment of the unenacted portion of the great legislative programme with which he began his administration." The message, not Congress, is the subject. The content of the message is cited, and the content, not congressional response to it, emphasized. Indeed, rather than taking the message as a litmus test of congressional opinion, congressional response now

becomes a way to further characterize the content. The *Times* reporter includes his own observation that the message was "obviously aimed at giving reassurance to business," and supports this comment by reporting that Congressmen regarded the message as "eminently conservative." Further, the president is treated as a person, and is mentioned by name in both the lead paragraph and in the headline, something that happened rarely in the body of the story before 1900, and never in the lead.

This form of the news story is still familiar to us: it incorporates what have become the givens of modern politics into the very form of the story. First, it emphasizes the preeminence of the president; he and his views, not Congress and its reactions or its rituals, are the main theme of the news story. Second, it incorporates the assumption that the president is in some sense a representative of the nation, a national trustee, more than merely the leader of a political party. He speaks for himself to the Congress and the nation, not as the leader of a party to that party in the Congress. After 1910 stories about congressional response to the message continued to emphasize partisan differences, yet the message itself was read, not as a party program, but as an indicator of the president's personal program and political career.

If this form of the news story incorporates, in its very structure, assumptions about our political system, it incorporates as well assumptions about the role and intention of our news media. It takes for granted the journalist's right and obligation to mediate and simplify, to crystallize and identify the key political elements in the news event. It takes for granted that the journalist should place the event in a time frame broader than that immediately apparent to the uninitiated. And it is here that the simplest notion of objectivity—that one should write only what another naive observer on the scene would also have been able to write—is abandoned.

News stories of the 1910s and 1920s illustrate these points admirably. That the preeminence of the president is assumed in these stories requires no illustration: the president and his views, as expressed in the message, are the key elements in nearly every news story lead from 1910 on. That the president is viewed in a time frame characterized by personal career, not by party, needs more illustration. There begins to be more attention paid to comparing the message to other messages of the same president and other presidents, a subject that for long had a place in editorial comment, but that only now becomes a regular part of news coverage. The *Times* reports of Taft's message in 1912, "This message ranks with the best in the literature of Executive utterances."[4] The 1918 *Tribune* story begins, "Appearing before congress this afternoon on the eve of his departure for France, President Wilson explained his reason for attending the peace conference and submitted recommendations for legislation on domestic questions which he desires initiated during his absence." Here, the turnaround from nineteenth century reporting is dramatic: congressional activity is taken within the context of the presidential schedule, rather than the presidential message being viewed within the time frame of congressional activity.

The 1928 *Evening Star* lead is also instructive: "President Coolidge, in his annual message submitted to congress today, gave a report of his stewardship and recommendations for the future. No more remarkable picture of American

development and no more virile and optimistic view of the future have been drawn by a President of the United States." Note here not only the editorializing, but the sense of the historic role of the president, connected not to party, but to "stewardship" of the nation, compared not to other contemporaries with whom he may or may not agree, but to other presidents. In a less intrusive lead, the *Chicago Tribune* that year held to this wider focus: "The valedictory message of Calvin Coolidge as the thirtieth president of the United States was read in both houses of Congress today."

By the 1930s, the additional factor of broadcasting made it clear that the president speaks not only to Congress, but to the American people and the world as well—something the press promptly noted. In 1934 the tradition of appointing a congressional committee to wait on the president was done away with and replaced by a telephone call to the president. Radio and sound-picture recording were present and noted in the press. (Attention to the spectacle of the opening of Congress continued, but more of it focused on the president, the *Evening Star* noting the presidential motorcycle escort down Pennsylvania Avenue, the *Washington Post* observing Mrs. Roosevelt's presence in the gallery.) On January 4, 1936, Turner Catledge mentioned broadcasting in his lead:

> In his opening message to the second session of the 74th Congress, delivered personally at an unprecedented joint session in the House chamber tonight, and broadcast by radio to millions of listeners throughout the world, President Roosevelt threw down a challenge to critics of the New Deal to come out into the open at once and fight in Congress, the people's forum, for repeal of the administration's measures.

The 1938 *Evening Star* story observes that the address is broadcast, and notes in the lead that "in an address of absorbing interest President Roosevelt today told Congress *and the world* this Nation must prepare to defend itself."[5]

If these stories reflect a new political reality, they reflect also a new journalistic reality. The journalist, no longer merely the relayer of documents and messages, has become the interpreter of the news. This new role allows the reporter to write about what he hears and sees, and what is unheard, unseen, or intentionally omitted as well. For instance, the *Chicago Tribune* in 1909, in a story dated December 8 by John Cullan O'Laughlin, begins: "President Taft's first annual message, which was read to the two houses of congress today, is more notable for what it omits than for what it says." In a less provocative manner, the *Times* on December 4, 1924, wrote of Coolidge's message: "President Coolidge's annual message, sent to Congress today by messenger and read in each house by a clerk, was notable for its lack of specific recommendations." In the 1920s, attention to what the president omitted was a regular feature of news reporting. On December 8, 1926, the *Times* story noted that "the message was marked by only two omissions, the world court and Muscle Shoals, and these perversely enough were among the first to be placed before the Senate." The *Evening Star* on December 7 noted that the message omitted mention of Mexico and the World Court. In 1928 Richard Oulahan's story in the *New York Times* told of what was omitted and what was said implicitly: "Perfunctory and colorless as it may have seemed to most of those who heard it read in the Senate and the House this afternoon, President Coolidge's last

annual message to Congress contained certain suggestions between the lines calculated to disarrange legislative plans for the session which was begun yesterday."

In 1930 G. Gould Lincoln in the *Evening Star* observed that President Hoover did not say, but "clearly implied," that the one percent reduction in the income tax would not be continued. Reporters even felt free to put words in the president's mouth. On December 3, 1930, Arthur Sears Henning in the *Chicago Tribune* wrote: "In his second annual message on the state of the Union, President Hoover told Congress today, in effect, that good times are just around the corner." Richard Oulahan did something similiar in his 1926 story: "'Let well enough alone' might be a description of the attitude the President implies in the document which the Constitution requires him to submit to Congress annually."

As more of the stories in the 1920s became interpretive, so too were more by-lined, a phenomenon typical of changes in journalism in that era. A content analysis of the front page of the *New York Times* by Christine Ogan and her associates[6] found no by-lines in the five-year periods from 1900 to 1905 or from 1910 to 1915. Six percent of stories were by-lined in 1920-25; 16 percent in 1930-35; 47 percent in 1940-45; and 85 percent in 1970. This study also found a difference in "time orientation" of front-page stories. Ogan distinguishes between "immediate" and "long-range" time orientation, between stories that focus on events where knowing them is useful in the short run (a baseball game, a fire, stock quotations) and stories that focus on events where knowing about them has more long-range value (a ball player's profile, a story on arson patterns in the city, or a report on economic indicators). In the period from 1900 to 1905, 87 percent of stories were of immediate interest. By 1920-25, this had dropped to 72 percent, and was 67 percent in 1930-35, 61 percent in 1940-45, and 57 percent in 1970.

Changes in reports of the annual message, where the same event, once treated as something of immediate significance, comes to be treated in a long-range time frame, buttress this suggestive finding. The reports do not rest with noting on-the-spot congressional response, but focus on the significance of the address in the political career of the president. The reporter does not leave the long-range significance of the event to the reader, but interprets it for him.

II

Why have these dramatic changes in reporting presidential addresses occurred, and what might they signify? The changes I have found may not, of course, be representative of news reporting as a whole. Yet, despite the narrow empirical focus of this paper, I believe that similar kinds of transformations have occurred in other types of news stories, and I offer this account as both hypothesis and model against which other researchers might compare changing conventions in other types of news reporting.

The simplest explanation is that news reflects reality, and the political reality itself therefore must have changed. The new conventions of journalism can be viewed as predictable responses to the growing power of the presidency. The form, not just the content, of the news story mirrors the fact that the

president and his addresses had, by about 1910, become more important than the Congress and its reactions to presidential policy.

Without question, the power of the presidency grew, and as it did, a shift from a "congressional" to a "presidential" system of government evolved. Theodore Roosevelt, especially, forged a symbolically more central presidency by the force of his personality and by his assiduous efforts at cultivating journalists. Yet, as important as Roosevelt was in bringing new authority to the White House, his actions do not sufficiently explain the changing conventions of journalism. First, some of the most significant changes in the presidency, changes that could be assumed to be causes of new modes of reporting, *followed* the change in news conventions. Woodrow Wilson, for example, revived the precedent, abandoned by Jefferson, of appearing before Congress to deliver the State of the Union address and other messages. In his first such message, he said, "I am very glad indeed to have this opportunity to address the two Houses directly and to verify for myself the impression that the President of the United States is a person, not a mere department of the Government, . . . a human being trying to co-operate with other human beings in a common service." Wilson's action reinforced the centrality of the president and the habit of seeing the president as "a person," but the habit was already being encouraged by journalistic practice.[7]

Another significant change was the establishment of the Bureau of the Budget in 1921 and the beginning of a presidential role in budgetary policy and government-wide policy-making. Until then, governmental agencies submitted budget requests to the secretary of the treasury, who passed them on, with little change, to Congress. The president played, at best, "only a limited role."[8] Despite Teddy Roosevelt's importance, then, in enlarging the prestige of the presidency, his real contribution lay, not in establishing a powerful presidency, but in paving the way for its institutionalization. In this context, the changing conventions of news reporting may have been less a simple result of a change in the political world than a constituent of that process itself.

There is another way to look at the situation. Remember that the press *always* treated the State of the Union address with great seriousness. The full address was always printed and, as in the early 1800s, was sometimes the entire editorial material for a given issue. Later on, though the news story focused on congressional proceedings, the full text continued to be printed, and the editorial—much more the heart of the newspaper in the nineteenth century than it is today—focused on the substance of the president's message itself.

The change in conventions of news reporting, then, while giving greater emphasis to the presidency in describing an altered political reality, more importantly provided *a different form* for describing any political reality at all. It is a very different matter to say the news reflects the social world by describing it, and to say that it reflects the social world by incorporating it into unquestioned and unnoticed conventions of narration. When a changed political reality becomes part of the very structure of news writing, then the story does not "reflect" the new politics but becomes part of the new politics itself.[9] There is not only a narration of politics in the news; the news is part of the politics of narrative form.

In the nineteenth century, reporters had little or no political presence as individuals or as a group. Editors, not Washington correspondents, set the political tone of a paper, and their views were political acts to be reckoned with. In the twentieth century, reporters have taken on a more pronounced political role and acquired political self-consciousness. Although critics bemoan the sensationalism and commercialism of the press and its failure to treat politics with appropriate solemnity, it is still true, as David Riesman observed years ago in *The Lonely Crowd*, that journalists accord politics a prestige that it does not have in the public mind. "They pay more attention to politics than their audience seems to demand. . . . Many of the agencies of mass communications give political news a larger play than might be dictated by strict consideration of market research."[10] In a sense, journalists are the patrons of political life.

To the degree that this is so, the journalism of the national newsweeklies, most large metropolitan newspapers, and the network television news does not mirror the world, but constructs one in which the political realm is preeminent. But what is politics, and how are we to understand it? The changing conventions of reporting State of the Union messages suggest and support a major shift in the public understanding of politics. The changes in story form do not indicate that journalism was once stenographic and is now interpretive, but rather that political commentary, once a partisan activity of the newspaper editor, has become increasingly a professional activity of the journalist. This change, far from being a product of the sixties or of the growing affluence and autonomy of national political reporters in the 1970s, began around the turn of the century.

The transformation of the news story is clearly related to the idea of politics promoted by the Progressive movement. Briefly, progressivism emphasized a "good government" view of the polity; it distrusted political parties and their machinery, and sought more direct public participation in government. The secret ballot; initiative, referendum, and recall; primary elections; direct election of Senators; and other reforms—all were products of the Progressive movement. If there was an effort to remove power from parties, it was not all to be returned to the public. The movement supported "expert" management of the political system, ranging from city-manager municipal government to the establishment of federal administrative agencies for the conservation of natural resources. In the Progressive vision, faction could be avoided, conflict overcome, and politics transformed into technique. Politics itself was to be professionalized.[11] Although the Progressive idea of politics did not cause the changes in conventions of news reporting, it was consonant with them and can be seen as part of the same climate of opinion. As Progressives sought to have politics viewed as technique, so journalists strove to have reporting viewed as political commentary by skilled analysts.

Within journalism itself, three factors may have made this an especially likely ambition. First—and I think most important—reporters as a group were becoming more self-conscious and autonomous. At the end of the nineteenth century, as historian Robert Wiebe has observed, the identification of the middle class with political parties weakened, while their identification with, and allegiance to, occupations and occupational associations grew.[12] In journalism, press clubs began to form in the late nineteenth century, the prestige and the

pay of reporters began to rise, professional journals appeared in New York, and at least an elite of reporters like Richard Harding Davis or Sylvester Scovel became quite famous and thereby relatively independent in their work. At the same time, as newspapers became successful big businesses, and publishers increasingly took more interest in making money than in making policy, journalists, freed from the necessity of adhering to their publishers' party lines, came to regard themselves as "professionals." But they did not gain complete autonomy, nor did they achieve all at once the relative independence they now have. What is clear is that editors were losing power relative to reporters as early as the 1890s, when newspapers shifted from reprinting documents to relying on reporters' contacts for news. As Anthony Smith puts it, "The power of brokerage . . . thus passed from news editor to correspondent and specialist reporter, and as a result the editor . . . [could not] wield the same kind of authority he did in previous generations."[13]

Second, newspaper readership grew enormously from the 1880s on, especially among the working class. If this had influenced the conventions of news reporting directly, the expectation would be for the more popular, mass-oriented papers to be the first to adopt the modern interpretive conventions; papers catering to a smaller and better-educated middle-class audience would lag behind. Yet very different papers adopted the new conventions, all at about the same time. Nevertheless, it is plausible to hold that, at some level of consciousness, journalists changed their practice to accommodate the real or presumed demands of a different kind of audience.

Third, the telegraphic transmission of news may have provided a model of how news reporting might be more brief and interpretive. The earliest news reports focusing on the substance of the president's message were stories telegraphed to Midwestern newspapers, as in the *Chicago Tribune*, as early as 1858. These reports did *not* substitute for a full transcript and a largely chronological account of congressional proceedings. These were printed a day later and were clearly regarded as superior. The telegraphed summary of the address was, in fact, offered apologetically, and readers were urged to wait for the full account. So the new format that the telegraph helped to invent did not become the working norm for half a century. When the new conventions finally emerged, there was apparently no overt connection between them and early telegraphic communication. Still, the terse form of news by wire may have lodged somewhere in the literary unconscious of journalists and their readers.[14]

The vital point remains that the modern conventions of news reporting emerged at a time when politics was coming to be thought of as administration. Politicians, then, could be legitimately evaluated according to their efficiency as political leaders rather than on the basis of their political positions. The new conventions of reporting helped take partisanship out of politics. This does not "reflect" a politics grown more independent of party; it incorporates and so helps construct a nearly preconscious set of assumptions about what politics is. The news story today, as in the past, not only describes a world "out there," but translates a political culture into assumptions of representation built into the structure of the story itself.

By the 1920s, a more self-conscious, autonomous journalistic corps covered the president. Reporters felt free to analyze the significance of presidential

messages, even if they did not believe it appropriate to comment on the rightness or wrongness of presidential views. They took responsibility for highlighting salient points of the message and for stating how the message related not only to congressional business at hand, but to the president's career and his place in history as well.

It should not be surprising, then, that when television came along, network news departments devoted disproportionate time to covering the presidency. The technology and economics of television make this a likely choice, of course. Since television equipment is expensive and awkward, and can be moved around less easily than the lone reporter with pencil and notepad, film crews tend to be centered in just a few locations, with the result that those locations—especially Washington—gain great emphasis in the TV news. And with the still-current understandings of politics that began decades ago to shift attention from Capitol Hill to the White House, the TV watch on the president was an obvious choice.

Other choices, of course, could have been made. In Britain, for years after the introduction of television, the BBC refused to cover general elections and took great pride in this decision. Elections were deemed too important for television.[15] Even in America, TV began its fascination with news, and with presidential news in particular, only when the quiz show scandals prompted the networks to take their public service function more seriously, and when John Kennedy tried to use his considerable personal charm on television to enhance his political standing. There was real question about whether television would become a news medium. But once it began to function as one, what kind of news medium it would be, what kind of political assumptions it would incorporate into the news, and what kind of political and journalistic culture it would draw on were in little doubt.

It is not unusual that a new medium comes to serve purposes that older forms are already trying to address. In *On Photography*, Susan Sontag observes that photography enlarges our view of what is worth looking at, until we have come to believe that *anything* may be worth photographing or looking at.[16] This is a far cry from conventional Western image-making. For centuries, only religious subjects were thought worthy of painting; even in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the repertoire of subjects was quite restricted. But in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, the subject matter for painting expanded. In this more democratic era, artists began to paint common people, street life, and a variety of landscapes. For a time, in fact, in the middle of the last century, the range of subject matter for painting was far wider than that of the budding art of photography, which was restricted primarily to portraiture. Within a few decades, however, photography became the more democratic art, as all aspects of life became its subjects. But this could not have been imagined if a profound cultural change was not already underway.

Photography, of course, is not mechanized painting, nor is the news on television only newspaper news with pictures. Television news has its own possibilities. In covering the State of the Union address, TV ironically brings back an abandoned print form: a chronological account of the day's event, the full text of the speech, and the pomp and circumstance, the spectacle and ritual, surrounding the event. Guided by the camera's eye, we see a revival of attention

to on-the-scene congressional response to the address, much as the reporters of the late nineteenth century provided. Still, too much has changed in both journalism and politics for this to satisfy the journalists, and presumably the public. The broadcasters provide a "follow-up" that summarizes the high points of the address and suggests the political significance of the message. When the story is retold on the late evening news, the president speaks for himself, *and* the broadcast journalist points out the highlights of the address and uses film of the speech to illustrate them. Television thus inherits the trend toward analytical reporting and nonpartisan political commentary that the print media had already established by the 1920s.[17]

News, as we see it in its ideal state, is all information, no form. Or, to use Kenneth Burke's distinction, it is supposed to be all semantic meaning, no poetic meaning. But as Burke observes, these categories are not easy to separate. In the ideal of semantic meaning, we aim to "evolve a vocabulary that gives the name and address of every event in the universe." Thus Burke takes as a good example of the semantic ideal the address on an envelope: name, street and number, city or town, state, nation. This is a very efficient system for locating one individual out of several billions. In a sense, it is purely informational, purely semantic, without affective color or significance. But it is nonetheless neither neutral nor objective. Its content is tainted because its form *assumes* certain values and structures. Burke writes of the envelope address: "It depends for its significance upon the establishment of a postal structure, as a going concern. . . . It *assumes* an organization. Its *meaning*, then, involves the established procedures of the mails, and is in the instructions it gives for the performance of desired operations within this going concern."[18]

A news story is also in the business of giving instructions for desired operations within a going concern. The news story informs its readers about politics, but in a specific way. Its meaning lies in the instructions it tacitly gives about what to attend to, and how to attend, within the going concern of American political life. It asks readers to be interested in politics, but politics as the community of journalists conceives it.

The community of journalists (at least, national political reporters) is "progressive," as Herbert Gans has observed, but this is so even more fundamentally than he implies.[19] Reporters are progressive in their implicit, conscious, but not often worked-out political views. They are progressive even more in their sense of what their job is, their view of what reporting politics always (as they see it) has been and should be. Without knowing it, and sometimes while actually fighting against it (thoughtful journalists frequently complain that, in writing primarily about agility in winning and losing, they and their colleagues treat politics too much like a sport), journalists are persuaded that politics is a matter of running campaigns, handling pressure groups, and disarming oppositions, and that this is an engineering task appropriately analyzed by experts, not by partisans. For more than half a century now, this is the story our news stories tell us, even when their authors intend them to say something else.

Theodore White wrote of the press corps, on the presidential campaign trail in 1960, that the talk of correspondents with one another is more than gossip; it is a critical process of consensus-formation. The group becomes a "brother-

hood" that "influences and colors, beyond any individual resistance to prejudice or individual devotion to fact, all of what they write. For by now they have come to trust only each other."[20] This is not entirely true. They trust *also* the very forms of discourse around which their work is oriented and their gossip centered. These forms—which they must control if they are to be respected professionals—have an extraordinary power to control the journalists themselves and, through them, their readers. Like reporters, American citizens expect to find power exercised in the conscious intentions of actors. But we, like the journalists themselves, will better understand our politics as well as our news media, when we recognize the substantive message and substantial authority of narrative form.

REFERENCES

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[1]*The Powers That Be* (New York: Knopf, 1979), p. 250.

[2]Arthur N. Applebee, *The Child's Concept of Story* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978), pp. 36-37.

[3]The data for this study come from examining reports of State of the Union messages in the following newspapers: *New York Times*, every fourth year from 1854 to 1978, and every year from 1900 to 1910; *Chicago Tribune*, every fourth year from 1854 to 1954, and every other year from 1900 to 1910; *Washington Post*, every fourth year from 1878 to 1954, and every other year from 1900 to 1910; Washington *Evening Star*, every fourth year from 1854 to 1954, and every other year from 1900 to 1910. Also, *Boston Gazette*, 1791-1797; *Connecticut Courant*, 1799, 1801, 1802, 1816, 1818; *New-York Evening Post*, 1801, 1802, 1810, 1822, 1826, 1850; *Albany Argus*, 1826; *True Sun* (New York), 1845; *Morning Herald* (New York), 1838; *Philadelphia Daily News*, 1866; *Omaha Daily Republican*, 1886; *San Diego Union*, 1886, 1900, 1908; *Iowa Citizen* (Iowa City), 1894, 1900, 1910.

[4]In 1934 the *New York Times* related Franklin Roosevelt and his message to the Democratic party, the memory of Woodrow Wilson, and the spirit of war: "Speaking from the rostrum in the House Chamber, where his democratic predecessor, Woodrow Wilson, delivered his war Message in 1917, President Roosevelt unmistakably affirmed the permanence of the ideal if not the form of the National Recovery Administration." More recently, Hedrick Smith's *Times* story on Jimmy Carter's 1979 annual message characterized it this way: "Evoking the New Freedom of Woodrow Wilson, the New Deal of Franklin D. Roosevelt, and the New Frontier of John F. Kennedy, he settled for the first time in his Presidency on an epigrammatic theme—the New Foundation—to symbolize his effort to restructure the nation's economic priorities, foreign policy, and Federal programs for the future."

[5]By 1954, the press was aware not only that the president spoke through the broadcast media, but that the president knew that he did so. The *Washington Post* reported that President Eisenhower wore a shirt of "television blue" and stood behind a lectern designed for him by actor Robert Montgomery. There was also an effort to play down Eisenhower's military standing, and so for the first time since 1919 no honor guard of soldiers was at the Capitol to salute the President.

[6]Christine Ogan, Ida Plymale, D. Lynn Smith, William H. Turpin, and Donald Lewis Shaw, "The Changing Front Page of the *New York Times*," *Journalism Quarterly* 52 (Summer 1975): 340-44. For related changes toward a more interpretive journalism in the 1920s, see my book, *Discovering the News* (New York: Basic Books, 1978), pp. 121-59.

[7]Wilson is quoted in Wilfred E. Binkley, *President and Congress*, 3d ed. (New York: Vintage Books, 1962), p. 258. The growth in presidential power beginning around the time of Theodore Roosevelt is noted by many observers. See James McGregor Burns, *Presidential Government* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1965), p. 55; Marcus Cunliffe, *American Presidents and the Presidency*, 2d ed. (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1972); Arthur Schlesinger, Jr., *The Imperial Presidency* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1973), p. 83. On Wilson's revival of Federalist precedent, see also Schlesinger, "Introduction," in *The State of the Union Messages of the Presidents, 1790-1966*, 3 vols., edited by Fred L. Israel (New York: Chelsea House, 1966). For careful attention to the development of media-president relations in this period, see George Juergens, *News from the White House* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981).

[8]Larry Berman, *The Office of Management and Budget and the Presidency, 1921-1979* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1979), p. 3. Rexford G. Tugwell cites the establishment of the Budget Bureau as a major event in the growth of presidential authority in *The Enlargement of the Presidency* (New York: Doubleday, 1960), pp. 396-97.

[9]The social sciences and humanities have been converging in the past decade in their interest in "narrative." See, for instance, the special issue on narrative of *Critical Inquiry* 7 (Autumn, 1980). Of related interest is the work of the Russian linguist, M. M. Bakhtin. An exposition of some of Bakhtin's ideas can be found in Michael Holquist, "The Politics of Representation," in *Allegory and Representation*, edited by Stephen J. Greenblatt, selected papers from the English Institute, new series no. 5 (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1981), pp. 163-84. Holquist's phrase, "the politics of representation," suggested to me my own phrase, the politics of narrative form, and hence the title of my essay.

[10]David Riesman, Nathan Glazer, and Reuel Denney, *The Lonely Crowd* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1950), pp. 197-98.

[11]On Progressivism, see Samuel P. Hays, *The Response to Industrialism 1885-1914* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1957), and Robert H. Wiebe, *The Search for Order* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1967).

[12]Wiebe, *The Search for Order*, p. 129.

[13]Anthony Smith, *Goodbye Gutenberg* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1980), p. 186. For more about the rise of the reporter after 1880, see my book, *Discovering the News*, pp. 61-87.

[14]The often overlooked role of the telegraph in American culture is discussed in "Technology and Ideology: The Case of the Telegraph," by James Carey, *Prospects*, the annual review of the American Studies Association, 1982 (forthcoming).

[15]Anthony Smith, "Britain: The Mysteries of a Modus Vivendi," in *Television and Political Life*, edited by Anthony Smith (London: Macmillan, 1979), p. 28.

[16]New York: Dell Publishing, 1977, p. 3.

[17]This is not to suggest that television has not had an influence in stabilizing and extending the conventions of print that emphasize the presidency. Researchers have found growing emphasis on the president in newspaper reports (Elmer E. Cornwell, Jr., "Presidential News: The Expanding Public Image," *Journalism Quarterly* 36 [Summer 1959]: 275-83, and Alan P. Balutis, "The Presidency and the Press: The Expanding Presidential Image," *Presidential Studies Quarterly* 7 [Fall 1977]: 242-51), but others observe that television network stories place even *more* emphasis on the president. See Stephen Hess, *The Washington Reporters* (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution, 1981), p. 98.

[18]Kenneth Burke, "Semantic Meaning and Poetic Meaning," in Kenneth Burke, *Philosophy of Literary Form* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1973), p. 140.

[19]Herbert Gans, *Deciding What's News* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1979), pp. 204-6.

[20]Theodore White, *The Making of the President 1960* (New York: Atheneum, 1961), p. 335.

GEORGE JUERGENS

Theodore Roosevelt and the Press

IN SEPTEMBER 1901, just back from William McKinley's funeral, Theodore Roosevelt called a meeting at the White House that revealed a good deal about his view of the presidency and the influence he would have on the office. He instructed his secretary to telephone the Washington managers of the three wire services and ask them to come right over to see him. It was an unusual request in an era when presidents almost never sat down with working reporters, and all the more unusual considering the many demands and pressures on him as he presided over the change in administrations. But Roosevelt clearly regarded a session with reporters as business of the highest priority. Charles Boynton of the Associated Press, David Barry of the *New York Sun*'s Laffan Agency, and Ed Keen of the Scripps-McRae Press Association (later to become United Press) figured prominently in his plans, both because their dispatches appeared in hundreds of papers across the country, and because they tended to be bellwethers for the rest of the press in deciding how the news would be presented. This president saw news as an instrument of power. It followed that he wanted to waste no time getting his publicity operation in order.

As Barry recalled the conversation, which took place seated around the cabinet table, Roosevelt did most of the talking in laying out how he proposed to deal with the press. He pointed out that since he had known Boynton and Barry for years, and trusted them, they could expect his complete cooperation. "I shall be accessible to [you]," the president said, "I shall keep [you] posted, and trust to [your] discretion as to publication." Keen, on the other hand, whom Roosevelt had never met before, would have to prove he could be relied on. When Boynton and Barry vouched for their colleague, Roosevelt agreed to extend the same terms to him. According to one source, he put Keen to the test right away by using the meeting to deliver a scathing indictment of the old guard in his party. "If you even hint where you got it," Roosevelt warned when he had finished, "I'll say you are a damned liar." He would do more than that. Roosevelt told the wire representatives that a reporter who violated his trust would be mercilessly cut off from further access to news. He would even take steps to deny legitimate news to the paper or agency that employed the offending reporter. The ground rules could not have been made more clear. "All right, gentlemen, now we understand each other," the president said in adjourning the meeting.[1]

Roosevelt proved to be as good as his word over the next seven years. He divided newsmen into distinct groups of insiders and outsiders, and was unforgiving in banishing those that he felt, justifiably or not, had betrayed him. The order went out consigning them to the Ananias Club, named after the New Testament character who, having lied about holding back part of a gift to the Church, was rebuked by Peter and fell dead. Members of the club—and their numbers grew by the years—were dead in the eyes of the White House.

On the other hand, for the correspondents who cooperated—which pretty well meant writing sympathetically about Roosevelt's programs as well as respecting his confidences—covering the president suddenly became a reporter's paradise. His accessibility and candor with the insiders almost staggered newsmen who had learned the mechanics of their craft in the gray days of Cleveland and Harrison. Roosevelt saw reporters almost every day, either individually or in small groups. A favorite occasion was 1:00 in the afternoon, when newsmen made a practice of standing around and asking questions—if they knew how to time the pauses between the president's monologue answers—while a Treasury Department messenger who doubled as his barber gave him his midday shave. It didn't have to be just then, however. He could always manage to squeeze in a few extra minutes during the day for reporters who needed to see him, and often made himself available in the evenings while signing his correspondence before going back to the main house for dinner.[2]

This kind of access to the president of the United States was remarkable enough, but it meant all the more because of Roosevelt's openness when he spoke with the press. Reporters were amazed, and sometimes a bit concerned, at the things he told them. He talked freely about the most delicate matters of state, and seemed at times to be almost courting danger by the bluntness with which he discussed personalities in Washington. The press probably even exaggerated how far down the barriers fell. It is always enticing to be taken into another person's confidence, particularly one who wields power, and the things said can easily distract attention from the many other things consciously left unsaid. To acknowledge as much still does not diminish the fact that Roosevelt went much further than previous presidents in opening up to trusted reporters. He did something else as well. Roosevelt demonstrated through a hundred small gestures that he regarded the journalists in his entourage as friends. He called them by first name; he shared their jokes; he invited them to social functions. For correspondents accustomed to observing presidents only from a distance, and to finding presidential words about as revealing as an oration on the Fourth of July, it was all delightfully unsettling. Little wonder that they came not so much to respect as to revere him.[3]

It is tempting to speculate that Roosevelt's comparative youth had something to do with his style. Forty-two years old at the time of the inauguration (the youngest man ever to hold the office), and the first president to grow up in the post-Civil War America of cities and factories, he represented an entirely new generation come of age. Ability to interact with people of different social background may have been less difficult for the progressive sons than it had been for the mugwump fathers. Or then again, considering the case of Woodrow Wilson, perhaps not. The important point is that in reaching out to

reporters as he did, Roosevelt responded in just the right way to take advantage of an upheaval in American journalism that had been going on over the previous two decades.

As the 1830s brought one revolution in the rise of a penny press geared to lively features and news about the activities of ordinary folk, so the 1880s and 1890s saw another in the emergence of mass circulation newspapers that measured their audience in the hundreds of thousands, and during the excitement of the Spanish-American War, in the millions. Circulation in proportion to population had in fact been rising steadily for several decades, both because of improved presses and the falling price of paper, and because the Civil War had catalyzed interest in newspaper reading. But toward the end of the century, an explosion occurred. Joseph Pulitzer's record during the years he made the *New York World* a model of sensational journalism is the obvious example. The newspaper he purchased from Jay Gould in 1883 had a daily circulation of fifteen thousand. Within a year he had raised it to sixty thousand, within two years to one hundred fifty thousand, and within three years to a quarter of a million. By 1886 he had almost doubled the sales of the leading American newspaper at the beginning of the decade. And he had just begun. By 1898, at the time of the war with Spain, the *World* sold almost a million and a half copies every day—a hundredfold increase in circulation in fifteen years. William Randolph Hearst outstripped even that pace (although showing less concern than Pulitzer in how he went about it) in taking the *New York Journal* from a daily circulation of seventy-seven thousand in 1895 to one and a half million in 1898.

The *Journal* and the *World* represented extreme cases, to be sure, but they were by no means unique in experiencing sudden growth. The average readership of all American newspapers almost doubled between 1880 and 1900, and by the time Roosevelt left the White House in 1909, had almost tripled. Moreover, publishers in various parts of the country were starting to approach the scale of operation previously associated with one or two giants in New York City. By the early 1890s, ten newspapers located in four cities measured their circulations in excess of one hundred thousand, and by 1914, thirty newspapers serving a dozen different cities did so.[4]

Many factors must be taken into account in explaining a phenomenon of this dimension, among which, technological change in the industry is an important one. It is idle to talk about mass circulation newspapers without considering the inventions that made them possible: the Hoe Company's web-fed quadruple press, capable of printing 24,000 sixteen-page papers per hour; folders that could cut, paste, fold, count, and stack twenty-four page papers at the speed they were printed; Ottmar Mergenthaler's linotype machine, which relieved printers of the costly and tedious process of setting type by hand; improvements in illustration that led from woodcuts to zincographs to halftone photoengraving. Urban growth also figured essentially, by creating an appropriate environment for mass circulation journalism and, perhaps, a need for the daily paper that had not existed before. Immigration and heightened literacy mattered importantly in broadening the potential clientele of newspapers. The list could go on and on.

The economic transformation of the nation after the Civil War also played a large part in the spurt in newspaper readership. Industrial production and manufacturing on a vastly wider scale required innovations in distribution, not least, a new reliance on advertising in newspapers and magazines to reach the national market. As advertising revenues soared in the last decades of the century—from 44 percent of total newspaper income in 1880 to 55 percent in 1900—publications came under extreme pressure to increase circulation in order to keep the revenue coming. In a sense, the industry was turned upside down in the way it balanced its books. Newspapers that had once peddled advertisers to readers now lived or died by their success in delivering readers to advertisers.[5]

Papers met the challenge in different ways—if for no other reason than that they had different clienteles to offer advertisers—but the game as played under the conditions of modern urban life imposed certain rules on all participants. For example, in order to reach the broadest range of readers in cities of diverse populations, the press more than ever had to maintain at least a pretense of objectivity in how it reported the news. It made no sense for papers to antagonize potential purchasers by being blatantly partisan in their coverage of news. The only way to attract people of different backgrounds and conflicting points of view was by sticking as closely as possible to an unbiased rendition of facts. This is not to say that slanted reporting disappeared from the American daily—not in the land of the McCormick and Hearst presses. With each decade, however, it became less common and less overt.

A further influence of urban development was in determining that increasing numbers of people would read their papers while traveling to and fro in crowded streetcars or elevated trains rather than in the comfort of their homes. Virtually all newspapers responded by printing shorter, livelier stories, and by condensing the important news into a lead paragraph so that it could be grasped quickly, without ploughing through columns of gray matter. They also experimented with format. People who purchased their papers each morning at a station newsstand or from a street news vendor were more likely than subscribers to be influenced by a layout that caught the eye, particularly by the appearance of the paper on the front page above the fold. They had to be persuaded to buy six mornings in the week, and six mornings in the week the readers of rival newspapers could be won away. Editors competed to attract readers in the split second it took to make a decision. "The front page would probably never have evolved from the first page," Helen Hughes points out, "were it not for the fact that purchase by annual subscription was largely replaced by single sales made by newsboys on the street to passersby." And, as with the lead paragraph concept, so did the evolution of the front page proceed in more or less the same direction for all papers. Readers of the *New York Times* may not have appreciated the loud display and garishness of a *New York Journal*, but even they expected a tasteful equivalent in multicolumn headlines, a more abundant use of illustration, and a feature or two to whet the interest on otherwise dull mornings. It is instructive in this regard to compare almost any major American newspaper of the early 1880s with its counterpart in the late 1890s. The former is something out of history: heavy, cumbersome, unfamiliar.

The latter is not significantly different in appearance from what we are accustomed to today.[6]

The same years saw an increased stress on human interest material, in reporting on government as well as other areas. Newspapers had to respond to the reality that by and large people are more interested in personal detail about figures in the news than in dry matters of statecraft. The wisdom applied not least in covering the president of the United States. Scandal and gossip about chief executives had always been grist for the press, but now, what can only be described as a kind of domestic chatter became a staple of White House reporting. The intense coverage of Grover Cleveland's marriage and honeymoon in June 1886 vividly illustrates the trend. Not only did newspapers all but suffocate the story of the wedding day in their attention to trivia (even the august *New York Times* devoted five full columns on its front page to an account of the ceremony); when the couple tried to slip away to their honeymoon cottage in Deer Park, Maryland, a small army of newsmen tagged along, filing an estimated four hundred thousand words over the next five and a half days, while keeping the president and his bride under round-the-clock surveillance. The intrusion enraged Cleveland and shocked those who still subscribed to the old proprieties. If such journalism is to be justified on the grounds that it sells newspapers, Joseph Bishop growled in *Forum* magazine, then "the profession becomes the lowest of human callings—lower than brothel-keeping or liquor-selling, for these make no pretense to respectability." Whatever the merits of that argument, his appeal that newspapers conduct themselves by the same code a gentleman would follow in his private behavior was almost certainly unrealistic under modern conditions.[7]

The key to Roosevelt's leadership was that he succeeded, as Cleveland could not, in making these characteristics of modern journalism work for him. A press obliged (at least to some extent) to report objectively, a press hungry for front-page bulletins and eager, for its own purposes, to personalize the presidency, offered obvious opportunities for a publicity-minded leader to exploit. The trick was in knowing how to take advantage of opportunity. On that score, Roosevelt demonstrated a shrewdness that made him virtually unique among public figures of his time, and went far toward explaining his achievements in office.

Roosevelt based his strategy on several tenets about the uses of mass communications in politics. To begin with, he assumed that the news that appears in a daily paper, and the way it is presented, does far more to mold public opinion than editorials. If he could seize the headlines and influence the way reporters wrote about him, it would not matter a great deal what the press might have to say about him on its inside pages. From this followed the further insight that the definition of news as a daily chronicle of official activity was much too passive and limiting in its implications. With any sort of imagination, a modern president could generate news on demand to ensure continued domination of the front page. And the more he monopolized public attention in this way, the more he established his credentials as national leader, which in turn made it easier to keep on generating news about himself. His further insight was that a strong president must not only make news, he must pay close attention to how the news is disseminated as well. There are different ways to

release information to the press. Roosevelt understood that using the correct technique in different circumstances could have a major bearing on the amount and kind of coverage he received. Indeed, handled adroitly, news could be the most telling weapon in the arsenal of political weapons available to a president.

Roosevelt also recognized—something that Cleveland and McKinley, with their old-fashioned virtues and old-fashioned expectations, failed to see (or at least to act on)—that the avid interest in the president as a personality could itself be a source of strength, by opening the way for him to dramatize himself, to become a symbol of state as well as a political leader. When every detail about a person's life is a matter of public concern, something for the press to dwell on, he achieves a status much like that of royalty, and puts precious distance between himself and those who would challenge his authority. And since a president always has the option of appeasing curiosity on his own terms, voluntarily making available all sorts of trivia about himself and his family, even orchestrating the publicity, he is better able to slam the door on the occasions when he does not wish to be on display. Of course it is impossible to exercise complete control. All modern presidents have suffered moments of outrage when newspapers ventured into areas that were supposed to be off-limits, and sometimes compounded the offense by being garbled or inaccurate in their intrusions. Presidents discover, as do monarchs and movie idols, that there are burdens as well as benefits in being put on a pedestal. Nevertheless, one of the ways to distinguish between those who succeeded as publicists and those who failed is that the former made the personalization of the office work for them. Theodore Roosevelt was the first to try, and in doing so, set the standard for his successors. Partly through natural colorfulness, partly through artifice, he kept newspapers filled with stories about his enthusiasms and eccentricities, his feuds and friendships, his sheer zest for living. In the process, he succeeded to a remarkable extent in stamping his personality on the age and confirming his primacy as national leader.

Fundamental to all of Roosevelt's other accomplishments was his recognition that American journalism had entered the age of the reporter. Editors like Horace Greeley, Charles Dana, and James Gordon Bennett, who had made their papers extensions of their own considerable personalities, belonged to a simpler time. With the stress on news as opposed to opinion, the concern that the news be delivered accurately and objectively, and—what would become increasingly conspicuous with each decade—the insistence that news must be aggressively pursued rather than simply received through handouts, a changing of the guard was under way. In place of the editors who had dominated a previous era, the new giants would be people like Oscar Davis, Richard Oulahan, Herbert Bayard Swope, reporters who earned their reputations by digging up the story. Roosevelt could not have had the insights he did about how modern journalism works without recognizing that the newsmen on the beat were the key. If presidential leadership depended upon communicating with the people, and if the press was to be Roosevelt's major instrument for communication, it followed that the correspondents who filed the dispatches about him would have considerable impact in determining the success or failure of his administration. "In our country," he once remarked, "I am inclined to

think that almost, if not quite, the most important profession is that of newspaperman." He certainly regarded them as a group worth cultivating.[8]

The meeting Roosevelt arranged with the three wire correspondents after returning from McKinley's funeral represented only a first step toward that end. He followed with a gesture so simple that probably even he did not fully appreciate its long-term implications. As the story is told, on a chilly, wet day in early 1902, he happened to look out the window of his office on the second floor of the White House and saw a cluster of sodden newsmen, huddled by the pillars on the north portico, waiting to interview the visitors passing in and out of the executive mansion on official business. He took pity on the group, it is said, and ordered that a small anteroom adjoining his ground floor study be set aside for the press as a lounge and place to write their stories. More important, the room was conveniently located to monitor traffic through the lobby, so newsmen could catch their subjects before they left the building, rather than having to wait for them outside. Roosevelt's thoughtfulness in bringing reporters in out of the rain is commonly accepted as marking the birth of the White House press corps.[9]

Whether it actually happened that way, he certainly provided a working area for the press inside the building, and a few months later, formalized the arrangement by establishing a permanent press room. Roosevelt had been appalled on moving into the mansion to discover how ill-suited it was as a home for a large and lively family. Since the ground floor consisted mainly of ceremonial rooms, and the president and his staff had their offices on the second floor, not a great deal of space remained as living area for the family. Older couples like the Harrisons and McKinleys may have been able to make do, but it was an altogether different matter with six young children, the oldest still in her teens, and none of a retiring nature. Roosevelt found the situation impossible, and since few people—least of all he—liked the suggestion that the family live elsewhere and the White House become an official building only, Congress moved quickly by appropriating $540,000 in June 1902 to renovate the main quarters and build a new west wing for office space. In describing how he wanted the wing laid out, Roosevelt specified that one room off the main lobby, next to his secretary's, be set up for the press. It meant that, for the first time, reporters would have telephones available to call in their stories; no longer would they have to rely on the messengers and telegraph boys, whose bicycles, parked in a long line on Pennsylvania Avenue, had been a fixture ever since the press first took up position outside the White House late in the second Cleveland Administration. But the room the newsmen moved into in mid-October 1902 was more than just a convenience; by conferring a sort of legitimacy on their presence, it suggested they were no longer there just as guests of the president. They were filling a public function.[10]

That Roosevelt meant to be helpful by these arrangements does not mean that his motives were entirely, or even primarily, altruistic. His major purpose in bringing the press into the White House, and later institutionalizing the relationship by providing permanent quarters, was to make it easier to generate publicity about himself. As long as he intended to dominate the headlines, it made sense to arrange that reporters be conveniently on hand, and in a way, almost extensions of his own staff.

The same logic also explains why he immediately set out to be the most completely accessible president America had known until that time. Press conferences did not begin until the Wilson years, but in a sense, Roosevelt provided something even better—at least for those eligible to participate—just by being available for long, rambling, relaxed conversations with newsmen. As Oscar Davis of the *New York Times* recalled,

> You might have an hour with [the president], and talk all around the horizon, politics, diplomatic affairs, military, naval or congressional situation, money trust, labor, undesireable citizens, or what not, and yet not get out of it all a word that you could write that day. Then, within a week, something might happen that would be trivial and unimportant to one who had not had such a talk with the President, but which furnished a good story to one who had.

Of course, in the process, Roosevelt's purposes were also served. Since the information passed on represented the truth as he saw it, his sessions with the press helped to shape the version of truth that went out to the public. Both sides benefited by the arrangement: Roosevelt in getting the publicity he wanted, the press in enhancing the quality of its reporting and enjoying the excitement and status that closeness to power brings.[11]

A president like this—accessible to the press, candid, friendly, convinced of the importance of what they did—could not help but win an almost worshipful following among the newsmen in his entourage. More than being the first chief executive to recognize that American journalism had entered the age of the reporter, by responding to the change, he helped to hasten it. That by itself would have been enough to secure him a special place in the affection of journalists. But the Roosevelt phenomenon went much further, because he also turned out to be among the most colorful of all presidents. After years of reticence and starched dignity in the White House, reporters, to their immense gratification, discovered in Roosevelt almost more material than they could use. It was an intoxicating experience. The excitement in journalism, after all, inheres in having exciting things to write about. A dull administration deadens everything connected with it, not least the job of reporting. The press come alive only when strong figures are at the helm and controversial things are happening. In these terms, Roosevelt was an ideal subject. He made the White House hum with activity, and in the process, gave the correspondents who covered him the best ongoing story in generations. They probably appreciated that as much as anything else about him.

Part of the reason he sparked excitement was sheer force of personality. "Roosevelt," one critic wrote grudgingly, "has the knack of doing things, and doing them noisily, clamorously; while he is in the neighborhood the public can no more look the other way than the small boy can turn his head away from a circus parade followed by a steam calliope." He took such obvious pleasure in being president, in the clamor and excitement of fighting for good causes, in meeting interesting people and denouncing wicked ones, that the country almost despite itself had to become involved. Certainly, nobody quite like him had come along in living memory.[12]

To say that he was colorful is almost an understatement: he was like a force of nature. And he was all the more interesting as a news subject because his

combination of personal qualities—caring deeply about everything, strong-minded, headlong in his rush through life—had him constantly embroiled in public squabbles that provided juicy copy for the press. He reveled in controversy, and if major issues were not available to fight about, he made do with small ones. Whether the subject was simplified spelling, violence in college football, the evils of divorce, the declining middle-class birth rate, the writers he castigated as "nature fakirs," who imputed human characteristics to animals—he felt strongly on most questions, and insisted that everybody else know how he felt. In the process, he generally raised such a din that the country pretty well had to pay attention. "Roosevelt's fighting was so much a part of the life of the period," Mark Sullivan wrote, "was so tied up to the newspapers, so geared into popular literature, and even to the pulpit (which already had begun to turn from formal religion toward civic affairs), as to constitute, for the average man, not merely the high spectacle of the Presidency in the ordinary sense, but almost the whole of the passing show, the public's principal interest."[13]

There is another side to the coin, however. To say that the Roosevelt personality fascinated the country is not to minimize the care he took to see that the country remained fascinated. When dealing with exciting public figures, it is often difficult to distinguish between the things they do spontaneously that make them special and the acts that are carefully contrived to achieve an effect. This was certainly true of the young president whom fate had put in the White House. He was a person of extraordinary gusto and enthusiasm, who just in being himself made news. The further fact is that publicity was so essential to his style of leadership that he worked constantly to generate it. Roosevelt the newsmaker was part natural man and part manipulator. He probably did not know himself where one aspect of his personality ended and the other began, but both are important in understanding his hold on the popular imagination.

The complexity is nicely illustrated by an incident in 1912, during his campaign for reelection on the Bull Moose ticket. On Monday evening, October 14, just as Roosevelt was leaving the Gilpatrick Hotel in Milwaukee to address a political rally, a fanatic, apparently deranged by the threat to the two-term tradition, stepped out of the crowd and put a bullet in the former president's chest. Neither Roosevelt nor his aides realized immediately that he had been hit. Not until the would-be assassin had been overpowered and Roosevelt and his party were in their car on the way to the hall did someone notice that blood was seeping through his overcoat. His aides pleaded that he be rushed immediately to the hospital, but Roosevelt refused. "I will deliver this speech or die, one or the other," he was quoted as saying.[14]

When he reached the hall, the scene was one of high drama. The crowd, informed about what had happened, sat rigid with tension as Roosevelt slowly advanced to the podium, and in a low, halting voice said,

> It's true [that I have been shot]. Friends, I shall have to ask you to be as quiet as possible. I do not know whether you fully understand that I have just been shot, but it takes more than that to kill a Bull Moose. I don't know who the man was who shot me tonight. . . . He shot to kill me. He shot the bullet. I am just going to show you. [Whereupon Roosevelt unbuttoned his jacket and vest and exposed his blood-soaked shirt.] The bullet is in me now, so that I cannot make a very long speech. But I will try my best.

And for the next half hour, disregarding pleas that he stop and receive medical treatment, Roosevelt delivered his set speech. At the hospital later, an examination revealed that the bullet had entered his right lung. He escaped more serious injury, perhaps death, only because its velocity had been slowed in passing through his overcoat, eyeglass case, and the folded manuscript of the speech.[15]

By any sensible standard, he had acted in a bizarre way. Even if the Milwaukee appearance had been a climactic event in the campaign, it would not have been worth the risk in going through with it. As it is, the rally had little significance. But in politics, as in other areas of life, things are not always judged on rational grounds. His courage, if it was that, thrilled the country and injected new life into the lagging campaign. A gesture later generations might regard as histrionic or immature struck his contemporaries as inspirational. It was a public relations triumph. Was it also calculated? Did Roosevelt go ahead with the speech only out of impulse, or because he recognized the potential for drama in presenting himself as a soldier wounded in the Progressive cause? Certainly, he played on that theme two days later in his bedside statement from Chicago, where he had gone to recuperate.

> It matters little about me, but it matters all about the cause we fight for. If one soldier who happens to carry the flag is stricken another will take it from his hands and carry on. One after another the standard bearers may be laid low, but the standard itself can never fall. . . . Tell the people not to worry about me, for if I go down another will take my place. For always the army is true. Always the cause is there.

Stirring words, and possibly entirely sincere. Sometimes it is impossible to tell with a gifted newsmaker where spontaneity leaves off and calculation begins.[16]

But in other instances, the fine hand of the public relations expert is inescapable. Roosevelt was constantly alert to ways of getting his name in the papers, and knew all the tricks. He used to laugh and say, for example, that he had "discovered Monday." The scarcity of news developments on Sundays leaves editors of the Monday editions with more space than they can conveniently fill. The president took advantage of that fact by timing many of his releases for Sunday evenings. He knew that even minor fare would get much wider play on the front page of Monday's newspapers than he could expect for more important stories at midweek.[17]

No occasion for publicity was too trivial to pass up. Arthur Dunn of the Associated Press thought the president extremely kind when he delayed signing a Thanksgiving proclamation until Dunn could get a photographer to the White House to record the event. Even nicer, when the photographer arrived, Roosevelt interrupted a meeting with the secretary of state so the equipment could be set up and the picture taken. Dunn cited the incident as an example of the president's thoughtfulness to the press, which of course it was. But it is foolish to suppose that he kept Secretary Hay waiting, and put aside whatever matter of state concerned them, just to be a nice fellow. The real interest of the story is in demonstrating Roosevelt's attention to the smallest detail in arranging favorable publicity for himself.[18]

Roosevelt also knew about the importance of "image" long before Madison Avenue introduced the term to the vocabulary. He had been the butt of some laughter in 1902 when he returned empty-handed from a bear hunt in Mississippi. Apparently particularly sensitive on this subject, he took pains to ensure that the laughter would never be heard again. When he planned his next hunt, to occur in Colorado while on a Western tour, he carefully arranged everything ahead of time. "As I understand it you would have five dogs," he wrote to the director of Yellowstone Park. "That number is ample if they are good ones. Could you try them—or at any rate try the two dogs you have on the ground at once and let me know the result? There must be no slip-up if I go hunting at all, and we must be dead sure we get our mountain lion." Indeed, for appearance sake he wanted more than just a kill. In orchestrating another hunt in 1905, he explained to a friend that "the first bear must fall to my rifle. This sounds selfish, but you know the kind of talk there will be in the newspapers about such a hunt, and if I go it must be a success, and the success must come to me." Ivy Lee would have understood perfectly.[19]

But words were his most effective instrument for self-dramatization. The presidents who have succeeded as publicists all used them well, and are remembered far more for things they said than for the tricks in public relations they tried. In Roosevelt's case, he had a rare skill for finding the pungent phrase that brought an idea to life and made him custodian of it. The list is remarkable. "Speak softly and carry a big stick," he said of his foreign policy. The industrialists who bilked the nation for selfish gain were "malefactors of great wealth." He offered the American people a "square deal," the precursor of other deals "new" and "fair." Writers like Thomas Lawson and David Graham Philips who abused the literature of exposure with sensationalism and inaccuracies were "muckrakers." Roosevelt spoke of the "trustbusters," of the "strenuous life," of "Goo-Goos," of the "lunatic fringe." And when he decided to run for president in 1912, he announced, "My hat is in the ring." Words like these had punch. They particularly impressed reporters, who recognized the president's skill in handling their own stock in trade.

His gift for the vivid phrase had a bearing on the acceptance, during the Roosevelt years, of political cartoons as a respected form of journalistic expression. (Until that time, many journalists regarded pictures in newspapers as slightly disreputable.) There was something about him—the color, the frenetic quality, the sense of being larger than life—that only a cartoon could capture. An art form that makes its statements through exaggeration is necessarily at a disadvantage when dealing with dull public figures, because colorlessness magnified is still colorless. But Roosevelt, in many respects a caricature to begin with, seemed to leap out from the page, all the more because he was so easy to draw. The large, flashing teeth, the thick-lensed glasses, the drooping mustache, were ideal for caricature. So were the costumes associated with him in his various roles: the cowboy suit, the safari jacket, the Rough Riders uniform.

Above all, Roosevelt simplified the cartoonist's task by the words he used. Charles Macauley of the *New York World* was probably the first to adopt the "Big Stick" as a symbol, but literally hundreds of cartoons played on the theme.[20] As Mark Sullivan wrote:

> He started a house-cleaning in one government department or another, and the press flowered with pictures of Roosevelt as the "Old Dutch Cleanser," his strenuous broom an adaptation of the "big stick." He announced his mediation between Japan and Russia, and the mace with which he conducted the peace conference was the "big stick" not too completely concealed by festooned olive-branches—suggesting that any divagation by Roosevelt into pursuit of peace was merely a temporary departure from his native, permanent, and preferred function of hitting heads.[21]

And as soon as one theme played out, another came along to replace it. The hat in the ring, the muckrakers, the statement about feeling like a bull moose, all offered obvious possibilities for treatment. He was, John T. McCutcheon wrote in the *New York Evening Post* just days after Roosevelt left office, "an inexhaustible Golconda of inspiration for the cartoonist."[22]

Although Roosevelt never commented on the subject, it would be surprising if he did not recognize the unique publicity he received from such drawings. It is not simply that they reached the illiterate and semiliterate masses, who could not cross the barrier of language—although that was no small consideration at a time of heavy immigration and when the high-school diploma was still the exception for most Americans. Pictures had an impact greater than words on the population at large, as of course they do to this day. More than keeping him in the public eye, the generally favorable cartoon treatment accorded Roosevelt served to humanize him. He became somebody all Americans knew because they looked at his likeness each day in their newspapers.

Cause and effect in this area is tricky, but one wonders if it is altogether a coincidence that the president who inspired so many cartoons was also the one to be treated with unparalleled familiarity by the people. He was the first chief executive, for example, to be known by his initials. Although family and friends addressed him as Theodore, the public commonly spoke of him as Teddy (as it happens, a nickname he detested). And from that nickname came the phenomenon of the Teddy Bear, inspired by an incident on his disappointing Mississippi hunt in 1902. When a stray cub was brought into camp one day, Roosevelt ordered that the animal not be harmed, and later had it turned loose. Clifford Berryman's cartoon in the *Washington Post*, "Drawing the Line in Mississippi," attracted wide attention to the incident. The marketing of the Teddy Bear followed shortly thereafter. A big-game hunter might seem an inappropriate candidate to lend his name to such a toy, but the more compelling fact was that the people felt they knew Teddy, and his fun-loving qualities somehow suited him to be associated with a stuffed animal that children could cuddle.[23]

In a way that seems in retrospect almost unfair, Roosevelt—who enjoyed so many other advantages in generating publicity—also had a lively family working for him. Never before had the White House been occupied by so many, so young, and so untamed a set of children. There were six, ranging in age from Alice, the president's daughter by his first marriage, who was seventeen at the time of McKinley's assassination, to Quentin, aged four. Their escapades kept the country enthralled, and ensured that even on slow days, the Roosevelt name would still be featured prominently in the press.[24]

Roosevelt certainly did not try to exploit the news value of his children. Like other presidents who have had to contend with obsessive public curiosity about

their private lives, he tried to shield them as much as possible from inquisitive newsmen. On the occasions he could not do so—as in the fall of 1905 when Theodore, Jr., enrolled as a freshman at Harvard, and an army of reporters tagged along to cover his activities—Roosevelt lashed out bitterly against what he termed the "crass, hideous vulgarity" of the press. The other thing to say in fairness, however, is that the children brought much of the publicity upon themselves. Perhaps because of the crushing blow of his first wife's death, Roosevelt was a doting parent who allowed them wide scope in amusing themselves. They responded with a level of exuberance tolerated in few youngsters their age, a level certainly not expected in the White House. Inevitably, enough tales of the high jinks filtered out to generate rich newspaper copy. The children, together with other youngsters they recruited, were into every recess of the building, and no room was so ornate that it could not serve as a playground. They roller-skated and rode bicycles down the long hallway on the second floor; they popped out of vases and linen closets during uproarious games of hide-and-seek; they refreshed themselves with quick dips in the White House fountain, trailing puddles of water back into the house; they deposited pet rodents and snakes in the historic furniture on the upper floors, and made darting raids in their nightclothes on the hors d'oeuvres when guests were being received. A favorite pastime was crawling through the air space between the floors and ceilings, an area that in the history of the White House had been known only to rats and ferrets, and making the building echo to the howls of laughter coming through the beams. On one occasion, they even brought their spotted Shetland pony, Algonquin, up two floors from the basement level on the elevator to visit in Archie's room. "Nothing was too sacred to be used for their amusement," the White House majordomo wrote somewhat acidly, "and no place too good for a playroom. The children seemed to be encouraged in these ideas by their elders, and it was a brave man indeed who would dare say no or suggest putting a stop to their escapades." In that case, it must have been doubly galling for the harried steward that the country, far from sharing his annoyance, found the stories rather delightful.[25]

Alice was easily the most prolific of the newsmakers, if only because at her age it was difficult to conceal her escapades from public view. As the first teenage girl in the White House since Nellie Grant, she would have attracted attention whatever her personality. The fact that she took after her father in so many respects made the attention almost obsessive. Impulsive, unconventional, boundlessly energetic, she pursued pleasure with the same abandon Roosevelt demonstrated in his activities, and in the process, kept the newspaper-reading public enthralled.

Certainly, Alice lived by her own law. For one thing, she smoked, a most unladylike habit at that time. She also tended to get into the sort of adventures not usually associated with a president's daughter. One such occasion, which provided good press copy, was a high-speed automobile ride she and another young woman made "without chaperone" from Newport to Boston. When he read the accounts, her father wrote her a letter that "scorched the paper on which it was written." Not that the rebuke slowed her down perceptibly. "Why don't you look after Alice more?" a friend once asked Roosevelt. "Listen," he responded. "I can be President of the United States—or—I can attend to

Alice." And since he couldn't do both, she went her merry way, with reporters often in tow. "My 'publicity value' was, I fear, at times a trial to the family," Alice remarked uncontritely in her autobiography.[26]

By the same token, nothing in public reaction on reading about her happy-go-lucky romp through life would have encouraged her to be contrite. To the press, she was "Princess Alice," a title that pretty well summed up the popular view. It says something about the young woman's popularity that a shade of blue was named for her, which later inspired a hit song, "Alice Blue Gown." Publicity had elevated her into a kind of royalty. She could scarcely make a public appearance during the White House years without being serenaded to the tune, "Alice, Where Art Thou?" "It was amusing when it first happened," she recalled, "but the novelty soon wore off and I developed a pretty fair technique, that conveyed amusement, surprise, and appreciation at the combination of attention and jest. The nice people who did it were always so pleased that they had thought of it."[27]

Something extremely important in American life was happening. When public attention focuses so intently on a president's family—follows their everyday activities, soaks up gossip about them, makes judgments about what they are each like—the office ceases to be simply political and takes on symbolic characteristics as well. The concept "first family" is one of the ways the presidency is different from any other office in the land. Senators may have enormous influence, but they are, after all, still only politicians. How many people know, or even care to know, the names of their senators' wives and children? A president is like a monarch, and for reasons that have at least as much to do with the way the country regards him as with the power he wields. By concentrating so closely on his private life, including his family, the public makes him more than he is constitutionally. A republic is supposed to find its symbols of nationhood in inanimate objects like the flag, and in ritual gestures like the Pledge of Allegiance. Intense publicity elevates the presidency into a living symbol.

The importance of the Roosevelt years is not that the process began then, but that modern journalism, together with a newsworthy family, brought it to a new dimension. Many reasons explain why power has flowed to the White House in the twentieth century. Among them, if not the most important, then certainly worth recognizing, is the personalization and glorification of the presidency involved in this heightened concept of first family. In a sense, Roosevelt's lively brood did more than help him dominate the news; by being newsworthy, they contributed in their own way to changing the nature of the office he filled.

The payoff for Roosevelt came in the political arena. As he remarked in one of his glittering phrases, the White House offered him a "bully pulpit." He stood at center stage, dominating the attention of the country, and able to generate publicity at will to further whatever cause he happened to be pushing at the moment. He pursued the advantage unashamedly. Through conversations with reporters, through daily press releases, through speaking tours with a contingent of friendly newsmen in tow (he called them his "swings around the circle"), through government reports issued at the moment they would do the most good, Roosevelt bombarded the nation's press with the political message

that served his purposes. His adversaries recognized what he was up to, but they could do precious little about it. "I say to you in all seriousness," Ben Tillman of South Carolina remarked ruefully in the Senate in January 1906,

> that Theodore Roosevelt owes more of his success as a public man to the newspaper men of this country than any other one instrumentality. . . . The news is colored and sifted to suit his idea of what it ought to be to maintain the great popularity which he has won, to preserve in the imagination of the people the hold he has on them. Speaking allegorically, the actual condition at the White House has been for many, many months that of a quack doctor who has certain pills which he wishes to prescribe for the public. The newspapers have been the spoon. . . . Roosevelt's pills on Roosevelt, Roosevelt's pills on railway rate legislation, Roosevelt's pills on everything pertaining to public affairs are administered in this way.

Tillman didn't mean it as a compliment, but of course he described one of the foundations of presidential power in the modern era.[28]

What makes the Roosevelt phenomenon all the more interesting was his sensitivity to the finer points in manipulating publicity. The press did not always receive its daily quota of information from the White House in equal and open portions. News surfaced in different ways to serve different purposes. The trick for Roosevelt was in deciding on the most effective method of release in various situations; for reporters, in getting as much information as they could without in the process being exploited by the president.

They dreaded, for example, his frequent use of trial balloons. These are disclosures about proposed actions given on a background basis, nowadays usually to columnists, to test public reaction. If the response is good, the proposal becomes policy, and the reporter used to float the story gains status for his inside contacts. A negative response brings a denial. By their nature, trial balloons are difficult to identify. An advance announcement that is later confirmed by events is usually just accurate information. The story denied, and not subsequently borne out by events, is usually just misinformation. Somewhere in both categories are trial balloons successfully floated or shot down, but often the reporter himself cannot be sure when he has been used to hold the string. Still, as Roosevelt demonstrated on numerous occasions, the technique can be useful as a way for a president to test the political currents without exposing himself.

Another of his techniques was blanketing the news. He understood that presidents, by being able to command publicity for themselves, can also deny it to others. If they wish to keep a rival off the front page, or at least minimize his coverage, all they have to do is give out so much news on a given day that the press is hard put to handle the flow. Since presidents always have priority, the rival is squeezed into whatever space remains. This Roosevelt demonstrated in 1908, when he decided to swamp Charles Evans Hughes's announcement of his presidential candidacy by timing the release of a particularly controversial message to Congress to overlap with the announcement. Some people thought it an underhanded thing to do, but as the president remarked blandly to reporters a couple of days later, "If Hughes is going to play the game, he must learn the tricks."[29]

Roosevelt knew them all. He knew, for example, about the use of leaks, a method of publicity by which the story is released to a trusted reporter on the understanding that the source's identity will not be revealed. It took a Theodore Roosevelt to recognize that, under certain circumstances, a tactic conventionally associated with underlings trying to influence policy could also work for a president. It might be that he wanted to circulate information that would seem partisan or self-serving coming from his lips. A leak could be a way to have the news appear in the papers as a disinterested statement of fact, and likely to be all the more prominently featured since journalists are not typically modest about their exclusives. Roosevelt even appreciated the nuances in choosing the recipients of leaks. All things being equal, he preferred the stories to appear in opposition newspapers because the gambit was less transparent that way.[30]

Backgrounders are another device to manipulate the news, and one Roosevelt used often. They come in various forms, but all involve sessions in which public officials speak with reporters on issues of the day, with the understanding that their remarks will not be attributed directly to them. If the president is the source, for example, a euphemism like "White House spokesman" might be used. In some cases, as with "deep background," the understanding is that there will be no attribution at all (which makes the backgrounder much like a leak, only a collective one in that the information is released to several reporters at once). The arrangement can easily be abused by officials who say nothing so remarkable that they should not be held publicly accountable for their words. There is also something absurd about backgrounders when, as often happens, everyone knows the source of the story except the newspaper reader. In politics, as in other areas of life, a transparent veil is provocative more than discreet. Still, these sessions can be a useful way to release information that might otherwise be awkward to impart. The point is not usually to maintain deniability; certainly not when the press is seen in a body. But being put on the record is like chiseling words in stone. Public figures sometimes want to be heard without raising their voices, and on those occasions, the backgrounder is a convenience. Roosevelt certainly found it so.

Something else followed from this intense absorption with publicity that may itself be an aspect of the modern presidency. In assessing the achievements of the Roosevelt Administration, it is striking how image often seems to weigh almost as heavily as substance as an element in the story. Indeed, what stands out in retrospect about many of the president's greatest political triumphs is the extent to which they were largely triumphs in public relations. The point is not that he won hollow victories; it is just that his typical strategy in any situation was to so dramatize the issue that people tended to credit him with more than he in fact achieved—or perhaps a better way to put it, with something *different* from what he in fact achieved.

His attack on the Northern Securities Company in 1902 is a case in point. In choosing this particular target to inaugurate his trust-busting activities, Roosevelt demonstrated again his shrewd publicity sense and appreciation for the importance of symbols in politics. He picked as adversaries men who were household names as the plutocrats of American life, J.P. Morgan and Edward Harriman among them. He picked an area of business endeavor—the railroad industry—that probably affected people more directly than any other, and

therefore stirred greatest resentment as an example of corporate abuse. And since it was essential to win to make his point that businessmen were not above the law, he had the good sense to pick a case where the opposition was particularly vulnerable, if only because of still-fresh memories of how the trust had been formed. It is hardly surprising that the Administration's successful prosecution of Northern Securities, and its subsequent suits against such giants as Standard Oil (John D. Rockefeller's company, a figure rivaled only by J.P. Morgan for the onus attached to his name), the American Tobacco Company, the New Haven Railroad, and DuPont earned Roosevelt enormous popularity, if not in the business community, then among voters at large.

The only problem is that the hosannas largely misread what he actually felt about industrial amalgamation and his actual record in office. Roosevelt did not aspire to restore competition by breaking up the giant combines. He regarded bigness in industry as a corollary of progress and, on balance, a blessing. The challenge, as Roosevelt saw it, was to encourage bigness while at the same time regulate its abuses. This could be done, he believed, by distinguishing between "good" and "bad" corporations, leaving the former alone while using the power of the government to bring the latter to account. Indeed, between them, he and McKinley presided over the period of greatest business consolidation in American history. It is not too extreme to say that the economy was restructured during their years in office. Of the 318 major corporations in the United States at the beginning of 1904, 236, with a total capitalization exceeding $6 billion, had been formed since 1897. They represented 74 percent of all companies that might reasonably be considered as falling within the purview of the Sherman Act. The Roosevelt record comes into better focus again when compared to that of his successor. Few Americans of the time were impressed that William Howard Taft—unimaginative, conservative, sadly unsuited for the presidency—initiated more suits in four years than Roosevelt did in seven; or that he dared to take on the two corporations, United States Steel and International Harvester, his predecessor had carefully left alone.[31]

The moral is not that Roosevelt consciously deceived the people or acted as the pawn of big business. On balance, he probably went as far in curbing the excesses of the moneymen as was wise or possible in the first decade of the century. Still, the excitement he engendered by moving against companies of particular symbolic importance, and doing it noisily, made him a hero for the wrong reasons. His skill at playing the politics of the dramatic gesture explains why—despite having no animosity against bigness in industry, despite serving during the period when more mergers than ever before or since in American history occurred, and despite the counterevidence provided in numerous histories and biographies—he was regarded in his own time and by later generations as "Teddy, the trust-buster."

Something of the same discrepancy between Roosevelt's actual achievement, which was considerable, and the image that grew up around him, is visible in the long struggle to secure a bill for government regulation of railroad rates. The passage of the Hepburn Act in 1906 represented his crowning triumph as a reform leader. Allies and enemies both conceded that without the president's involvement, the victory could not have been won, certainly not in that year. And yet, precisely because Roosevelt fought in a way characteristic of

him, through a massive publicity campaign calculated to arouse popular emotions, he became identified as more of a militant on the issue than in fact he was, and the bill he secured as more far-reaching in its provisions than was actually the case.

The president's activity on several fronts to drum up support for a measure to regulate rates, and to combat the lobbying against it, certainly qualifies as a glittering example of the uses of publicity for political purposes. Starting with a speech on the subject before the Union League Club of Philadelphia in January 1905, the barrage of stories never let up. He made two "swings around the circle"—one to Texas and another through the Southeast—to stir up enthusiasm for the reform. He had reporters in daily for their little chats. He leaked information damaging to the opposition. He noisily launched investigations of the railroad industry, and when moments of quiet threatened, just as noisily released the results. "The cannonade of head-lines took on cumulative frequency," Mark Sullivan recalled; "occasionally, indeed, two or more jostled each other on the same front page, the general saturation of the atmosphere causing *Life* to remark, plaintively, that 'there are a few solvent and respectable persons left in the country who have not yet been investigated.' " And to make sure that he left no bet uncovered, he also brought magazines into the campaign. Ray Stannard Baker's five-part series on corruption in the railroad industry that began in the November 1905 issue of *McClure's* proved particularly helpful, and characteristically, Roosevelt not only cooperated in the preparation of the articles (to the extent of offering Baker office space and access to government files), but at the reporter's invitation, monitored each article before it appeared.[32]

The Hepburn Act was introduced in the House of Representatives in January 1906, and passed by a lopsided vote of 364 to 7 in early February. The Senate took up the measure in late February, and after extensive parliamentary maneuvering, passed it in mid-May by almost as impressive a majority, 71 to 3. By any reasonable standard—considering the effort that went into securing the principle of rate regulation—Roosevelt had won a famous victory. The law represented the single most important step until that date in America's adjustment to being an industrial society. As long as the free marketplace no longer existed, government had to assume an increasing supervisory function, and Roosevelt more than any other individual contributed with his victory to the breakthrough.

Why, then, is it also possible to speak of the act as illustrating the frequent discrepancy between the reality of what Roosevelt accomplished and the version the people accepted? The reason is similar to what happened in the case of his antitrust policy. Sheer force of publicity, which Roosevelt carefully managed, tended to obscure attention from what the quarrel was really about and the terms on which the quarrel was resolved. The outpouring of articles in newspapers and magazines conveyed the impression of a villainous railroad industry, so greedy for profit that it opposed any form of accountability, and of a heroic president, so determined to bring big business under control that he would fight to the political death for the cause. The truth was more complex.

By 1905 realists on both sides of the issue realized that some sort of rate legislation was inevitable, which meant that the struggle really came down to

the form the legislation should take. On this subject, Roosevelt, while preferring a relatively stringent measure if he could get congressional approval, found it easier than some of his contemporaries to scale down his ambitions should circumstances warrant. After working closely for a while with the militant reformers in the Senate, he abandoned them at the expedient moment and opted for a law far milder than they would have accepted. No matter what the question—whether the Interstate Commerce Commission should have power to set definite or only maximum rates; whether the Commission's rulings should be subject to narrow judicial review or broad review; whether limitations should be placed on the power of the courts to issue injunctions against ICC-imposed rates while cases were under litigation; or whether the ICC should be authorized to evaluate the worth of railroads as a basis to fix fair rates—he accepted the conservative position on all. Robert LaFollette, one of the reformers Roosevelt left in the lurch when he decided to come to terms with the old guard in the party, remarked bitterly on the discrepancy between presidential publicity and presidential performance in the Hepburn fight. "This cannonading," the Wisconsin senator wrote in his autobiography, "first in one direction and then in another, filled the air with noise and smoke . . . , but when the battle cloud drifted by and quiet was restored, it was always a matter of surprise that so little had really been accomplished.[33]

Accepting that LaFollette was no admirer of Roosevelt, and that his assessment is not altogether fair, he still had a point. The lopsided margin by which the Hepburn Act passed the Senate is the best indication that the law was not something jammed down the throat of big business. It was the achievement of a pragmatic-minded politician who, when forced to choose, preferred partial victory in the present to the promise of total victory at some future date. In the Hepburn fight, Roosevelt spoke loudly and carried a small stick.

What, then, is to be said of his reform record? If he seemed to contemporaries as something different from what he actually was, the power of publicity helps to explain why. Finally, we know public figures by the images they project, wittingly or unwittingly. Roosevelt, a master of image-making, knew precisely how he wanted to appear: crusader against special privilege in the eyes of the voters; defender of sound principles in the eyes of political and business leaders. One of the reasons he is such a fascinating figure in history is that he pretty well succeeded in pulling off the sleight-of-hand. But maybe that is what all successful (or popular) administrations in the modern era are about. If so, this president provided many of the pointers on how to manage it.

References

This article is based on portions of my book *News From the White House: The Presidential-Press Relationship in the Progressive Era* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981).

[1]The meeting is described in *Forty Years in Washington*, by David S. Barry (Boston: Little, Brown, 1924), pp. 266-68. William L. Rivers quotes Roosevelt's warning to Keen in *The Adversaries: Politics and the Press* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1970), p. 18.

[2]For descriptions of the "barber chair" conferences, see Lincoln Steffens, *The Autobiography of Lincoln Steffens* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1931), pp. 509-10, and Louis Brownlow, *A Passion for Politics* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1955), p. 399. "A more skillful barber never existed," Brownlow wrote. " 'Teddy' in an ordinary armchair would be lathered, and, as the razor would descend toward his face, someone would ask a question. The President would wave both arms, jump up, speak excitedly, and then drop again into the chair and grin at the barber, who would

begin all over. Sometimes these explosions interrupted a shave ten or a dozen times. It was more fun to see than a circus." Oscar K. Davis of the *New York Times* wrote of his evening chats with the president in *Released for Publication: Some Inside Political History of Theodore Roosevelt and His Times, 1898-1918* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1925), p. 128. The reporter marveled at Roosevelt's ability to scan the mail, making occasional corrections and signing his name, while at the same time keeping a conversation going.

[3]Isaac F. Marcosson was one of those who found an "almost astonishing frankness" on his visits to the White House. See *Adventures in Interviewing* (New York: John Lane Company, 1920), pp. 87-88. According to William Allen White, Roosevelt occasionally even liked to discomfit officials trying to discuss private matters with him, by speaking in a purposely loud voice so that reporters waiting outside his office could follow the conversation. *Masks in a Pageant* (New York: Macmillan, 1928), p. 307.

[4]The figures are drawn from tables in *The Daily Newspaper in America: The Evolution of a Social Instrument*, by Alfred McClung Lee (New York: Macmillan, 1937), pp. 725-26, 728-29. See also Daniel Boorstin, "Selling the President to the People," *Commentary* 20 (November 1955): 422.

[5]Data on rising advertising revenue appears in Lee, *Daily Newspaper in America*, pp. 748-49.

[6]Helen MacGill Hughes, *News and the Human Interest Story* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1940), p. 31.

[7]Joseph B. Bishop, "Newspaper Espionage," *Forum* 1 (August 1886): 535. The *New York Times*' overblown account of the wedding appeared on June 3, 1886. For a good example of the honeymoon coverage, see the *New York World* for the five or six days following.

[8]Quoted in Rivers, *The Adversaries*, p. 20. Another comment by Roosevelt on the importance of the working press can be found in his *An Autobiography* (New York: Macmillan, 1913), p. 354.

[9]This version of how the White House press corps came into being appears in numerous sources. See, for example, Delbert Clark, *Washington Dateline* (New York: Frederick A. Stokes Company, 1941), pp. 53-54.

[10]The building of the west wing is described in *The White House: A Biography*, by Charles Hurd (New York: Harper, 1940), pp. 225-44. The work was carried out with remarkable speed, but so carelessly that the mansion had to be rebuilt again within a relatively short time. See Brownlow, *A Passion for Politics*, p. 35. Frederick Essary, the veteran correspondent for the *Baltimore Sun*, commented on the importance for reporters in having telephones available in *Covering Washington: Government Reflected to the Public in the Press* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1927), pp. 87-88. The closest they had come previously to enjoying such a convenience was during the Spanish-American War, when the Associated Press installed a direct telegraph wire from the White House to its office in the Star Building. See F. B. Marbut, *News From the Capital: The Story of Washington Reporting* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois Press, 1971), p. 169.

[11]Davis, *Released for Publication*, p. 124.

[12]Quoted in Mark Sullivan, *Our Times*, vol. 3, *Pre-War America* (New York: Scribner's, 1930), pp. 72-73.

[13]Ibid., pp. 71-72. One drawback for Roosevelt in this kind of colorfulness was that he had to contend throughout his career with gossip about his drinking. It seemed inconceivable that any normal being could carry on in the way he did without the aid of stimulants. Lincoln Steffens remembered an occasion when the president on his way to a cabinet meeting expressed concern about the rumors on Wall Street that he was habitually drunk, and even took drugs. "Now what should I do about that?" he asked. "Should I take it up and fight it or should I ignore it?" Steffens offered the sensible advice that Roosevelt should follow his own first rule in such cases: "Never deny anything unless it is true." The president thought that just the right response, and a few minutes later laughingly repeated the line to his cabinet. As Steffens noted wryly, nobody else seemed to be amused. Steffens, *Autobiography*, pp. 511-12.

[14]*New York Times*, October 15, 1912.

[15]Ibid.

[16]Ibid., October 17, 1912.

[17]Willis J. Abbot, a long-time Hearst employee, who assumed the editorship of the *Christian Science Monitor* in 1921 and raised the paper to its present eminence, wrote of Roosevelt's shrewdness on this point in *Watching the World Go By* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1933), p. 244.

[18]Arthur Wallace Dunn, *From Harrison to Harding: A Personal Narrative Covering a Third of a Century, 1888-1921* (New York: Putnam's, 1922), vol. 2, pp. 24-25.

[19]On testing the dogs, see letter from Roosevelt to Major John Pitcher, March 2, 1903, in *The Letters of Theodore Roosevelt*, edited by Elting E. Morison (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1951-1954), vol. 3, p. 437. The injunction about requiring the first kill is quoted in *Theodore Roosevelt: A Biography*, by Henry F. Pringle (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1931), p. 345.

[20]Stephen Hess and Milton Kaplan credit Macauley with introducing the big stick symbol in *The Ungentlemanly Art: A History of American Political Cartoons* (New York: Macmillan, 1968), p. 132.

[21]Sullivan, *Our Times*, vol. 3, p. 78.

[22]John T. McCutcheon assessed the Roosevelt influence on his craft in "Roosevelt as Cartoon Material," *New York Evening Post*, March 13, 1901.

[23]Clifford K. Berryman, "Drawing the Line in Mississippi," detail from "The Passing Show," *Washington Post*, November 16, 1902.

[24]The other children were Theodore, 14; Kermit, 12; Ethel, 10; and Archibald, 7.

[25]Roosevelt castigated the vulgarity of the press in a letter to Harvard president Charles W. Eliot on September 29, 1905. See *Letters of Roosevelt* vol. 5, p. 52. The annoyed reaction to the antics of the children appears in Irwin "Ike" Hoover, *Forty-Two Years in the White House* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1934), p. 28.

[26]Alice Roosevelt Longworth wrote of her father's unhappiness about the automobile ride in *Crowded Hours* (New York: Scribner's, 1933), pp. 60-61, and of her "publicity value" being a trial to the family, p. 59. The remark about having to choose between being president or curbing Alice is recounted in Owen Wister, *Roosevelt: The Story of a Friendship, 1880-1919* (New York: Macmillan, 1930), p. 87.

[27]Longworth, *Crowded Hours*, p. 77.

[28]*Congressional Record*, 59th Congress, 1st Session, vol. 40, part 2, January 17, 1906, p. 1181.

[29]Quoted in William Henry Harbaugh, *Power and Responsibility: The Life and Times of Theodore Roosevelt* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Cudahy, 1961), p. 355.

[30]Veteran journalist David Lawrence commented on Roosevelt's shrewdness in choosing the recipients of leaks in "Shop Talk at Thirty," *Editor & Publisher* 77 (May 27, 1944): 64.

[31]Arthur S. Link discusses industrial consolidation during the McKinley-Roosevelt years in *American Epoch: A History of the United States Since the 1890's* (New York: Knopf, 1955), pp. 48-49.

[32]On the Union League speech, see *New York Times*, January 31, 1905. Coverage of his two "swings around the circle" appears in the press during April and May 1905, and again during October 1905. Sullivan referred to the "cannonade of headlines" in *Our Times*, vol. 3, p. 235. Baker mentioned Roosevelt's offers of assistance in a letter to his father dated January 29, 1905. Cited in Harold S. Wilson, *McClure's Magazine and the Muckrakers* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1970), p. 275. He described Roosevelt going over the proofs of the articles in *American Chronicle: The Autobiography of Ray Stannard Baker* (New York: Scribner's, 1945), p. 194.

[33]Robert M. LaFollette, *LaFollette's Autobiography: A Personal Narrative of Political Experience* (Madison, Wisconsin: The Robert M. LaFollette Co., 1913), p. 479.

ARTHUR MARWICK

Print, Pictures, and Sound: The Second World War and the British Experience

IN THE LONG RUN, said Keynes, we are all dead. In the long run, no doubt, the imperatives of technology and of the market were already pressing Britain in the 1940s toward that mix of video and print culture that now obtains throughout the industrialized world. Yet, if we are to understand fully the relationship of print to picture to sound in Britain during the Second World War, and indeed, the development of the relationship between print and the visual media thereafter, we must examine carefully both the peculiar characteristics of the British and the particular impact the war had on British society. Thus I start by establishing the basic shape of mass communications in the Britain of the 1930s. Then, in taking in turn the main media of communication as they developed, changed, and impacted on each other during the war, I stress the important contingent phenomena: the sense of isolation and fear of invasion in 1940, the blitz, the need to maintain morale, the thirst for knowledge about international events and the growth of a new awareness of the relevance of social issues, the General Election of 1945, and the question of Britain's political future. Finally, I look at the use that has been made of visual material and video communication in reinterpreting the Second World War for the present generation, and at the special British mythologies that film and television reinforced and perpetuated.

Before the War

By the end of the twenties, three major press empires were clearly established, those of Lord Beaverbrook *(Daily Express* and London *Evening Standard)*, Lord Rothermere *(Daily Mail)*, and the Berry Brothers *(Daily Telegraph)*. Odhams Press, publishers of cheap books and a variety of magazines, had taken over the dull official Labor paper, the *Daily Herald*, reorganizing it in 1930 as a newspaper in which Labor politics were mixed with features of general appeal to working-class and lower-middle-class readers. In the same year, the two London-based Liberal newspapers, the *Daily News* and the *Daily Chronicle*, were amalgamated into the *News Chronicle*. Although Lords Beaverbrook and Rothermere hoped to use their newspapers to assert their own eccentric right-wing opinions, the *Times* saw itself as a "national institution conducted solely in the best interests of the nation and the Empire,"[1] the *Herald* and the *News Chronicle*

had their own distinctive political platforms, and the rest of the London-based press was Conservative in outlook, the basic concern of *all* newspapers, regardless of orientation or ideology, had to be the winning of advertising revenue, since they derived only half of their income from the selling price of the newspaper. Economic recession, however, which forced a falling-off in advertising, put the burden of remaining above water on increased circulation. The development of moderately prosperous lower-middle-class and working-class housing estates in areas where there *was* real economic growth pushed the press into a feverish circulation war in which readers were bribed with Shakespeare, Dickens, and free insurance. The newspapers faring best were the *Express*, which appealed to the middle-middle class and beyond, and the *Herald*, which could depend on a core of loyal Labor readership. The *Mail*, which remained rather staid by comparison, drew its strength from the middle-aged middle class of both sexes, and in consequence lost out slightly by the end of the decade. The most significant development was the emergence, from 1935 onward, of a new *Daily Mirror*. The *Mirror*, strongly Conservative in tone, had aimed, somewhat uneasily, at a combination of upper-class and lower-middle-class readers. It took a new editorial direction in 1935 when it was turned into a genuine tabloid with snappy, provocative headlines and trivial, but appealing, news stories. There was as yet no consistent political stance—the paper was certainly not Labor—but it moved away from extreme conservatism to a kind of erratic populism. The most prestigious provincial newspapers (mostly Conservative in outlook, though the *Manchester Guardian* cut a distinctive figure for its strong—and leftish—liberalism) continued to be read by the upper middle and middle classes in the provinces, but could not compete with the expanding circulation of the London-based national dailies.

By the late thirties, about three quarters of the 35 million adults in Britain read at least one of the eight national daily newspapers, with many people reading more than one. Circulation figures for the summer of 1937 were as follows:

Daily Express	2,330,000
Daily Herald	2,000,000
Daily Mail	1,580,000
Daily Mirror	1,367,000
News Chronicle	1,324,000
Daily Sketch	850,000
Daily Telegraph	637,000
The Times	192,000
Total	10,280,000

Most households, however, contained more than one reader, and with newspapers available in libraries and—particularly the *Daily Herald*—in workingmen's clubs, actual readership figures were much higher. On the eve of the war, these were:

Daily Express	7,300,000
Daily Herald	5,850,000
Daily Mirror	4,350,000
News Chronicle	3,700,000
Daily Mail	3,600,000
Daily Sketch	1,700,000
Daily Telegraph	1,600,000
The Times	350,000

The figures show the rise of the *Mirror*, which was now bringing in male working-class readers from the South and the Midlands, and the relative decline both of the *Mail* and of the rather characterless *Sketch*. The *Daily Telegraph* presented itself as a "serious newspaper." Less austere and more blatantly Conservative than the *Times*, it was read by aspiring, Conservative-minded people at all levels of the middle class, and by ultra-right members of the upper class. The *Times* came very close to being a spokesman for the Conservative-dominated national government, though always aiming to be national, rather than partisan, in approach: it was bought mainly by upper-class and upper-middle-class readers, including, because of its special status, those of Liberal and, indeed, Labor persuasion. The British press was certainly more centralized than in any other developed country; yet, while Conservative opinion was no doubt overrepresented, the range of opinion offered was far from negligible. What is perhaps more important is that the papers read by the great majority of the British people were not very enlightening on major international issues nor could they, by their very nature, draw their readers into active interest in local issues.[2]

Two forces, one minor and mainly privately sponsored, the other major and state-sponsored, were deliberately and consciously designed to break through the ignorance of the British public. In my view, the significance of the "documentary movement" of the thirties has been exaggerated, although it did influence a number of different media and eventually had some effect on the important developments of the war period itself. The films made by John Grierson and his associates were patronizing and contrived, and outside the small coterie of mainly upper-class and upper-middle-class devotees, had no great immediate influence. During this period, the great American realist photographers used their art to capture images that added strikingly to the arguments over American social issues. Yet scarcely any British photographer, even the most famous, such as James Jarché, used photography as a means of positive communication, as opposed to a simple medium of record or of reinforcing stereotypes. The most important product of the documentary movement was *Picture Post*,[3] which aimed at a more positive photojournalism than its rather anemic precursor of a few years earlier, *Illustrated Weekly*. Its political stance, however, did not go beyond that of a more cultured *Daily Mirror*, for although its editor was on the left, its proprietor was a staunch Conservative.[4]

Possibly, so much attention has been paid the documentary film movement because British films of the thirties have been so readily written off. Until very

recently it was almost dogma that what British audiences of the thirties sought in films was sheer escapism and the opportunity to identify with and ape the hairstyles and mannerisms of America's celluloid heroines and heroes. British-made films, it was said, were simply imitations of Hollywood's, endured by exhibitors and audiences largely because the law insisted that a certain proportion of all films shown be British products. Even in the most active years of British production, the early and middle thirties, British films accounted for no more than 30 percent of releases in any year, although as some compensation, they were shown more often than American ones. Yet a good deal of recent research indicates that British films combined special national characteristics with a special popularity of their own. It was the American trade magazine *Variety*, of January 3, 1933, that attributed "the increasing domestic popularity of the British film to its increased compatibility with the temperament of home audiences." With a third of the population going weekly, the cinema, as the *New Survey of London Life and Labour* reported in 1934, "is *par excellence* the people's amusement."[5] The reports of the British Board of Film Censors (a voluntary body of the film industry that worked closely with the government) make it clear that there was little worry about American films (like the Warner Brothers' movies that provided sharp social comment rather than escapism) causing social dissension within Britain. British films, however, were monitored from preproduction stages onward, and producers were discouraged from dealing with topics that could involve domestic political or social conflict. Yet, although some critics claim that the British cinema was deliberately manipulated in the thirties in order to contain any possible threat of revolutionary violence, others argue that the appearance of an alternative "workers' cinema" shows that such control was really not successful. Such arguments seem to me to overemphasize any influence the cinema could possibly have had; certainly, the workers' cinema was of infinitesimal importance. In spite of appalling unemployment and shameful social conditions, and despite the move toward Marxism of certain intellectuals, all evidence points to a profoundly stable and cohesive society in Britain in the thirties. Audiences welcomed films that portrayed working-class figures, such as those of George Formby and Gracie Fields, and recognizable working-class environments, such as in *Hindle Wakes*, *South Riding*, and *The Stars Look Down*. These films were populist, not socialist, in tone. But then the majority of the British people, including those who loyally voted for the Labor Party throughout that often desperate decade, were not socialist either. The great protest novels of the thirties, such as *Love on the Dole* (turned down twice by the film censors) and *Means Test Man*, while giving stark insights into the lot of the working class, scarcely present an image of a society ridden by conflict.[6] One can venture to say that, far from threatening the stability of British society, the cinema in fact reinforced the established order of things, either through sheer escapism or an affirmation of British values. Yet, the film censors were, I think, unduly timorous; there was little will to revolutionary conflict in British society. The *Daily Herald*, after all, wanted a change of government, not a change of regime. But there *was* a need for vigorous portrayal of the social evils that existed. British cinema in the thirties was part-and-parcel of the apathy and complacency that marked the decade.

British newsreels, which were devoted mainly to stunts and sporting events, can be almost ignored. When they did cover a serious news item, their treatment of it was invariably trite and trivial. Further, the newsreels were without doubt implicitly Conservative in tone: an item that allegedly gave Neville Chamberlain and Clement Attlee equal opportunity to make their cases, filmed Chamberlain securely seated with prime-ministerial authority, and Attlee in a most uncomfortable and unimpressive pose. The Jarrow Hunger marchers of 1936, having the official support of the Labor Party and many others, were treated very fairly in the newsreels; the marches organized by the Communist-sponsored National Unemployed Workers' Movement, much less so. But British newsreels went beyond conservatism. Effective censorship pressure prevented Nazi Germany from ever being shown in too unfavorable a light, and *Inside Nazi Germany*, from the American March of Time series—with which British newsreels compared quite unfavorably—was actually banned. Newsreel presentation of the Spanish Civil War tended, though never blatantly, to favor the rebels, which simply echoed the sympathies of the upper class, to which the film companies' owners belonged.[7] Thus newsreels contributed little, if anything, to the enlightenment of the British public on major international or domestic issues. Hunger marches organized by the unemployed, and reported widely in *all* the media, did more to gain the attention of people living in areas largely unaffected by the depression than any newsreel coverage. And the nature of Nazism must certainly have come through in films of Nazi rallies, but without incisive analytical commentary to reinforce their perceptions, the British people were probably left with a sense of Hitler as a very un-British oddball rather than a vicious menace to European peace.

But what of the output of the British Broadcasting Corporation, which, as a product of Tory paternalism, was positively *committed* to enlightenment? The BBC was affected by the documentary movement, but when it attempted to deal with "ordinary life" in such broadcasts as "Coal" or "Cotton People," it was scarcely able to step outside the preconceptions of the mainly upper-class people who determined its policies. "Cotton People" ended up with a fundamental Tory, protectionist message: "Until a check is put on unfair foreign competition, Cotton and the Cotton People must suffer."[8] In fact, the BBC's strong suit was the elevation of cultural taste rather than news or current affairs. News bulletins were stiff and formal, and told nothing that could not readily be gleaned from the newspapers. There was little exploitation of the possibilities of on-the-spot broadcasting from major events or trouble spots, though by the end of the decade, ideas for this were being worked out. And there was a strong instinct to avoid potential areas of controversy. Yet in terms of numbers of listeners, the popularity of the BBC rose critically during the thirties. As a public corporation banning advertisements and sponsorship, the BBC derived its operating revenues from the sale of licenses that all who owned receiving sets were required to purchase. In the late twenties, radio was still a rich man's luxury: by March 1927, only 2,269,644 licenses had been issued. But by the end of 1938, the number of licenses had increased fourfold, to 8,856,494, a figure about two and a quarter million less than the total circulation of the eight

national newspapers at that time, and representing a radio set in three quarters of all British households. According to surveys made by the BBC, their audience was 40 percent middle class, 60 percent working class. The upper class was too small statistically to be counted; perhaps also the BBC saw itself as representing the upper class, projecting its uplifting broadcasts upon an audience that consisted exclusively of the middle and working classes.[9]

Television broadcasts, based on the same noncommercial, public service principles, began shortly before the war, and then only to a very limited audience in the London area. With the outbreak of war, broadcasts were suspended, and thus can scarcely figure in any evaluation into the impact and interrelationship of the mass media in the thirties. What does stand out is that all the forms of mass communication discussed herein advanced together; no one medium pushed forward at the expense of another, and the documentary idea, for example, can be seen as stimulating both visual and print forms. The production and sale of novels was certainly not adversely affected by the cinema: if anything, such novels as Winifred Holtby's *South Riding* were given additional publicity and sales impetus by the film based on the book.

The growth of the mass media is sometimes linked to an alleged Americanization of Britain. Even in the realm of films, this position would seem to be overstated; and it must be noted that the BBC, in its resistance to sponsored broadcasting, and its exemplification of a responsible alternative, was clearly standing out against what were thought of as American values. For news, factual information, and current affairs, the basic source for the British people was the newspaper. And although the quality of the news service provided by the mass circulation papers was not very high, the working-class audience for newspapers nevertheless expanded in the late thirties. In their handling of the newer media, such as sound broadcasting and both still photography and film, the groups and individuals who controlled these means, from the powerful owners of film companies and officials of the BBC to artisan photographers, were essentially conservative both in technique and in what they sought to achieve.

The War Years

Obviously, wartime conditions, by offering opportunities and imposing restrictions, profoundly affected the various media. Before examining the separate media, however, it is important to look at both censorship—which had the negative function of stopping the communication of "news" that might help the enemy—and propaganda—which has the positive function of creating "news" that will have a deleterious effect on the enemy, or at least mislead him. Another positive function is to encourage one's own military personnel or civilians, or at least convey basic information on, for example, how to economize on food. Negative effects were achieved through direct censorship by the military authorities, by restricting access to areas where anything of significance might be going on, and by censorship through civilian authorities. Defence Regulation 3, which prohibited British citizens from "obtaining, recording, communicating to any other person or publishing information which might be useful to an enemy," was largely responsible for achieving the last of

these. Defence Regulation 39b, which made it an offense "in any manner likely to prejudice the efficient prosecution of the war to obtain, possess or publish information on military matters" was also effective.[10] In addition, the Ministry of Information scrutinized all photographs, and expected all items of any possible military sensitivity that originated elsewhere to be submitted for clearance. Up to a point, the censorship was retrospective, and individual prosecutions apart, the government had the power to close down summarily any newspaper offending in whatever way. The positive aspects affected the military authorities and service ministries that were responsible for news releases on all major military matters, the Ministry of Economic Warfare, and again, the Ministry of Information, whose communications covered a wide range of both military and domestic matters. In essence, the organization of British censorship and propaganda was based on a tacit assumption: that proprietors and editors of newspapers, controllers and program planners in the BBC, film makers, and senior military personnel, ministers, and top civil servants would, because they came from the same social class background, share the same attitudes, and thus cooperate readily in the proper prosecution of the war effort. Latter-day critics of "the autocracy of censorship," in my view, fail to appreciate the very real social unity of the time.[11] Though there was talk of the government taking over the BBC, that body continued to operate autonomously, though constrained by formal links with the Ministry of Information, which, in practice, steadily weakened as the war proceeded. The government of course always had its reserve powers and ultimate sanctions. The release of footage of military operations was strictly controlled, but although the Ministry of Information took some initiatives of its own, and in one case, put up finance for a feature film, the making of films was left to the private companies. The actual film-making, however, could be closely and often irritatingly supervised. In addition, the Ministry's control of film stock and other necessary supplies, and its power to exempt staff from military service, gave it added leverage.[12]

With the outbreak of war, the newspapers suspended their promotional schemes. Soon there was no need to chase either readers or advertisers. For the latter, ever-increasing shortages of newsprint eventually brought a reduction in size from the twenty pages of prewar days to only four. And despite the abandonment of regular orders and, often, regular distribution, owing to the disruptions of war, changes of address, movement of individuals into the army or to munitions factories, and the dislocations of the blitz, demand was intense for whatever newspapers could be produced. The quality papers, in fact, reduced their circulation in order to keep the number of pages to more than what the popular papers would accept.

One of the central problems in assessing the influence of the media concerns the undoubted change in opinion toward social reform that took place during the war. For years, of course, what historians, politicians, and journalists themselves referred to as "public opinion" had consisted very largely of what was said in newspapers. Thus it was very difficult to separate attitudes that existed independent of the press and ones that were shaped, perhaps even created, by the press. For the Second World War, however, we have both public opinion polls and the rudimentary, but more wide-ranging, efforts of

Table 1. Readership of Morning Newspapers (in percentages)

				MEN					WOMEN		
				Civilians*		Forces			Civilians*		
	All Persons	Men	Women	A	B	Army	Navy	Air Force	A	B	Forces
Daily Mirror	25.3	27.3	23.5	24.9	19.8	29.1	36.5	30.9	24.5	21.0	32.4
Daily Express	19.5	25.8	13.8	22.6	26.9	25.9	27.4	29.7	10.1	17.2	13.6
Daily Herald	12.4	14.6	10.3	19.3	16.1	12.9	14.0	9.3	10.9	11.1	3.1
Daily Mail	8.3	10.3	6.5	6.8	10.8	11.1	10.0	14.3	3.7	8.7	8.4
News Chronicle	7.9	10.2	5.9	10.2	11.6	9.3	10.4	12.2	4.5	7.5	3.4
Daily Sketch	6.7	6.9	6.5	5.0	6.3	7.7	7.8	8.5	5.1	6.7	12.9
Daily Telegraph	3.6	4.3	3.1	0.9	5.6	4.3	6.5	8.3	0.4	4.6	7.9
Times	0.7	1.0	0.5	—	1.0	1.0	1.8	2.5	—	0.7	2.0
Provincial papers	7.8	8.1	7.4	13.7	15.8	4.6	1.9	3.5	8.4	7.6	1.4
None	28.9	22.5	34.7	18.5	16.7	26.5	22.9	21.5	40.3	29.7	34.4

*Civilians A—factory workers; Civilians B—all other workers.

Mass Observation, a private organization whose services were sometimes enlisted by the government itself. The main effect of the first three years of war, Mass Observation reported, was to make people less preoccupied with themselves and their immediate problems than they had been in 1938, though most thoughts were in fact concentrated on the war effort itself.

Around the end of 1942 a further change became apparent. The Beveridge Report, together with the controversy surrounding it, marked something of a watershed. People began to express themselves more firmly about their belief in social change, and began to be more specific about the particular changes that they thought ought to be made. Such opinions were very pronounced in the last stages of the war, though many also expressed fears that politicians would seek to put the clock back, as they had done at the end of the First World War.[13] We can also, without having recourse to the dangerously refractory mechanism of the press, establish changes in attitude among politicians, social leaders, and others who, though formerly of little weight in public affairs, found in war the stimulus and opportunity to put forward their views. The evidence is in private correspondence, in the formation of pressure groups (Common Wealth, the Tory Reform Group, etc.), and in speeches in parliament and elsewhere.[14] Indeed, it is possible to distinguish between speeches reported directly in newspapers and editorial and feature matter in the same newspapers. The *Times* retained its image of itself as the paper close to the powers-that-be, representing the interests of the nation. The famous *Times* editorial in the aftermath of Dunkirk that called for economic and social, as well as political, democracy, was written by E.H. Carr, editorial writer and Cambridge historian, already on the road from defender of appeasement to sympathetic chronicler of the early fortunes of the Soviet Union.[15]

The single most significant item in the press history of the war is the triumph of the *Daily Mirror*. Table 1 shows the results of a special readership survey carried out in September and October 1941 (confined to England):[16] The *Daily Mirror* is at the top of every column except one. Although the categories "Civilians A" and "Civilians B" do not coincide with class lines, the former is indisputably working class, whereas the latter includes all other social groups. It is only among predominantly non-working-class male civilians that the *Daily Express*, with its eccentrically Conservative outlook, has managed to hold on to its prewar primacy. The *Mirror* carries all before it in its appeal to male factory workers, to the armed forces, and notably to women, above all, to women—a small minority of course—in the armed forces. The overall figures reflect a slight drop in total newspaper circulation since prewar days, attributable to the disruptions and difficulties of wartime distribution. Any analysis of the *Mirror*'s achievements[17] brings us up against a significant point in our general inquiry. One cannot simply balance the appeal of the newsreel against newspaper, vision against sound, or video culture against print culture: within each medium, within each culture, a particular style can be forged that renders especially appealing one particular practitioner within the culture. Such was the *Daily Mirror* in wartime Britain. Before the war, the *Mirror* had, without any firm political or social stance, cast around for attracting readers in groups generally neglected by the press (women, the better-off working class); its great strength even then was its freedom from the *de haut en bas* pretentiousness and coldly

detached pseudowisdom that in one way or another betrayed the social origins or the social pretentions of those who ran all British newspapers in the thirties. The *Mirror* employed colloquialisms, working-class idiom, and parodies of upper-class speech to stress its identification with its readers. These, while certainly not defined along any class lines, were clearly taken to include women and the working class, usually treated by other newspapers as groups apart in society (even by the *Daily Herald*, which implicitly saw the working class in ideal terms as a privileged agent in the historical process). While other newspapers were generally respectful toward the government, and detached in their criticism of errors and misjudgments, the *Mirror* enthusiastically enrolled itself on the side of "us," the people, in face of a government that was often secretive, authoritarian, and uncomprehending of individual grievances: "In these critical times dead wood isn't even of use for the coffins of those martyred through muddle."[18]

The tone of the *Mirror* can be contrasted with that of the *Times*, which spoke in detached generalities: "A certain lack of foresight, failure to see things whole, seems to have dogged our war effort from the first. . . . May it not be that it is the system that is chiefly at fault?" The *Express* tried its hand at the popular touch, but immediately returned to the impersonal mode: not seeking to be involved with the people, as was the *Mirror*, it could refer, in a detached way, to "the industrial masses": "The Daily Express hopes that MPs have been finding out about things in their constituencies, [that] they haven't just been playing golf, or lolling about. . . . We hope that they have been working as hard as they demand the industrial masses should work, that they have discovered the wheres and whys of the war factory bottle-necks." A few days earlier, the *Express* had argued that "the mood of the nation is to say to its rulers: 'take us and get something done with us. You can still have greater power with us and America than Hitler can squeeze from all his conquests.' " As A.C.H. Smith emphasizes:

> A popular demand for leadership is echoed here as much as in the Mirror, but the relationship between leaders ("rulers") and led is notably more deferential—we, the people, are to initiate change by provoking the government, but we are to provoke them to "take us and get something done with us." This "get something done with us" is quite different from the Mirror's mood of "let's get something done." It suggests that the role of the people is essentially passive, to be led, to take orders. We are to offer ourselves for their use. The Mirror stresses the reverse: people demand a government they can use.[19]

The secret to the *Mirror*'s success was its close liaison with its readers, its deliberate encouragement of readership participation. Through its ordinary letter columns it knew what its readers were thinking; through its important advice columns it knew what questions troubled them. Replies were basic, succinct, clear, and cutting. To the question, "Why are service letters written in formal circumlocutions?" it answered, "Because—it is in the rules. It's an official 'must.' To cut the flowery language and get on with the war would upset the rule book." And, "Can a commanding officer stop a man having his wife with him in a town which is *not* a restricted area?" "He certainly can't. If he attempts to, send me full particulars, and it will soon be altered." The self-

confidence of Allighan (the columnist) in his ability to "get things done," Smith notes, "is communicated very clearly here."

> But it is not just a matter of "getting things done." It is a matter of getting things done for Us, the men in the ranks, often over against Them, the officers and the service bureaucracy. Allighan is a figure who can talk Their language, play the game according to Their rules, but, basically, he's still one of Us.[20]

The same brisk efficiency and direct address characterized the *Mirror*'s women's pages. At times the tone (in columns written by women) was quite tough:

> It's no good your thinking that what goes on in Parliament is nothing to do with you. You may feel that you have got your hands full with your home and babies or your job.
>
> But don't you see that without being "in the know" about every plan that has anything to do with women, you're not being fair to your children or yourself?
>
> And how many women aren't in the know is proved daily by the letters that come in here, asking questions about small and big things that have been settled and made public long ago.
>
> Don't think we mind answering your letters. We want to help you, but the point is, you shouldn't have to ask questions like: When does cheese rationing start? How do I get free milk for my children? Do I have to register on Saturday? Do I have to go into munitions?
>
> If you had read your paper with intelligent interest, you would have read and remembered all these things. . . . Look—you're right bang in the centre of this war. You're in the front-line as far as raids go, and if you're not being mobilised for industry or one of the forces, you've got the big responsibility of your home and family.
>
> For heaven's sake, then, shake off your feeling that the world is bound by your front gate, or a visit to the pictures with the boyfriend next Saturday, and realise that you've got to be ready to take a part in the running of things.[21]

The *Mirror* kept in touch with its readers in the armed forces through letters from them and through its journalists who, after call-up, often worked on army newspapers. The *Mirror* also published, with the full support of the Admiralty, a daily paper for the submarine branch of the Royal Navy, entitled *Good Morning*, through which came a particularly uninhibited impression of the opinions and preoccupations of this particular audience. More than once the government considered suppressing the *Mirror*, yet warnings were heeded, for the *Mirror* shared the commonsense patriotism of the bulk of its readers.[22]

But printed communication of a rather different sort was also very important in the evolution of opinion during the war, though the significance of both the Penguin books, read by lonely civilians in their air-raid shelters, and the communications of the Army Bureau of Current Affairs, used by army education officers in the communal sessions of army life, has almost certainly been exaggerated. The first commentators on the war tended to be the same sort of people who wrote Penguin books during the war, and the director of ABCA was associated both with the Workers Educational Association and with Penguin Books. Perhaps the enemies of ABCA did it a good turn: one War Office Tory said of it that its "whole tendency . . . is toward the soft life and total reliance on the State to provide everything from the womb to the tomb."[23] Churchill's

view, expressed to his War Secretary, was vigorous, though, as often in such matters, unavailing: "I hope you will wind up this business as quickly and decently as possible and set the persons concerned to useful work."[24] The point is that the war provided the opportunity—and the demand—for serious reading at home, and for serious argument and discussion in the army. Smith's conclusion on the *Mirror* is exactly my own.

> The *Mirror* was only one of many populist influences: there is little doubt that Labour would have won the 1945 election handsomely without the paper's support; little doubt, too, that the *Mirror* could not have followed a populist line during the war had it not been reassured by the evidence, in its own post-bag and through other channels, that popular feeling was already on its side[25]—

as it was also on the side of those more old-fashioned print artifacts, Penguin Books and the ABCA communications.

Cartoons, which had formed an integral part of press communication since the late nineteenth century, had declined into a very subordinate and ancillary role in the major British newspapers by the 1930s, though they were probably of considerable significance in the creation of images and stereotypes in the committed left-wing papers. The curtailment of newspaper size helped to give cartoons—concentrated utterance, achieved by aesthetic draftsmanship and the use of humor, stereotype, and distortion—a renewed significance. Low's famous cartoon of a solitary British workman defiantly brandishing his fist on the cliffs of Dover, entitled "Alone," undoubtedly expressed a self-image that is replicated in the many war diaries of the period. His "Marching Forward Together," in which the Labor figures in Churchill's coalition are very clearly drawn (the Conservatives other than Churchill seeming rather colorless) undoubtedly crystallized the image of a national government that all could identify with.[26] It was, in fact, Zec's stark documentary-style cartoon of a torpedoed sailor adrift on a raft, captioned " 'THE PRICE OF PETROL HAS BEEN INCREASED BY ONE PENNY'—Official," that brought the most serious threat of suppression to the *Mirror*. Certainly, there was a faint ambiguity about the cartoon. It seemed to be saying, responsibly, that no one should complain about the rising price of petrol when sailors were risking their lives; but perhaps there was a subversive hint that the sailor's sacrifice was really on behalf of the wealthy at home.[27]

Photography was another means of communication in wartime, and I would argue, a rather neutered one, particularly given the low technical base that obtained in the thirties. The military was suspicious of cameramen and gave them little help. Cameramen, for their part, were extremely hesitant about photographing anything that might be thought to be damaging to morale. Much of their work was simply intended as material to be preserved in the Imperial War Museum. The Ministry of Information was both extremely cautious and oddly arbitrary in its censorship and release of photographs. It was often the combination of photograph and caption—for the rule was that photographs be submitted with captions—that worried the censors, not anything inherent in the photograph. Yet understandable rulings, such as that the precise locations and extent of damage caused by enemy air raids not be mentioned, governed the censorship or release of photographs. Thus blitz photographs were not usually

published till some time after the event. Those that were released immediately—almost always set up in a most contrived fashion—were of people bravely and cheerfully "carrying on." When the Bank underground station was bombed in January 1941, 111 people were killed; pictures were not released for another twelve months, and even then the main purpose was to demonstrate how the ingenuity of the Royal Engineers had helped to keep this busy road junction in operation. The caption accompanying the *News Chronicle* picture read:

> 12 months ago a bomb fell in the roadway near the Bank of England—this is one view of the damage it did. The censor released these pictures yesterday. So that the traffic might continue to use this busy crossing, Royal Engineers constructed a temporary bridge across the crater. The underground sub-way caved in, the booking hall was destroyed, a number of people were killed.[28]

In general, there was a convention in force on both military and home fronts that dead bodies were not to be photographed. For example, photographs of bomb damage to a South London school, in which the child victims could be seen wrapped in sacking, were banned by the censor. *Picture Post* refined its photojournalism of the thirties by presenting series of interrelated photographs that, taken together, told a story. But its tone, one of a serious desire to inform with a slight radical twist, brought it under suspicion from the government, and *Picture Post* tended to be starved of good pictures at the expense of *Illustrated*, its more accommodating rival.[29] Yet photographs and cartoons, however powerful in establishing the accepted imagery of the war, were essentially an adjunct to the printed page.

Cinemas in Britain were already booming in the thirties. They were closed briefly in the early stages of the war, but with audiences generally preferring to ignore air-raid warnings, they soon returned to boom conditions. As in prewar days, the normal cinema program consisted of two feature films and a newsreel, with an additional ten minutes set aside for showing official documentaries related to the war effort. There were other "nontheatrical" outlets for informational (or propaganda) films, the most important of which were the film showings arranged in factory canteens. Without question, the war created the conditions for the first true flowering of the British film industry, a flowering that lasted into the early postwar years.

Ironically, despite all the paraphernalia of official wartime censorship, British film makers could now handle topics they could not touch in the thirties. In particular, work at last went ahead with the filming of *Love on the Dole*. This story of the inescapable tragedy of working-class life during the depression was not only produced and released, but concluded with a message from A.V. Alexander, a Labor minister in the Churchill government, declaring that such evil conditions must never be allowed to return again. *Ship Builders*, another film by the same director, John Baxter, almost certainly could not have been made in the thirties. It is still arguable whether the film of *Love on the Dole*, with its uncompromisingly pessimistic ending, was (as I believe) a greater artistic success than the novel—with its apparent, though loaded, concession to some kind of "happy ending." Yet there is no question that *Ship Builders*, with its breadth of historical grasp, realism, and lack of sentimentality, succeeds far more than the novel of 1935 on which it is based. That the film quite

deliberately shows prosperity returning to the Glasgow shipyards by conscious government effort in wartime, and emphasizes as well the key role that interventionist, Keynesian economic policies played in unifying and involving everyone in the all-consuming war effort, speaks for a startling change from the climate in which films were produced in the thirties.

For all that, British feature films during the war essentially reinforced the cozy image of British society as one of idiosyncratic ways and tolerant outlook. Overall, the films covered a wider range of social classes and showed more rounded portrayals of working-class and lower-middle-class characters than in the thirties. Churchill objected (once again, unavailingly) to the making of *The Life and Death of Colonel Blimp*, but in fact this pleasant and moving tale presented "Colonel Blimp" as a sympathetic, consensual character, quite unlike the apoplectic ultra-Tory, imperialistic character of Low's cartoons. Thus, although film makers shared, with most intellectuals and policy-makers, the broadening view of what constituted accepted society—since the working class was, after all, clearly participating in the national effort—they were hardly flag-bearers for the cause of positive social reform. Films were primarily for entertainment and excitement, and were clearly so rated by their audiences.

Certain films undoubtedly put over a constructed "reality" of the war. *Next of Kin* (originally financed by the War Office), *Went The Day Well*, and *The Forty-Ninth Parallel* showed the danger of German agents, invaders, and fifth columnists. War as waged by the different fighting services was the background for many films, such as *One of Our Aircraft is Missing*, *San Demetrio London*, and *The True Glory*. But it was the newsreel and the documentary, finally coming into their own, that convincingly conveyed to civilians what the war, fought in the skies, in the Atlantic, in North Africa and in Italy, and finally, in Western Europe, was really like. Indeed, the newsreel undoubtedly provided to the civilian the most potent imagery of the war in its many aspects. British military cameramen were not usually given the best facilities for taking authentic action pictures of military engagements in progress, and the whole technique of film editing, anyway, produces a construction of reality rather than consistent actuality. There was much standard faking, such as the inevitable cliché of following the release of bombs with shots of (different) bombs exploding. There were also many deliberate deceptions: British soldiers dressed in Italian uniforms to represent an Italian surrender, for instance. Yet, despite these imperfections, these films gave to a war fought in a bewildering range of theatres and modes, an otherwise unobtainable sense of concreteness and immediacy. British authorities were not very much more enlightened than they had been in the First World War, when the first great war sequences hit the screens of the early cinemas; but the art of film itself had become far more sophisticated. In the First World War, film was simply a rather amazing adjunct to the full and colorful accounts of military engagements carried in the press; in the Second World War, it was central in giving the public the best representation then possible of what warfare in the forties was like. What newsreels did not convey was any sense of unfolding strategy, of how one engagement related to another, of the real significance in the total picture of the war of what was being shown on the screen. Here, even the starved and truncated newspapers remained supreme. In respect of the actual progress of the war, the newsreels told audiences nothing: such hard news as there was had already been revealed in the newspapers.

And here we come to a crucial point. The different forms of communication did not scoop one another, did not contain exclusive items. Rather, they formed together a blanket of basic information and attitudes in which the civilian, and indeed the soldier, was enveloped. For particular messages that the government wished to get over—"Careless talk costs lives," "Make do and mend,"—the need to buy savings stamps and war bonds, how the different rationing schemes worked, what to do with incendiary bombs, fifth columnists, or powdered eggs, the full range of resources were deployed. At the height of the war, as much as 20 percent of newspaper advertising was directly sponsored by the government.[30] Ministry of Information film "shorts" were often little more than animated posters, and Ministry of Information posters dominated the hoardings. Yet, the changing balance from the print to the visual media can be seen in the way certain stories seem to inhere in newsreels and in their close analogue and special feature of wartime, the short documentary, which was really no more than an extended sequence of retrospective newsreel material. In the First World War, newspapers were forever printing stories about the invasion of a man's world by women, about the important role in the war effort that women were already—or ought to be—playing. By the Second World War, it was clearly appreciated that the quickest, most direct way of getting through to women was by means of the cinema, not only through newsreels and documentaries, but through feature films such as the Ministry of Information financed *Millions Like Us*, which largely concerned the role of women in the war effort. The general togetherness of the war and the indispensability of once-neglected working-class skills could best be portrayed in newsreel and documentary films. For the latter, complex processes and skilled techniques were demonstrated without the tedium of the thirties' documentary, so that many a bank clerk or suburban housewife for the first time got some insight into what it was like to work in a factory.

Yet the medium that was central to the British war effort in all its aspects was radio, both in the BBC programs beamed abroad to capture the hearts and minds of neutral, conquered, and allied nations, and in the crucial role the BBC played among British civilians and British soldiers. The critical expansion in the listening public had already taken place during the thirties. But while the other media in essence simply held their own in difficult circumstances, there was, after a slight fall at the beginning of the war, a quite definite expansion in radio listening during the war, attested to by the steady increase in licenses issued, from 8,856,494 in 1938 to 9,940,210 in 1945.[31]

Shortly after the outbreak of war, the BBC stated that the principal aim of its wartime programming was to be the maintenance of public morale. There was of course no rigid government control of the BBC, which in any case, was not in itself a totally monolithic organization. As the war proceeded, there was more scope for program planners to express dissent from the tight upper-class control that had essentially characterized the BBC in the thirties. To quote one more of Churchill's futile pronouncements, the prime minister in late 1940 saw the BBC as "an enemy within the gates, doing more harm than good."[32]

"Once the news was not of very great importance," a BBC spokesman remarked in 1944. "Now it occupies the peak hours and has swept culture into the background."[33] Two major developments marked the BBC in these years. The first was the revolution in the presentation—and reception—of news broad-

casts. In the many personal diaries that proliferated during the war, there are scarcely any references to newspapers, some odd references to films, and a rather striking number of references to radio news bulletins.[34] Half the population regularly listened to the nine o'clock news. Thus encouraged, but conscious anyway of its duties in the matter, the BBC, recruiting experienced journalists from outside, developed new techniques both in the acquisition and presentation of news: recorded insets were introduced into news broadcasts, and there were experiments with special extended news programs. By the end of the war, "War Report" was giving colorful and graphic accounts of the progress in the invasion of Europe. The BBC had a magnificent scoop at 8 A.M. on June 6th, when it announced, based on information derived from its monitoring of German reports, the invasion of Europe. Official efforts to prevent the news from being broadcast had been made, but since no formal censorship stop came, the BBC resisted this pressure. The official news was broadcast at 9:30 A.M., when programs were interrupted for a message by Eisenhower to the peoples of Europe. The culmination came with the running report of de Gaulle's entry into Paris.[35] The broadcast, which includes both the sound of sniper fire inside Notre Dame Cathedral and the capture of four snipers inside the church, is clearer to follow than the somewhat confusing newsreel shots of the same episode. No wonder the *Birmingham Post* declared: "It is hoped that all the enthusiasm and enterprise that has gone to make this war-time news service really radiogenic will not be abandoned when peace comes again. The feeling of being in touch with events as they occur is exhilarating, and it can only be achieved by radio." There was a touch of irony about this statement in the *Manchester Guardian:* "I look back with regret and forward with hope to those peaceful days when we sat around whilst Stuart Hibberd or Alvar Lidell read the old type of bulletin from the weather forecast to the fat stock prices. . . . Will there ever come a time again when "no news" will be the standard news?"[36] Was H.G. Wells right to predict in 1943 that "the day of the newspaper was done"?[37] Throughout most of the war, newspapers prided themselves on the enterprise their journalists showed compared to reporters of the BBC. Only at the very end of the war were there complaints that the BBC was being given special facilities.[38] It would be wrong, however, particularly in the conditions that existed then and that continued to exist for many years, to think of radio news broadcasting as taking over from the newspapers. The 1945 General Election campaign, for example, despite important broadcasts by political leaders, was fought in the newspapers (and, indeed, in the traditional way, on the hustings). But the crucial state of receiving the news direct in one's home by turning a knob had been reached.

The second development at the BBC echoes, though in a distant and distorted manner, the editorial turn taken by the *Mirror*, that is, a more participatory and democratic attitude toward its listeners and, emulating the standards set by American radio, toward more professional and popular techniques. Very gradually, the BBC introduced greater continuity, sharper timing, more relaxed presentation, and greater regularity of scheduling. Its first challenge in meeting new audience needs came in connection with the large numbers of troops cooped up, bored and inactive, with the British Expedition-

ary Force in France. It was important that these troops should listen to a *British* broadcasting service, not a foreign one. Thus the BBC began to give serious attention to what the troops wanted, not what they *ought* to want. The new "Forces Programme," begun in January 1940, put a new emphasis on dance music and variety shows.[39] The basic point about listening in the forces was that it was group listening, and in very large measure, background listening. It was reported that "the troops won't mind if a proportion of good serious stuff is included in their programme . . . [but] . . . *they won't listen*. They will simply accept good serious stuff as one of the facts of life, like blackouts, and absence of hot water, and being away from home."[40] The new program appealed immensely to civilians as well, and in a very short time, they outnumbered listeners in the forces.

On a different track were the self-conscious and rather hesitant attempts to bring a working-class point of view into broadcasting, a very distant echo of the *Mirror*'s involvement with its readers through its letters and question-and-answer columns. In the BBC Archives, a file with the title "Reconstruction-Political Talks" has the illuminating explanatory parenthesis "Working Man." That the old patronizing attitudes still prevailed can be seen in one producer's explanation that detailed legislative proposals "are better discussed by people with administrative experience and a knowledge wider than working-class people can hope to have of the whole political and economic fabric"; though, he continued, "useful work" could be done "in bringing to expression the background and vague aspirations of working-class men and women." The director of the BBC in Scotland was more realistic, though no more encouraging of the idea of working-class participation in broadcasting. "The interests about which workers in the industrial areas would want to talk," he said, "are—the war, home politics, industrial grievances, football, and the dogs. We believe that the kind of things they would want to say about the first three could not be broadcast." In the event, a series of talks, somewhat in the nature of anodynes, were broadcast. The old clashed most obviously with the new in a proposal of September 1942 for a program to be called, "The British Worker and His Wife During the War." Ernest Bevin protested the cozy implications of the title, and suggested "Labour's War Effort." The program eventually went on the air as "The Voice of Labour."[41] Bevin was enthusiastic about "Workers' Playtime," first broadcast on May 31, 1941, where variety shows were played in workers' canteens and simultaneously broadcast. In the shows "Factory Canteen" and "Works Wonders," the workers themselves provided the talent.[42] But here, there was only very limited and circumscribed participation.

Since the War

By war's end, sound broadcasting had become Britain's most important medium of communication, above all for the communication of information, but also for the extremely important role it played in the realm of entertainment. It had shown itself in the war to be the best means of getting important advice to the public and to exhort the people to do one thing or another. It conveyed agricultural policies to the farmers, food policies to the housewife; it

was in fact through the BBC that clothes rationing was first made known to the public.[43] At the end of the war, in the light of recent experience, three programs were set up: the "Light Programme," modeled on the successful "Forces Programme"; the "Home Service," a continuation of the older tradition, modified in the popular direction; and a "Third Programme," consciously aimed at a minority, and thus, in a sense, marking a retreat from earlier aims at uplift and enlightenment for all. And within the BBC, those who most acutely understood the significance of the wartime developments advocated the rapid resumption and expansion of television broadcasting.[44]

What this study, limited by time and place, suggests is that the different media should neither be isolated from one another nor seen as somehow operating independently upon society. Military necessity and social circumstances shaped the media far more significantly than the media shaped either the course of the war or social development. Sound film and sound broadcasting were the products of the same level of technology that produced total war. They were used for war purposes, as were other products of technology. But the British experience, especially when compared with that of certain other countries, demonstrates the limits to propaganda. As Germany's power declined, Goebbels devoted scarce resources of material and manpower to the making of *Kolberg*, the film colossus that was intended to revive it. It was a laughable failure.[45] The nearest British equivalent was Olivier's *Henry V*. In Britain, in circumstances of scarcity, all means of communication prospered; and it may be noted that private individuals turned to the writing of diaries as never in peacetime.[46] Government officials and those in control of the various mass communications agreed broadly over the sort of attitudes to be propagated and what information to convey or conceal. In an admittedly—and necessarily—controlled situation, the media did not compete with one another, but rather had their special characteristics bent toward the common goal, the winning of the war.

The great potential of film for conveying certain essential realities about the war, however, was not exploited, and deliberately so. Nonetheless, these resource materials were being quietly deposited in the archives, awaiting the day when the war would be reexamined in a new light. But visual information can only be conveyed by visual means: you cannot write a book, or even an illustrated newspaper article, about, for example, what film tells about the bombing raids over Germany and the desperate encounters between bombers and fighter planes. Only when, in the postwar era, the means to receive visual information was as available in every home as radio had been during the war, could these sources be brought back to life. That point did not come until the middle fifties. Till then, television remained exclusively in the hands of the BBC, and still projected the traditional austere image, moderated only slightly by the democratic influences of the war. From 1955 on, the Independent Television Authority exercised a broad supervision over a network of commercial companies financed by advertising revenue, each serving a different area of the country (STV in Scotland, for instance; Thames Television in London). More rigorous technical standards and greater adventurousness in programming now affected both BBC and the ITA companies; but with the considerable

exchange of personnel between the two systems, the basic cultural standards set from its beginnings by the BBC were also upheld by the ITA. Although the BBC monopolized television, it remained "a middle-class indulgence, like fee-paying private schools and holidays in Spain."[47] It was independent commercial television that "managed to convince the working class that television was 'on their side.' "[48]—very much as the *Mirror* had done in the early stages of the war.

Television in its new ascendancy, however, did not displace the press. As Peter Masson reported in "The Effects of Television on Other Media," it is now well recognized that "the penetration of 'quality' papers amongst non and light television viewers is higher than among medium and heavy television viewers, and that this is due to some inherent characteristics of individuals, not to the 'quality' press causing light or non-viewing of TV," nor vice versa. Television, he concluded, "appears to have had little direct effect on the reading and circulation of all forms of press media."[49] Radio was hit, however, as were cinema and photojournalism: *Picture Post* disappeared in 1957, along with two other photojournals. Before commercial television, newspapers had had a near monopoly of advertising revenue: external economic factors, like external military factors, can be crucial where there is not necessarily any direct competition in the appeal to audiences of different media. In today's straitened times, it is clear that the poor give up their newspapers before they forgo their television sets.

In any event, the new potential of television in the home made possible the exploitation of the dormant potential of Second World War film in the archives. In my view, this has never been done properly. On the one hand, television simply gave a new lease on life to the great British mythology of the Second World War as that "finest hour" in which Britain alone saved civilization. Foreigners are always struck by the prevalence on British television screens, as well as in British picture theatres, of programs and films relating to World War II. On the surface, "Dad's Army," a BBC-TV series of the early seventies, showed the British laughing at themselves and the oddities of the hastily assembled Home Guard of 1940; but underneath, it appealed to a deep nostalgia for the war. The most bizarre example is the 1973 Boulting Brothers' film *Soft Beds, Hard Battles*. At a time when British industry was collapsing in the face of French, German, and Japanese competition, the film presented the French as whores and whoremasters, the Germans as sadistic buffoons, and the Japanese as imperial maniacs. The British, of course, while being gently mocked, were, in essence, the glorious victors in that most glorious of wars.

On the other hand, while never emancipating themselves from the tyranny of the word, television program makers fell at once under the sway of certain television clichés. "World at War," the most effective series about the Second World War, made use of all kinds of film sources, including many that, for reasons of security, could not be released during the war. While the limitations of British newsreels could certainly not be concealed, some German films, and American films of the Pacific theater particularly, were used effectively. Yet even the most stereotyped British newsreels invited questions about why the film had been made and presented in a particular way: What was the film concealing? What was it hinting at? Such questions were seldom asked. Instead,

a particular overall interpretation of the war was settled upon, and the films chosen to hew closely to that interpretation. Much of the weight—whatever illusion the viewer had that he was actually *seeing* the unfolding of events—was carried by the commentary, spoken by Britain's leading *actor*, Laurence Olivier. There were numerous "eyewitness" interviews, that great cliché of all television presentations, yet no one ever questioned whether the impressions of an American sailor at Pearl Harbor, or those of an English woman immured in wartime Germany, thirty years after, were reliable. Their only function was to fit neatly into the general tenor of the commentary.

To say all this is not to deny that "World At War" was a magnificent achievement. But what it did, as did all popular media—from newspapers, to radio documentaries, to illustrated partworks (illustrated histories that come out in the form of weekly or monthly magazines)—was to diffuse existing knowledge. Unless and until these film documentaries are scrutinized critically, the new knowledge locked in them must remain irrevocably so. A couple of years ago, a television producer consulted me about a program he wanted to make for the fortieth anniversary of the blitz on Coventry. As it turned out, he was less interested in the scrutiny of film evidence than in dragging in the apocryphal story that Churchill knew of the planned raid, yet allowed it to take place in order not to give away the secret of the Enigma Machine. Here, the tyranny of the book that first propagated the story was stronger than the appeal of new kinds of visual information.

This study, then, suggests that there is no linear inevitability about video supplanting print. We forget, perhaps, how seductive even silent film, and then sound broadcasting, once seemed. In the Second World War, all of the media then available prospered, each performing a slightly different task within a commonality of objectives. Television, certainly, combines the potency of film and radio, and then some. Yet in its own handling of that war, it has demonstrated the continuing indispensability of the print medium.

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MICHAEL MANDELBAUM

Vietnam: The Television War

I

THE VIETNAM WAR was the first to be televised. In their living rooms watching the evening news, Americans regularly saw film of airplanes flying, often dropping bombs, and troops on patrol, sometimes in combat. The Vietnam War was also the first one in which the United States suffered a clear defeat. An army of half a million Americans failed to crush the attempts of the National Liberation Front and North Vietnam to overthrow the government of South Vietnam. By 1973 the American troops had gone home. In 1975 the North Vietnamese army conquered the South.

It is widely believed that the first feature was the cause of the second, that the United States lost the war *because* it was televised. Lyndon Johnson believed this. On April 1, 1968, the day after he had announced on television that he would not seek another term as president, he told a meeting of the National Association of Broadcasters,

> As I sat in my office last evening, waiting to speak, I thought of the many times each week when television brings the war into the American home. No one can say exactly what effect those vivid scenes have on American opinion. Historians must only guess at the effect that television would have had during earlier conflicts on the future of this Nation: during the Korean war, for example, at that time when our forces were pushed back there to Pusan; or World War II, the Battle of the Bulge, or when our men were slugging it out in Europe or when most of our Air Force was shot down that day in June 1942 off Australia.[1]

The president's meaning was clear: if its previous wars had been televised, the United States would not have persevered in fighting them. Franklin Roosevelt and Harry Truman would have lost support for their policies even as he had lost support for his, forcing the abandonment of his campaign for reelection.

The fact that scenes from the war appeared regularly on television has seemed to others besides President Johnson to have made it impossible for the United States to win in Vietnam. Regular exposure to the ugly realities of battle is thought to have turned the public against the war, forcing the withdrawal of American troops and leaving the way clear for the eventual Communist victory. This has become a truism, a part of the conventional wisdom about recent American history.[2] It is certainly plausible in an age when television pervades

American society. It is doubly plausible as an explanation for what seems anomalous: the failure of the most powerful nation in the world to have its way in a much smaller and far less technically advanced country. As an explanation of what happened in Vietnam, however, the fact that the war was televised has one shortcoming; it does not stand up to scrutiny.

It is certainly true that public opinion ultimately determined American policy in Vietnam. Between 1954 and 1965 it had little influence on what the U.S. government did there because American support for the government of South Vietnam was modest and made no appreciable impression on the public. Between 1965 and 1968 the American presence in Southeast Asia grew dramatically. The number of troops rose from twenty thousand to over half a million. The American air force began to attack targets in North Vietnam. The American public became aware of the war, and then disenchanted with it. The year 1968 was a turning point. In February an uprising was launched all across South Vietnam against the government and American forces, which became known as the "Tet offensive." The military asked President Johnson to add 200,000 men to the troops already in Vietnam. He refused. Shortly thereafter he renounced his campaign for reelection.

The new president, Richard Nixon, began the steady withdrawal of American combat forces from Vietnam. By the end of 1972, virtually all had left. Nixon had been elected, or so he believed, among other reasons, because of public dissatisfaction with his predecessor's conduct of the war. His changes of policy were designed to be acceptable where Johnson's were not.

It is true as well that Americans got most of their information about the war, as about the world in general during the Vietnam period, from television. In the 1960s it became the principal medium for news in the United States. The correlation between the outcome of the war and the way Americans learned about it, however, is spurious; or, if not plainly spurious, at least not proven and not plausible. It was not the special properties of television, not the fact that it was this medium and not others upon which Americans relied to follow events on the other side of the Pacific, that shaped American attitudes toward the conflict.

II

How might television coverage have sown dissatisfaction with the Vietnam War in the United States? It might have made the American people more conscious of it than they would have been had television cameras not been present. In the sixties, in an effort to polish the public image of television that the "quiz show" scandals of the fifties had tarnished, the three major networks did increase the number of hours they devoted to news programs. To cultivate a reputation for seriousness and civic-mindedness, they began to put documentary programs on the air. Few of them, at least in the first two years when Americans were being sent to Asia in great numbers, dealt with Vietnam.[3] In 1963 the evening national news programs were expanded from fifteen minutes to a half hour. The reasons were financial; these programs, which they distributed to affiliated stations around the country, were extremely profitable for the networks. With more time to devote to news, they hired more reporters;

their Saigon bureaus grew. More film of the war, therefore, began to arrive at the networks' headquarters in New York, and found its way into the nation's living rooms.[4]

By the middle of the 1960s, surveys of their habits showed, Americans were watching a great deal of television. Or rather, the many American television sets were playing much of the day. This did not necessarily mean, however, that their owners were paying close attention to them. Television provided background noise in many households. Americans might spend more hours in a room with a television playing than they did reading a newspaper, but reading requires a higher quality of attention, and there is no simple way to equate the two. As they shifted from newspapers to television as their primary source of news, Americans may have received less, not more, information about current affairs. They may have learned less about Vietnam than they did about World War II.[5]

Television coverage might, alternatively, have soured the American people on their government's policies in Vietnam by slanting the news, by putting the American effort there in an unfavorable light. Peter Braestrup's exhaustive study of the American media's coverage of the Tet offensive does show that the public received a distorted picture of the event. For reasons having to do not with political bias but with the habits of journalism, Tet was portrayed as a military defeat for the United States. In fact, from a strictly military point of view, it was a greater setback for the North Vietnamese and especially for the National Liberation Front. They not only suffered enormous losses, but the general uprising they had expected to trigger all across South Vietnam did not occur.[6]

Braestrup finds fault, however, with the way Tet was portrayed by *all* the major American news organizations—newspapers, news magazines, and the wire services, as well as television. He draws no particular distinctions between them. Whatever the media were telling them about Tet, moreover, the American people may have drawn the appropriate conclusion about the event. Tet did not make the war markedly less popular than it had been before; its effect was to reduce the level of support for Lyndon Johnson's conduct of it.[7] During the fall of 1967, the Johnson Administration had made a special effort to persuade the public that the war was going well, that it was being won, that the end was in sight. Tet demonstrated that there was a good deal of fight left in the enemy, and suggested that the war was hardly close to a conclusion. The Communist side was plainly determined and unlikely to give up easily or soon. Tet called into question the president's optimism, and public confidence in him dropped accordingly.

The special case of Tet aside, the operational procedures of television news did shape the way that the war was presented to the public. These arose from the needs of the news organizations themselves, not from the political views of those who worked for them. (Television reporters had more or less the same opinions about Vietnam as the country as a whole.[8]) The producers of the news programs encouraged their Saigon correspondents to shoot film of combat, especially before 1968. Combat scenes tended to be more dramatic, more exciting, and therefore—and this was the primary consideration—more likely to attract viewers than other kinds of coverage. Because there was little interest in

showing Vietnamese, the subjects of the combat footage produced were invariably Americans, who were usually engaged in unspecified, but seemingly successful, military activity.[9]

The film was seldom broadcast the same day that it was shot. It was technically possible to transmit directly to New York by satellite, but this was expensive, especially in the sixties.[10] The usual procedure was to ship cans of film by air. This meant that they arrived at network headquarters a few days later, and so could not be shown to illustrate a breaking story. Most combat footage therefore appeared as background, to give viewers a general flavor of the war. So the news programs' audiences generally saw Americans in apparently successful action that was not, however, tied to any particular event.[11] This may have helped to give an unduly optimistic impression of the war, and contributed to the public's disillusionment when events proved the optimism unwarranted. It was not television alone, however, that was telling the American public that the war was being won. Nor, as noted, did Tet affect the public's judgment of the war itself, but rather the Johnson Administration's conduct of it.

In fact, television coverage of the war had very little overt editorial content. The networks simply presented a series of images, mainly of Americans fighting an unseen foe. They provided the public with a kind of "illustrated wire service."[12] Images themselves ordinarily carry no explicit message. The impression that they leave depends on the interpretive framework that the viewer brings to them.[13]

The producers of the national news programs and their superiors at the three networks were reluctant in the extreme to supply any such framework, let alone one critical of the policies of the American government.[14] Television is the most timid of the media. The networks have been especially wary about giving offense to anybody over any issue. They lack the roots in a particular community that newspapers have and so are particularly vulnerable. They are also enormously profitable businesses, whose proprieters are wary of doing anything that might deprive them of the commercial sponsors that make broadcasting so lucrative. They are, as well, alert to the preferences of the owners of the local stations that carry their programs.[15] They are particularly wary of running afoul of the federal government because they are subject to the oversight of a federal agency, the Federal Communications Commission. Broadcasting is a government-regulated business in a way that newspaper and magazine publishing are not.[16]

Where the networks feared to tread, the government had the field to itself. It was left mainly to government spokesmen to provide the interpretive framework for the television coverage of the war in Vietnam.[17] Government officials in Saigon and Washington, above all the president, had ready access to broadcast time.

The networks retreated from even mildly controversial practices at the first sign of official displeasure. When Vice President Spiro T. Agnew attacked the media in a speech in Des Moines in 1969, the chairman of CBS, William Paley, ordered the network to discontinue its commentaries immediately following televised presidential speeches. (They were subsequently resumed.[18]) Even before that speech, the networks had begun to avoid reporting on the war in

ways that they thought might court unpopularity. Stories about the peace talks in Paris replaced combat footage from Vietnam on the evening news. The negotiations and the withdrawal of American forces, not the fighting, came to be defined as the newsworthy aspects of the war.[19]

III

The belief that television had a decisive influence on the conduct of the Vietnam War does not rest on the editorial content of the network news programs, however. It was not the conceptual framework for interpreting the pictures of violence that appeared on American television screens that shaped public attitudes toward the war, according to the conventional wisdom, but the pictures themselves. An image is thought to be many times more powerful than words. These images, of shot and shell, blood and death, produced a particular set of reactions in those who saw them: dismay, disgust, and horror, all of which fed the desire to stop the war, or at least to stop American participation in it. When Americans could only read about war, they could contemplate it with dispassion. When they could see and hear it in their living rooms, they turned against it.

The case for the decisive influence of television rests on the assumption that the way people receive information determines how they respond to it. This is another way of putting Marshall McLuhan's axiom that "the medium is the message." The conventional wisdom about television and American policy in Vietnam is consistent with McLuhan's central proposition: print, the linear medium, breaks the world down into artificial categories, while the electronic media, especially television, recreate the "plural simultaneity" of real life. Print divides and distances people from one another; television engenders feelings of solidarity and sympathy. According to McLuhan's theory, reading about the war would have left Americans willing to let it proceed in all its destructiveness; seeing it on television, the humanity they shared with their Vietnamese fellow inhabitants of the global village was brought home to them, and they insisted that it be stopped.[20]

There is little empirical evidence of how people reacted to seeing the war on television.[21] In its absence, it is just as plausible to suppose that television promoted *support* for the war as to assume that it generated opposition. Seeing fellow Americans fighting and dying might have kindled patriotic sentiments, and inspired in the television audience the determination to see the war through to a successful conclusion, in order to give meaning to those sacrifices. It is not necessarily true that the more directly civilians experience war the more reluctant they become to support the government that is fighting it. Television undoubtedly affords a more direct experience of war than newspapers, radio, or even cinema newsreels. In the twentieth century, however, those non-combatants exposed to aerial bombardment have had the dubious privilege of even *more* direct experience. The bombing of their cities did not make the English, the Germans, the Japanese, or the North Vietnamese more reluctant to fight, at least not at first.[22]

Alternatively, the constant exposure to the war on television may have made Americans apathetic about the killing half a world away. Television arguably

had an alienating effect, flooding the nation's living rooms with so many images of so many different things as to make it impossible for Americans to respond with feeling to any of them.[23] It may have rendered the war trivial, with the pictures of battle seeming no more urgent or alarming than all the others that regularly paraded across the small grey screen.[24] This is the contention of the *New Yorker*'s television critic, Michael J. Arlen, in his essay on television coverage of Vietnam, "The Living-Room War."[25] The title is meant ironically. The war was no more serious a matter than all the other things that television brought into American living rooms.[26]

IV

If there is no conclusive evidence of television's impact on American attitudes toward the Vietnam War, there *is* historical evidence that calls into question the conventional wisdom about its influence. Vietnam was the first televised war; it was by no means the first unpopular American war.

The Revolutionary War, the War of 1812, and the War between the States were all in one way or another civil wars. By definition, a large number of Americans opposed the government's policies in each. There was vocal opposition to the Mexican War and the Spanish-American War and subsequent campaign to suppress the insurrection in the Philippines, on the grounds that they were imperial adventures inconsistent with American principles. American participation in both the First and the Second World Wars was relatively popular, but the United States became involved in both only several years after they had begun, and in the case of World War II, only after being directly attacked. Between 1914 and 1917 and again between 1939 and 1941, the American public on the whole favored keeping out.

Wars have been unpopular because of enduring characteristics of American society. The United States has been a nation of immigrants, many of whom uprooted themselves because they did not wish to serve in the armed forces of the countries that they left. It is a liberal society, combining a traditional republican distrust of standing armies, which lingered into the twentieth century, with the presumption that the citizen's obligation to the state are minimal, and include military service only when the nation itself is in peril. The roots of antiwar sentiment reach far back into the American past, to a time before the age of mass literacy and newspapers, let alone television.

Following World War II, American attitudes toward the world changed, however, and there are grounds for supposing that the predominant American view of war changed with them. After 1945 the United States found itself at the center of international affairs, with no prospect of retreating to its accustomed position on the periphery. The wider world was more threatening than before, and the United States had assumed more responsibilities in it. After 1945 there were reasons for war to seem a normal, or at least a necessary, part of American national life.

The United States has fought two wars since 1945, and at first glance a comparison between them seems to lend support to the conventional wisdom about the influence of television. The Korean War and the war in Vietnam were similar conflicts. Each was a civil war on the Asian mainland; in each the United

States supported the non-Communist side against a Communist challenge. Both were limited wars, in that the United States did not bring the full weight of its military power to bear in fighting them. Each war was frustrating for Americans. Each ended, at best, in stalemate. The Korean War was fought before the age of television and seems, in retrospect, to have been relatively popular. The Vietnam War was televised and was, ultimately, unpopular.

The truth of the matter is, however, that the Korean War was unpopular as well. In fact, the course of American public opinion on each war was strikingly similar.[27]

Both wars had wide support when they began: the year 1965, when the number of American troops there began to rise dramatically, may be taken for these purposes as the equivalent of June 1950, when North Korea attacked the South and the United States decided to intervene. Both wars became unpopular; popularity is measured in both cases by public opinion polls asking whether the United States had made a mistake in entering the war.[28] Support for the Korean War, measured in this way, dropped more quickly than did support for the Vietnam conflict. The difference is explained if the level of support in each case is assumed to depend on the number of American casualties; the higher the cost of the war in these terms, the lower its popularity. There were more casualties earlier in Korea than in Vietnam. In both instances, support can be shown to be a logarithmic function of total casualties.[29]

Aggregate comparisons can be deceiving. They can mask important shifts by distinct groups within the population, which may offset each other. The Vietnam and Korean wars, however, received about the same level of support from the same types of people.[30]

The parallel between the two wars goes further. They were part of similar patterns in American electoral politics. As support for each war declined, so did the popularity of the man responsible for conducting it, Harry Truman for the Korean War, Lyndon Johnson for Vietnam.[31] Each man decided not to seek another term in office. The nominee of his party in the general election was defeated. The Republican challenger in each case was elected on a pledge not to do anything in particular about the war, but simply to do something different. Richard M. Nixon's unspecified "secret plan to end the war in Vietnam" (a phrase he apparently never used but that conveys the public's impression of his position) recalled Dwight Eisenhower's promise, sixteen years before, "I shall go to Korea."

Korea and Vietnam were wars of the same kind, they induced more or less the same pattern of public support, and they were associated with remarkably similar electoral patterns. Vietnam was televised; Korea was not.

V

There is one striking difference between the two wars. Opposition to the war in Vietnam was more vocal; this is the reason it is often thought to have been less popular than the Korean War.[32] There was an antiwar movement in the 1960s; there was none in the previous decade. There was, of course, no unified political organization with a single political program opposing the war in Vietnam. There were many groups, which employed a variety of tactics

ranging from petitions, advertisements in newspapers, rallies and marches, to civil disobedience—obstructing military recruitment centers and publicly burning draft cards. There were scattered episodes of violence as well. The element common to all of them was active opposition to the American military role in Indochina. There was nothing remotely comparable in response to the Korean War.[33] Opposition then was passive and silent.

Through the antiwar movement, television may have exercised an *indirect* influence on the Vietnam War. For television did play an important part in the movement's development. It did not create active opposition to the war, but it did have a profound effect on the way that opposition was expressed. It served as a network of communication through which people in one part of the country discovered that others elsewhere shared their feelings about the war, and saw how they could demonstrate those feelings publicly.

It became, as well, a forum for propagating antiwar views. The antiwar movement did not expect to stop the war itself, but rather hoped to persuade the American public that it ought to be stopped. This message could reach many more people through television than in any other way. The opponents of the war could not afford to purchase time to broadcast directly, and so counted on being newsworthy. The movement often geared its timing and its tactics to the routines and tastes of television. A successful demonstration was one that received a few minutes' coverage on the evening news.[34] One of the themes of *Snyder's Walk*, Thomas B. Morgan's powerful novel of journalism and the peace movement, is the way that the felt need to attract media attention sometimes determined not just tactics but basic moral choices.

Antiwar rallies often became a form of theater, with crowds, impassioned speakers, and occasionally open conflict between demonstrators and police. The antiwar movement was the equivalent, on the home front, of combat footage in Vietnam itself; it made for good television. Television coverage of Vietnam protests reflected, as well, the American fascination in the nineteen-sixties with young people, especially the young adults who served as the soldiers of the antiwar movement.

The influence of television on the war in Vietnam thus depends on the influence of the antiwar movement on the course of that war. Gauging this is not a simple matter. There are grounds for believing that the movement helped to shorten the war. For while it is true that public opinion as a whole was roughly the same for Korea as for Vietnam, the antiwar movement embodied the kind of political influence that public opinion surveys ordinarily do not measure.

For the purposes of such surveys, every individual's opinion counts equally. In politics, however, some are more influential than others. Vocal opposition to the war was concentrated among those with more than their share of political influence. Young people tended to be more favorably disposed toward the war than their elders; as a whole college students supported the war.[35] But at *select* colleges, opposition to the war was the norm. Students at these institutions were the children of people with high social status and considerable political power. His daughter, then a student at Radcliffe College, was credited with persuading Senator Eugene McCarthy to oppose the war in 1967.

The surveys that measured the number of Americans who considered the Korean and Vietnam wars mistakes did not ordinarily register the intensity of people's feelings about the two wars. Intensity of belief is important, however, because it determines how, if at all, a person will act on what he believes. Those in the antiwar movement obviously felt strongly enough to do more than simply register their views in a poll when asked. They petitioned, rallied, marched, and in some cases even went to jail to express their opposition to American policy in Vietnam. The movement disrupted American life and divided American society, thereby raising the cost of the war, and perhaps helping to persuade the public that the price of waging it successfully was too high.

Intensity of feeling can affect the outcome of elections. Every vote counts equally, of course, but in primary elections, only a minority (sometimes a small minority) usually bothers to cast a ballot. Those who are moved to vote by a particular issue like the war, therefore, can have influence out of proportion to their numbers in the population as a whole. They can enlarge their influence, as well, by lending active support, especially financial support, to candidates in primary elections who espouse their positions. The intensity of opposition to the Vietnam War had much to do with the success in the Democratic presidential primaries of the candidacies of Eugene McCarthy in 1968 and George McGovern in 1972.

There is another reason to believe that the antiwar movement shortened the war. The two presidents responsible for conducting it became preoccupied with public opposition to their policies. Johnson attracted demonstrators wherever he went in 1968, which no doubt contributed, along with the results of the New Hampshire and Wisconsin presidential primaries that year, to his decision not to seek reelection.

Even larger demonstrations against the war took place during the Nixon years, especially in November 1969, and in May 1970, after the invasion of Cambodia. The Nixon Administration made a concerted effort to discredit the antiwar movement,[36] which led, indirectly, to the president's downfall. When Daniel Ellsberg released the Pentagon Papers to several newspapers in 1971, in the hope that the publication of a documented history of the American role in Vietnam would turn the country against the war, the Nixon Administration decided to try to connect him in the public mind to other opponents of the war and especially those in the Democratic party. The president's associates recruited and paid a group of men to raid the Los Angeles office of Ellsberg's psychiatrist to obtain confidential material that would damage his reputation. The same group was caught the next year breaking into the Washington office of the Democratic National Committee in the Watergate building.[37]

There are also grounds, however, for suspecting that the antiwar movement had the *opposite* effect from the one it intended, that it helped *prolong* the American military presence in Vietnam. Although the war became increasingly unpopular, the antiwar movement was always *more* unpopular. The Vietnam period was a time not only of political protest, but of cultural protest as well. New styles of dress, new patterns of behavior, especially sexual conduct, and new attitudes toward the principal institutions of American society appeared, all of them at odds with the prevailing norms and beliefs. Together they made up what came to be known as the "counterculture."[38] The majority of

Americans found them distasteful, even threatening. The Vietnam period was also one of cultural conflict in the United States, played out as a clash of symbols—long hair, the flag, the draft card. In this, television, the supreme disseminator of symbols, played a central role.

The antiwar movement became caught up in the symbolic conflict and associated in the public mind with disorder and revolt.[39] This made it unpopular, which may have tarnished its cause in the eyes of the American public.[40] The Nixon Administration sought not merely to increase the movement's unpopularity, but to draw political profit from it. It tried to equate dissent from its policies with disloyalty, or at least disreputability. Hostility to the counterculture and the antiwar movement were central themes in the Republican campaigns of 1970 and 1972.[41] Nixon offered himself and his party as the champions of all that was familiar, traditional, and safe in American life, against what he portrayed as a mortal challenge by scruffy, dissolute, and subversive groups—like the antiwar movement. These themes do not fully account for the results of those elections; but they certainly contributed to his sweeping victory in 1972. Thus his own outspoken opposition to the antiwar movement may have strengthened Nixon's political position, helping to make it possible for him to withdraw American combat forces from Vietnam at *his* chosen pace, rather than faster, as the war's opponents preferred.

It is unlikely that many Americans supported the Nixon Vietnam policy simply because they did not care for its opponents. That policy was relatively popular because it was tailored to what the public wanted. And what it wanted was quite different from what the antiwar movement wanted. Both groups came to regard the war as a mistake. The public as a whole thought so for different reasons, however, and as a result, favored different methods for correcting the mistake than did the antiwar movement.[42]

Antiwar activists believed that American involvement in Vietnam was an unwarranted intrusion into a civil war and a violation of the nation's values. They were troubled by the destruction in Southeast Asia and by the loss of life, Vietnamese as well as American. The general public, by contrast, was comfortable with the war's purpose. The aim of keeping South Vietnam free of Communist control seemed to most Americans proper and just. The problem in their eyes was that the war was too costly. In particular, too many American lives were being lost.[43] To the antiwar movement, the Vietnam War seemed a crime; to the American public it was a blunder.

At any particular moment between 1965 and 1973, most of the active opponents of the war favored the immediate, unconditional withdrawal of American forces from Indochina. Until 1968, however, those among the general public who thought the war a mistake were as likely to favor a sharp escalation of the conflict—in order to end it quickly—as to want American troops to leave.[44] Thereafter, the preferred means of lowering the costs of the war was to remove American combat forces; this the Nixon policy of substituting Vietnamese troops for them, the policy known as "Vietnamization," accomplished.[45] The public was uneasy about abandoning the goal for which the war was being fought. Surveys showed a powerful reluctance to do anything that would pave the way for the Communist conquest of South Vietnam.[46] In the 1972 presidential election, George McGovern offered the country the antiwar

movement's assessment of the war and its prescription for ending it. He was resoundingly defeated.

This suggests that, rather than hastening its end or prolonging it, the antiwar movement had no impact at all on the course of the Vietnam War. It suggests that its apparent influence was illusory, that its aims were fulfilled only insofar as they overlapped with those of the general public.

The antiwar movement was an important episode in American history. For millions of people it was the source of experiences that shaped their attitudes toward the world, toward their country, and toward themselves. It had a hand in toppling two presidents. Whether it did what it set out to do, however, is a different question, and one without a clear answer.

The United States lost the war in Vietnam because the American public was not willing to pay the cost of winning, or avoiding losing. The people's decision that the war was not worth these costs had nothing to do with the fact that they learned about it from television. Whether it was based on the fact that many of their fellow citizens were vehemently opposed to the war, which they also learned from television, is difficult to say. It is possible that it was not. It is possible that the public would have reached the same judgment in the same way over the same period of time—that is, that the war would have followed the course it did—even if the cathode ray tube had never been invented.

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[3]Godfrey Hodgson, *America in Our Time* (New York: Vintage, 1978), pp. 143-44, 147-48.

[4]Ibid., p. 149.

[5]William Schneider has argued that television has expanded the audience for news of foreign affairs because, although the subject does not interest most Americans, they do not tune out stories on foreign subjects on the evening news programs in the same way that they skip such articles in newspapers. He further argues that most Americans are unenthusiastic about involvement in other countries, which suggests that television *diminishes* popular support for intervention abroad. But by the time public opinion turned against the war in Vietnam, American involvement was so extensive that the public could not have ignored it, even without television. William Schneider "Bang-Bang Television: The New Superpower," *Public Opinion*, May 1982.

[6]Peter Braestrup, *Big Story: How the American Press and Television Reported and Interpreted the Crisis of Tet 1968 in Vietnam and Washington* (Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 1977), pp. xxi, xxv; Hodgson, *America in Our Time*, p. 354.

[7]Ibid., p. xxxiii-iv.

[8]Epstein, *News from Nowhere*, pp. 43, 211-212.

[9]Hodgson, *America in Our Time*, pp. 149-50.

[10]Epstein, *News from Nowhere*, p. 33.

[11]Hodgson, *America in Our Time*, p. 150; Michael J. Arlen, *Living-Room War: Writings About Television* (New York: Viking, 1969), p. 116.

[12]Ibid., p. 111.

[13]See, for example, Epstein, *News from Nowhere*, p. 21.

[14]Barnouw, *Tube of Plenty*, p. 381

[15]Epstein, *News from Nowhere*, p. 56.

[16]Ibid., p. 43.

[17]Arlen, *Living-Room War*, p. 15.

[18]Barnouw, See *Tube of Plenty*, pp. 443-45.

[19]Hodgson, *America in Our Time*, pp. 374-79; Epstein, *News from Nowhere*, p. 17.

[20]The best summary of McLuhan's ideas is to be found, not in any of his several books, but in Jonathan Miller's *McLuhan* (London: Fontana/Collins, 1971), which also contains convincing criticisms of these ideas that stop just short of judging them worthless. The phrase "plural simultaneity" is Miller's, p. 11.

[21]For a single, not altogether reliable piece of evidence, see John E. Mueller, *War, Presidents and Public Opinion* (New York: Wiley, 1973), p. 167.

[22]Hiroshima and Nagasaki offered the Japanese strong incentives to stop fighting. The process of decision that led to Japan's surrender was under way before the first atomic bomb struck on August 6, 1945, however. In that decision, the role of the emperor was crucial. Had he insisted that his countrymen continue the war even after both cities had been destroyed by atomic explosions, it is far from clear that they would have disobeyed.

[23]Miller, *McLuhan*, p. 126.

[24]During the Vietnam period, a number of fictional television programs about war appeared. Most of these were set in World War II, prompting speculation that they promoted support for the Vietnam War by associating it subtly in the public mind with the previous, popular conflict. Barnouw, *Tube of Plenty*, pp. 375-76. An equally plausible deduction is that war programs were popular because the Vietnam War itself was popular.

[25]This is the title of an essay, which serves as the title of a collection of his articles written between 1966 and 1969.

[26]Even if pictures did serve to crystallize opposition to the war, they did not necessarily come from television. Of all the thousands of images of Vietnam, three were particularly memorable: the South Vietnamese police chief executing a suspected enemy by shooting him in the head at point blank range on a Saigon street during Tet, 1968; a young woman crying out in anguish while bending over the body of a student who had just been shot by the Ohio National Guard at Kent State University in May, 1970; and two naked Vietnamese children running down a road, splattered with napalm, two years later. Of the three only the first appeared on television, and a photograph lifted from the television film was carried on the front page of newspapers across America. One of the newspapers that carried the picture, on February 2, 1968, was *The New York Daily News*. The next day the newspaper printed an editorial about the picture that supported American participation in the war. Braestrup, *Big Story*, pp. 460-62.

[27]This is the main argument of Mueller, *Wars, Presidents and Public Opinion*. See especially pp. 62, 65, 114, 157.

[28]Ibid., p. 43.

[29]Ibid., p. 60. Another explanation of the variations in the popularity of the two wars that is consistent with the data is that it depended on expectations that the conflict would end quickly. Thus support for Korea plummeted when the Chinese entered the war. There was no comparable event during the Vietnam period. Ibid., p. 52.

[30]Ibid., pp. viii, 154.

[31]Truman's loss of popularity was more clearly related to Korea than Johnson's to Vietnam. The second war coincided with the outbreak of civil disturbances in American cities, which hurt the public standing of the incumbent president. Johnson, moreover, may have succeeded, where Truman failed, in presenting his war to the public as a bipartisan undertaking. Ibid., pp. 227-31.

[32]Ibid., p. 156.

[33]Ibid., p. 39.

[34]Todd Gitlin, *The Whole World Is Watching: Mass Media in the Making and Unmaking of the New Left* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1980), p. 15.

[35]William M. Lunch and Peter W. Sperlich, "American Public Opinion and the War in Vietnam," paper presented to the International Studies Association (West) Meeting, Los Angeles, April, 1977, p. 25.

[36]Jonathan Schell, *The Time of Illusion* (New York: Knopf, 1976), pp. 53-55.

[37]Ibid., pp. 164-67; J. Anthony Lukas, *Nightmare: The Underside of the Nixon Years* (New York: Viking, 1976), pp. 90, 94.

[38]See Hodgson, *America in Our Time*, chapters 16 and 17.

[39]Mueller, *Wars, Presidents and Public Opinion*, p. 164.

[40]Hodgson, *America in Our Time*, p. 164.

[41]Ibid., pp. 424-45.

[42]Mueller, *Wars, Presidents and Public Opinion*, p. 266.

[43]Hodgson, *America in Our Time*, pp. 388-92.

[44]Ibid., p. 393.

[45]Nixon did in fact escalate the war in geographic terms; this proved acceptable to the American public, for whom the declining numbers of American casualties were evidently paramount. "The

American people . . . were quite prepared to bomb North Vietnam, but they did not want American draftees killed in substantial numbers for some abstraction called self-determination." John P. Roche, "The Impact of Dissent," in *The Vietnam Legacy*, p. 135.

[46]Mueller, *Wars, Presidents and Public Opinion*, p. 100; Hodgson, *America in Our Time*, p. 397.

MICHAEL R. WINSTON

Racial Consciousness and the Evolution of Mass Communications in the United States

FROM ITS INCEPTION, the United States has been a society shaped by racial conflict. Yet collective recognition of this conflict and its consequences has occurred only episodically, at those times when the thin crust of political and social compromise devised to contain the racial genie, introduced by slavery in the seventeenth century, was broken by the volcanic pressures of this pervasive, but subterranean, reality of American life. At times, recognition was crystallized by the compelling force of a new ideology, as in the case of the American Revolution, when many white colonists saw the inherent conflict between an insistent demand for freedom for themselves but continued slavery for Negroes.

In 1776 there were half a million slaves in a population of two and a half million. John Allen of Massachusetts expressed the problem succinctly, if superficially, when he said to his fellow revolutionaries, "What is a trifling three-penny duty on tea compared to the inestimable blessings of liberty to one captive?"[1] It was obviously contradictory to maintain slavery while making revolutionary political claims against the British Crown on the philosophical grounds of the "self evident truth" of equality. The theoretical claims of liberty that might have included blacks were inevitably compromised by unyielding economic counterclaims. James Madison, that pragmatic genius of compromise, understood that, quite apart from philosophical debates about slavery and freedom, Negroes, though subordinate, would remain an element of the American population with important political and other consequences. He referred to them, revealingly, as

> an unhappy species of population abounding in some of the States, who during the calm of regular government, are sunk below the level of men; but who, in the tempestuous scenes of civil violence, may emerge into the human character, and give a superiority of strength to any party with which they may associate themselves.[2]

Although the antislavery implications of the Revolution's ideology were in time obscured by the increasing political power of the South, the tension between American democratic idealism and a system of racial supremacy remained. As Moses Coit Tyler wrote, it "did, indeed, at last become very hard for us to listen each year to the preamble of the Declaration of Independence and still remain the owners and users and catchers of slaves."[3]

Later "recognitions" would be forced upon the national consciousness by the great sectional duel over the expansion of slavery in the territories, which culminated in the Civil War; the national debate on the status of the Negro in American society after the defeat of Reconstruction; the increasing tempo of racial confrontations accompanying the black struggle against segregation in the decades following World War II; and the nation's uneasy relations in the 1960s with the newly decolonized nonwhite countries of the "Third World." These "collective recognitions" of the racial dimension of American society were as exceptional and short-lived as that during the Revolution: white Americans continue to maintain an ambivalent, perhaps schizophrenic state of mind on race and racial domination. On the one hand, preoccupation with the practical requirements for preserving white supremacy has resulted in an enormous body of legislation, litigation, and judicial opinion that in and of itself attests to the historic pervasiveness of race in virtually every aspect of American life.[4] Yet, except in times of crisis, American society has pushed matters of race to the periphery of national consciousness. Recent historical research reveals the depth of the majority's desire for a country quite different racially from the American reality:

> What American intellectuals did in the post-Revolutionary decades was, in effect, to claim America as a white man's country. The impulses behind this claim were as deep and powerful as any in American culture. They became evident in proposals for removing Negroes from the United States, and these proposals, which became common at the end of the eighteenth century, tell, as much as any body of historical material can "tell," how profound were Americans' feelings about Negroes.[5]

America's Double-Consciousness

The persistence of "the race problem," combined with the simultaneous selective "invisibility" of the Negro, has created a peculiar white "double-consciousness" of the black presence in American society, racial awareness as a diapason of social anxiety, contrapuntally joined to a psychological denial of the importance of racial dominance in American social institutions and processes. One thinks, for example, of the history of American cities, where race has had a profound, though generally unacknowledged, impact. Even in the decades since World War II, when suburbanization was propelled to a significant degree by the desire of whites to flee from Negroes, there has been little collective understanding of racism as the force that separates the United States from most industrialized societies in its attitudes toward cities, and the consequent failure to pursue a rational federal policy on urban development.

An indication of the mechanism of double-consciousness is the extensive use of code words. "Inner city," for example, is used to designate areas that have been abandoned to black habitation and that then become the victims of disinvestment and economic stagnation. All urban services—schools, hospitals, sanitation, public housing, libraries, transportation, and public safety—are eventually shaped by the underlying racial conflict. The distortion of thinking and language that flows from this is illustrated in the habit of discussing "blacks and other minorities" in cities where they comprise a majority. By psychologi-

cal and intellectual legerdemain, "central cities" become peripheral. Millions of citizens in New York, Chicago, Boston, Philadelphia, Atlanta, New Orleans, Dallas, Los Angeles, or San Francisco become "minorities" who "achieve reality" to large numbers of whites only rarely, during periods of civil disorders or in discussions of crime and unemployment.

This peculiar double-consciousness helps to explain why television has, on the whole, not only failed more than the print media to reflect social reality as far as race is concerned, but has helped also to perpetuate false or stereotypical images of blacks and some other minorities. In part, this is inherent. Television's basic communications technique—the transmission of information by a rapid succession of coded images—is neither discursive nor reflective. Although television can, of course, project ideas, it may be incapable of matching the capacity of print to develop complex ideas and arguments. Free of the restraints of syntax and linear discussion, television conveys a "sense of authenticity" through the intrinsic superiority of the visual image, giving the viewer the impression that he or she has grasped a matter intellectually, when in fact only the absorption of definite visual images that *suggest* ideas and conclusions has occurred. It is simply easier for television to give the viewer the feeling that the images are accurately reflective of a complex reality than it is to achieve the same effect with print.

It is in the treatment of most social or political conflicts, of which racial issues are a subset, that television's misuse of the "sense of authenticity" is most notable. While this essay is concerned primarily with race, its observations about television could be extended to other issues of equal impact. American television's relationship to race reflects the oddities of the society's double-consciousness, a relationship shaped by the interaction of two superficially unrelated social facts: the evolution of the symbolic codes of race relations and television's institutional structure as a national commercial enterprise. It may be useful to consider first, the development of a set of symbols used not only to convey racial messages, but also to define racial reality in terms that accord with the cultural, social, and political fact of white supremacy.

Color-Coded Social Reality

One of the notable features of race relations in the United States is the extent to which symbolic codes of various kinds were developed to express and reenforce the racial hierarchy. These codes have often been studied simply as "stereotyping" devices, with great emphasis laid on the more superficial aspects of particular images. But something of greater significance lies behind the specifically demeaning characteristics of stereotypical black images in American popular culture. These "images" were not conceived as representations of reality, nor understood to be "real" by audiences, but were ways of coding and rationalizing interracial behavior. It is now well established, for example, that a significant change in the American attitude toward race occurred after the defeat of Reconstruction, when the civic and social status of Negroes was debated for a generation. A crucial part of the movement to "reconcile" the North and South after 1865 was the attempt to define the black man's character. In the increasingly important mass circulation newspapers and magazines of the

1880s and 1890s, a new image of Negroes was firmly established, one that helped justify their disfranchisement, segregation, and exclusion from the expanding center of the new industrial society then in formation.[6] This development may be one of the best empirical bases for the now classic dictum of W.I. Thomas: "If men define situations as real, they are real in their consequences." This "imposed reality" was all the more devastating in its consequences when it was attached to color. Although color per se has no intrinsic meaning, it became increasingly important symbolically with the European conquests of nonwhite peoples after the sixteenth century, when it began to have talismanic or code value. As Edward Shils has pointed out:

> One of the simplest and most obvious reasons why color is a focus of passionate sentiments is that it is an easy way to distinguish between those from the periphery and those from the center of particular societies and of the world society. Differences of pigmentation symbolize or indicate contemporaneous differences between present wealth and power and present poverty and weakness, between fame and present obscurity, between present eminence in intellectual creativity and present unproductiveness. It is correlated with past events too—above all, with past events of humiliation, injury, and insult.[7]

The white majority's nearly universal acceptance of the false social definition of "the Negro" gave new force to the color-coding system that symbolized it. This amalgam of myth and code gathered momentum, fitting in, as it did, into the "cult of Anglo-Saxonism" that arose in response to the massive and culturally unsettling immigration of the period. Stereotypes of the "new aliens," particularly Jews, Italians, the Irish, and Chinese, were as vicious as those imposed on the "old aliens," the Indians and Negroes. Thomas Bailey Aldrich, editor of *The Atlantic Monthly* from 1881 to 1890, was appalled by the "wild motley throng" that was entering America's "Unguarded Gates." In 1892 he maintained that "jailbirds, professional murderers, amateur lepers . . . and human gorillas should be closely questioned at our Gates."[8] Writers of popular fiction went beyond the image of the "lazy, improvident, and criminal" Negro of the newspapers to develop what Sterling Brown identified as seven stereotypes: the Contented Slave, the Wretched Freedman, the Comic Negro, the Brute Negro, the Tragic Mulatto, the Local Color Negro, and the Exotic Primitive. "All," he wrote, "are marked either by exaggeration or omission; they all agree in stressing the Negro's divergence from an Anglo-Saxon norm to the flattery of the latter."[9] More gifted writers sometimes avoided the worst caricatures of black Americans, but they also reflected emerging national attitudes on race. In Mark Twain's *Huckleberry Finn*, these new attitudes were given an extra edge by Twain's own double-consciousness as observer and critic of American society. After Huck reported a steamboat accident to Aunty Sally, she exclaimed:

> "Good gracious! anybody hurt?"
>
> "No'm. Killed a nigger."
>
> "Well it's lucky because sometimes people do get hurt."

The theatre and popular forms of entertainment such as vaudeville developed routines that reenforced the "darky" role as a "classic" image. As a source

of humor, Negroes were on the periphery of most entertainment, and were inevitably presented as the exotic "outsider." By the early twentieth century, the message of the anti-Negro propaganda of the previous generation, buttressed by the new theories of race that had evolved in the leading universities, had also become a settled conviction of the national elite.[10] Charles Francis Adams, Jr., for example, declared in 1908 that

> the American system, as we know, was founded on the assumed basis of a common humanity. . . . Those of all races were welcomed to our shores. They came, aliens; they and their descendants would become citizens first, natives afterwards. That theory is now plainly broken down. We are confronted by the obvious fact, as undeniable as it is hard, that the African will only partially assimilate and that he cannot be absorbed. He remains an alien element in the body politic. A foreign substance, he can neither be assimilated nor thrown out.[11]

The Emergence of the "Real American"

A "foreign substance"—although one embedded in American life since 1619—that could "neither be assimilated nor thrown out," the Negro was nonetheless useful as a foil to the white "new Americans" in the making. As the new American nationality was forged after the Civil War from disparate immigrant groups, "whiteness" became a badge of "true Americanism." Obviously, Negroes, Indians, Chinese, Japanese, and other nonwhites could not qualify, regardless of their legal status, length of residence, or cultural assimilation. And in the new forms of political and economic domination being forged simultaneously, the "white primary" emerged in the South as a *de facto* nullification of the Fifteenth Amendment, while in the North, the growing labor movement excluded Negroes through violence or restrictive membership practices. The emerging social definition of the archetypical "real American" was reflected in popular culture, especially in what was eventually to become the country's most idealized projection of itself, the movies. From its beginnings, American film adopted the stereotypes of minorities first made a part of the common culture in earlier pulp fiction, magazines, and newspapers. One of D.W. Griffith's early successes was an exploitation of American popular bias called *The Romance of a Jewess*. Similarly, Mack Sennett had an early hit, *Cohen at Coney Island*. Both were full of the anti-Semitic formulas that fed the public's appetite for humor at the expense of "the aliens." Films using Irish stereotypes, such as *Lady Bountiful Visits the Murphys on Washday*, had similar box-office success. But these pre-World War I films met with sufficient opposition from the stigmatized white groups to push Griffith and other film pioneers to focus on more vulnerable groups.

Griffith's *That Chink at Golden Gulch*, *Greaser's Gauntlet* (featuring a Mexican-American), and his Ku Klux Klan classic, *The Birth of a Nation*, were the result. By the time American film matured as a medium with enormous commercial possibilities, the portrayal of Negroes was restricted to a narrow spectrum of walk-on stereotypes, designed to not endanger profits by possibly giving offense to the "Southern box office."[12]

As films became increasingly expensive to make, the need to eliminate any possible offense to the racial ideas of the white South forced the medium into a

portrayal of race that ultimately affected the entire nation's perception of the Negro. A complex interactive relationship between myth and reality developed, so that images originally understood to be unreal, through constant repetition began to *seem* real. And as segregation became more firmly established in social as well as legal codes, the process became self-validating. "Image" though false, became "reality," as more and more whites learned about Negroes primarily through newspapers, books, and films. As America's "domestic aliens," Negroes were forced increasingly into a separate world, narrowing the opportunities for the interracial experiences that could provide a corrective to the distorted image. As segregation intensified, the points of contact between the races diminished. For many whites, the stereotypes, in fact, were often not too far removed from the occasional uneducated Negro they encountered in a menial position. Although few later Hollywood films matched *The Birth of a Nation* in crudity or meanness of stereotype, they followed a pattern governed by a racial code. Blacks were used as comic relief or servants, but seldom in other roles.

By the forties, many of the earlier ethnic stereotypes had disappeared from Hollywood, but the "outsiders" of the 1890s remained: the ever-popular Indian of the Westerns; the inscrutable or sinister Oriental; the sly, but colorful, Mexican; and the clowning or submissive Negro, whose intelligence, in Hollywood's estimation, never rose high enough to be sinister. These marvels of selective perception were simultaneously developed by radio, which, with its coast-to-coast hook-ups, helped to harden the stereotypical images that the public, when they thought about it at all, increasingly came to expect as entirely "natural" and accurate. Radio had a further advantage: it was not necessary to hire any of the minorities portrayed on its programs.[13] One of radio's great successes, the "Amos n' Andy Show," which created a whole world of black buffoonery from the remnants of the "coon story" tradition of the vaudeville stage, was written and acted by whites. Far from being unimportant or simply a symbolic irony, it deepened an already significant gulf between the reality of Negro life in America and a bizarre projection of self-serving white ideas about the character of Negroes. If they really were like Amos n' Andy, then the white supremacist structure of American society was not only permanently safe, but its victims were contemptibly amusing in ways that comforted as well as entertained white listeners. It is also true, as Ralph Ellison has said, that "the tenacity of the stereotype springs exactly from the fact that its function is no less personal than political"; beneath the surface is "an inner need to believe" in it as a means of reconciling democratic values with the resistant facts of racial dominion.[14] The destructive consequences of this tradition in the nation's first electronic mass medium would not be clear until decades later.

Following the Hollywood Tradition

It was fateful that at the time television emerged in the fifties, first as a fad, then as a national cultural force, American society was in a state of uncertainty induced by the massive social and political changes that were the aftershock of World War II. America's new global role in what was coming to be known as "the Cold War" added to the anxiety of an increasingly uprooted mass public.

With the confidence of the late war years gone, the United States in these years was a society unprepared for fundamental social change or dramatically different foreign relations. It was particularly susceptible to a reenforcement of xenophobic ideas about non-Americans and a definition of the "real American" as a white American. By and large, this is what the early decades of television provided. It reflected accurately neither the world nor the United States, but rather a version of reality structured by commercial culture responsive to well-developed racial codes and artistic conventions. All of the decision-makers in television were white, and what they deemed to be commercially viable was, predictably, a replay of radio and Hollywood staples of racial stereotyping. In 1950 television's first Negro situation comedy was aired, the "Beulah Show," featuring Hattie MacDaniel of *Gone With the Wind* fame. Three years later, "Amos n' Andy" moved from radio to television. More successful than "Beulah," "Amos n' Andy" demonstrated the commercial potential of "black comedy" written by whites for white audiences. There were short-lived comparable programs portraying other groups. The "Mollie Goldberg" show, for example, was the first and last of its genre, while the progeny of "Amos n' Andy" have become the dominant representation of blacks on television.

The NAACP mounted continual protests against the skewed portrayal of blacks by television, but these were no more successful than the earlier drive against *The Birth of a Nation* and similarly offensive Hollywood films.[15] It was evident quite early in the medium's development that when television was not directly hostile to Negroes, it would ignore them. It was to be "white" not simply, as newspapers were, in its employment practices, but in its projection of American life, insofar as it reflected American reality at all. Organizations formed to increase the black share of employment opportunities and programming in television, such as the Coordinating Council of Colored Performers, founded in 1953, were doomed to failure.[16] The fundamental fact was that the audience, convinced that the "real America" was white, to a great extent determined the nature of television programming. "Ethnic Europeans" could become "mainstream" only to the degree that they became part of that homogenized "television reality"; but that was as far as the definition would stretch. In that sense, television has been no more responsive or sensitive to ethnically differentiated whites than it has been to nonwhites. And as long as the audience itself held those views, it was not likely that television programming would change. As Lawrence Lichty pointed out recently, television programming "is tethered to the audience. Like a kite, it has a bit of latitude. But it always responds to a tug from viewers."[17] Television, Lichty believes, is responsive fundamentally to a "glacial mainstream." Thus, with the audience and those in control of programming mutually reenforcing, "video reality" continued to diverge from the reality of society.

Much of the debate about the relation of television to race has focused on this divergence and on the phenomenon of stereotyping, without recognizing that the stereotype, at least in the case of race, through constant repetition had become a convincing substitute for reality, and more important, an integral part of social reality as perceived by the majority of Americans. The stereotype has persisted because such a "refracted reality" has a systemic function in maintaining the social belief that American society is essentially fair in racial matters.[18]

From Stereotype to New Forms of "Invisibility"

In the sixties and seventies, many of the worst stereotypes on television disappeared, though objectionable situation comedies, such as "The Jeffersons" and "Good Times," continued to be popular with producers and audiences. But after the wave of change induced by the civil rights movement in the South, and the urban violence in the North and West, it was unlikely that television audiences would easily mistake these programs, or "Archie Bunker" for that matter, as genuinely representative of the groups portrayed. In that sense, the persistence of such programming may be less significant than some critics have claimed. It may illustrate little more than commercial television's creative exhaustion, its inability to transcend old formulas for "success." Few Americans could easily confuse the "fantasy" Negroes portrayed by the sitcoms with the reality represented by the "Little Rock Nine," SNCC's black college students facing terror during the "Mississippi Summer" voting rights campaign, or the hundreds of thousands who responded to the new leadership of Martin Luther King or Malcolm X. In television's world, there were now "two black realities"—the synthetic reality of the sitcoms and the one broadcast by the news programs—which for a decade, though juxtaposed strangely, could never be reconciled. With the end of the explosive phase of the civil rights movement, exposure of the "second reality"—the news programs—has diminished, but the simplistic stereotyping of earlier decades will perhaps never again have the same persuasiveness.

In one sense, stereotyping is almost a dead issue. Although desegregation of schools has been stymied for decades, there has been significant progress in other areas, including employment, recreation, and housing. With increasing interracial contact at all levels in the workplace, and growing numbers of blacks in positions from which they were formerly barred, there is more opportunity for experience to contradict the stereotype. And because stereotyping has had such a long and lurid history, it is easy to imagine that once it diminishes, the problem will be essentially solved. Yet this is far from the case; all that will take place is the elimination of the obviously hostile forms of racial programming. On a deeper level, the most significant distortion has not been the misportrayal of Negroes, but their exclusion from programs depicting developments in which they played important roles. "Simple exclusion" may be the most insidious form of distortion, because it reenforces the false, but widely believed, idea that blacks have contributed little to the United States, and are significant only as "a problem." This point may be too obvious to require illustration, but a few examples may be useful. In television programs on the Civil War, World War I, World War II, or the Korean War, blacks are "invisible." In one eight-hour documentary on the Vietnam War, broadcast in 1982, black infantrymen were scarcely seen, even though it was the longest war in our history in which troops were integrated, and in which blacks comprised a disproportionately high share of the infantry. Since the documentary was on the war, and not on "racial problems," it was apparently unnecessary to include blacks. Perhaps a better example is television's treatment of the arts, an area where blacks have undoubtedly played a major, even shaping role. While the Negro for centuries affected American speech, and music and other forms of cultural expression, in

the last forty years there has been an intensifying "negrification" of American popular culture, especially music and dance. This is too pervasive for television to evade; but it is possible to evade blacks. A strange cultural situation has evolved in which television, the most popular medium, on many programs reflects a "negrified" popular culture without Negroes. This in some ways parallels the situation in Brazil, where the undeniably Afro-Brazilian culture has been appropriated as "Brazilian," yet the creators are pushed to the periphery of the culture, just as they are on the margins of the society. Television programming reflects the underlying conviction that in all things the United States is a white country. This simplistic notion has endured, while the more complex conception of America as a polygenetic culture and society continues to be resisted, despite superficial modifications of the patterns of racial dominance.

Video and Print During the Crisis Decades

It is reasonable to ask how the print media have differed from television in these matters. A fundamental difference, of course, is that television is an inherently monopolistic economic and cultural institution. While it is true that all of television's racial stereotypes had antecedents in print, other voices and other orientations were also possible. There was, for example, no technological grid that dominated the different print media. Without access to television's technological grid—the enormously expensive broadcasting studios and other facilities, and the capital required for even theoretical access—other views and orientations are beside the point. In the case of newspapers, magazines, and books, the large number of enterprises, combined with their smaller scale, permitted the expression of views that deviated from the emerging national consensus. Even in the worst period of segregation, when pulp fiction abounded with examples of racial stereotyping and group animosities, there were white firms, large and small, publishing books by and about Negroes that were relatively more faithful to the complexity of the nation's racial realities. Moreover, the investment required to enter publishing was small enough for black publishers to emerge in all the print fields. Thus, even when certain black points of view were not acceptable to white publishers, there were black vehicles of expression in which black authors could communicate with their intended audience. That there is no parallel situation in television has had serious consequences, and these become clearer if we consider television's greatest challenge in the area of race, the period of upheaval that started with the Montgomery bus boycott of 1957 and probably ended with the Liberty City (Miami) riots of 1980.

When the civil rights movement began to attract national attention in the late fifties, Negroes hardly existed in the TV world, except for Amos n' Andy and the occasional entertainers on the "Ed Sullivan Show" or Arthur Godfrey's popular program. Both Sullivan and Godfrey were criticized by Southern politicians for having even the few blacks they had on their shows, since it "tended to suggest equality." This was, in a sense, the problem the South was beginning to have with new technology generally—it was becoming increasingly difficult to segregate, as had been discovered with airplanes, which were

never forced into the segregated system of the railroads and buses. But it is fair to say that, on the whole, the national public was unprepared by television's "reality" for the decades of racial confrontation that followed 1957. The disparity between what was increasingly on television news and on the sitcoms and other routine entertainment was extraordinary. Yet it is clear that the medium did little to solve the basic problem, which was to convey to the American public more of the reality of race in America than could be accommodated in variety shows, quiz programs, and sitcoms. In those difficult years, television had more to say *about* blacks in American society, but very seldom was any of this said *by* blacks. Even when the messenger was black, in fact, the message was usually from a white point of view.

The print media, on the other hand, gave to numerous black voices the opportunity to present their side for the first time. Newspapers, magazines, and major publishing houses adapted rapidly, if imperfectly, and the public at large found some new understanding of what the so-called black revolution was about. Television, for example, had commentary *about* Martin Luther King, Jr., but provided no opportunity for him to reach the public directly, as he had in his books of the period, *Strength to Love* (1963) and *Where Do We Go From Here: Chaos or Community?* (1967). Similarly, television provided no parallel opportunity for the communication of black views afforded by major publishers, for example, to James Baldwin in *The Fire Next Time* (1963), to Baldwin, K.B. Clark, Malcolm X, and King, in *The Negro Protest* (1963), to Kenneth Clark in *Dark Ghetto* (1965), or to Malcolm X in his autobiography (1965). Confronted by such a massive internal crisis, that part of the public that depended on television for most of its understanding of the rapidly shifting issues of race was at a loss to determine what ideas and feelings lay behind the chaotic scenes they saw on the TV evening news. While an intelligent reader could rather easily grasp some of the fundamental issues presented by black spokesmen in their books and in magazine articles, the "TV-dependent" could not. An indication of television's fundamental failure to portray the reality of the civil rights movement becomes evident when we consider the response of publishers, as reflected in their rapidly changing book lists, to the changes taking place in society during those turbulent years. Television, by contrast, seemed to be standing still, maintaining its own version of reality. This failure was not simply an economic issue, since publishers must also be responsive to a market. Neither was it due solely to the "sensitivity" of the issues and the problem of presenting them to a mass audience, since publishers faced a similar challenge in the historically touchy field of textbook publishing. Yet in the sixties, significant improvements were made in rectifying the false conceptions of American history and society that had become standardized in elementary and secondary school books for more than three generations.[19]

There may, then, be something in the institutional function of television as well as its structure that determines its response to issues of social change. It may be that the mass-marketing aspect of television is decisive in programming. As programming has become more expensive, television's dependence on large advertisers has increased. And this dependency is clearly more inhibiting than the old "Southern box office" concern of the Hollywood film makers. Could an advertiser really dare to sponsor, on a regular basis, programs that represented a

controversial black point of view? The question has more than rhetorical significance; for a substantial part of the public, any point of view about the status of blacks in American society inconsistent with their social, economic, or political marginality is likely to be controversial. Even noncontroversial black entertainers have not been able to play major roles on television because of the "sponsor barrier." In 1957 Nat King Cole, an especially popular singer of the era, was the first Negro to head a network program. The program never succeeded in finding a regular sponsor, apparently because of the reluctance of advertisers to have their products "identified with" a black man.

American television's function as a mass-marketing device also drives the medium toward programs that are predominantly "entertainment," which in turn narrows the opportunities to program "serious" matters. Issues of race thus have the same slender chance of treatment by television as international relations, disarmament, urban decay, industrial decline, or environmental pollution. It may be argued that, in that sense, television's treatment of race has been no more deficient than for a number of other serious issues. The likelihood that an issue will be covered on TV is in inverse relationship to its importance, a "programming law" that seems to reflect the networks' persistent underestimation of the public's interest and intelligence. The American public, I think, would have responded positively in the sixties to serious television treatment of the racial crisis. Although "Roots" had its faults, its phenomenal success a decade later seems to support this contention, even if it is not conclusive proof. On the surface, any multiprogram series on the history of a black family from the era of slavery to the twentieth century would be a programmer's nightmare, filled with public relations "land mines" of all sorts. Yet the viewing public's response was the greatest in the history of television. Eager to have a panoramic "explanation" of the evolution of race relations in the United States, the public accepted as fact much that was contrived or distorted in "Roots." The basic point is that the public was interested far beyond what could be predicted on the basis of the usual assumptions about "what will play in Peoria." The very success of "Roots" is an indication of how derelict television has been in not mining the rich lore of the American past as a whole. Apart from the "formula Westerns" borrowed from Hollywood movies, there has been remarkably little use of American history or literature. It remains likely that the BBC will produce more classic American fiction than its American educational TV counterpart.

In a very real sense, American television's inability to confront the matter of race is only a part of its larger failure to grasp the richness of America's social and cultural diversity. The homogenized world projected by television may be a vision of the future, but it is clearly not a reflection of the present reality. The issue reaches beyond the matter of hiring minorities in TV newsrooms, or as technicians, or even as writers. It poses the problem of how to reform a highly centralized, almost monolithic business to accommodate and portray accurately the institutional, cultural, and intellectual diversity of our society. While there clearly has been some improvement in the number of minorities appearing on television and working in various parts of the industry, this improvement falls far short of the change necessary to bring television into greater congruence with the reality of American life.

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MARCEL C. LA FOLLETTE

Science on Television: Influences and Strategies

To learn quite a lot about politics, one need only volunteer for an election campaign; to learn about the health care system, visit a hospital. In each case, the rules, techniques, rewards, and social structure of the system are visible even to novices. But science has no such necessary interface with the public, and learning about the institution of science, therefore, requires a formal approach to the subject. Because science is open primarily to the knowledgeable and the certified, few opportunities exist for informal observation of researchers at work or for spontaneous interactions between scientists and the public. Such encounters as do occur must take place far from the laboratory, in schoolrooms or via the mass media.

Despite the need to close this distance, commercial television—a communication medium with powers of immediacy and clarity unparalleled by print—has been underutilized for bringing information about science to mass audiences. The reasons for this are neither technical nor necessarily implied by the subject: scientists continually produce fresh, interesting new results; the laboratories and equipment can be colorful and photogenic; and a number of excellent public broadcasting programs have demonstrated that science can indeed be successfully "popularized" (that is, explained to general audiences unfamiliar with scientific language, procedures, or principles) on television. Rather, the reasons—shaped long before the development of commercial television—inhere in the opinions of scientists and media professionals (writers, editors, producers) about what subjects are appropriate for popularization, how those subjects will be described, by whom, to whom, and why. These opinions, and the communications strategies they support, reflect a long-standing uneasy accommodation between scientists and those who popularize science, and reflect the continued dominance of print as a medium for the public communication of science, even in this electronic age.

The Bias Toward Print

Science has always been a favored target for editorial selection, and popular magazines have traditionally been vehicles for its successful communication. In the nineteenth century, literary periodicals such as *Harper's Monthly* routinely included explanations of physical events such as the aurora borealis or recent

experiments with electricity. And during some periods in the twentieth century, mass circulation magazines, such as *The Saturday Evening Post* and *American Magazine*, published almost one science article per issue.[1] Many scientists today, however, regard publication of an article in a general magazine—where neither editors nor readers are necessarily sympathetic to science—as a journey into unpredictable, potentially hostile territory, a venture justified only by some special purpose. When scientific associations or individual researchers want to speak to the public, they are far more likely to choose as a forum a "popular science" magazine.

Although popular science magazines in the United States have been allied philosophically and politically with the scientific establishment, only rarely have the ties been formal sponsorship or ownership. Even though the editor of *Popular Science Monthly*, the foremost science magazine of the nineteenth century, regarded himself as a "champion" of popularization (to "bring to thoughtful readers without scientific training some knowledge of scientific thought and progress"[2]), and the publication clearly sympathized with the scientific community, it had actually been founded by a commercial publishing house. The next editor, psychologist James McKeen Cattell, preferred to be seen as a champion of the scientific community,[3] and served as editor of *Science*, the official journal of the American Association for the Advancement of Science, at the same time as he was publishing *Popular Science Monthly*.

The most prominent science magazine of the twentieth century, *Scientific American*, has had similar strong cachet with scientists, but is also a commercial enterprise, without formal links to, or sponsorship by, any scientific organization. Founded in 1845 by a Yankee inventor, the magazine at first concentrated on the patent business. Its most successful phase came after its sale in the 1930s to Gerard Piel and Dennis Flanagan, who shaped it into a technically accurate, superbly produced forum from which scientists explain their work to the converted.[4] Although the magazine has on occasion taken strong stands on some freedom of the press issues,[5] the editorial tone is generally conservative; investigative journalism and exposé have no place in its pages. The magazine's overriding goal is to inform the audience accurately, completely, and without rancor or debilitating bias.

Notwithstanding the success of *Scientific American* (its circulation is over one million worldwide), it had relatively few competitors until the late 1970s, when publishers who were seeking to enter the market for specialized magazines began to recognize the profit potential in science and the *Scientific American* model. The new magazines (the leaders being *Science 82*—the number changing each year—published by the American Association for the Advancement of Science; *Discover*, by Time, Inc.; and *Omni*, by the publishers of *Penthouse*) reiterate the old theme of the glory and promise of scientific research, just as *Popular Science Monthly* did one hundred years before.

The enthusiastic reception given to these publications by the scientific community[6] is characteristic of the media preferences of scientists; given a choice, they cling to print. Although television is better able to show the sights and sounds of science, and commercial television serves larger, more diverse audiences than specialized science magazines, the scientific community in general appears to favor magazines and books as formats for popularization.

Members of one major scientific professional association, for example, when considering how best to promote public understanding of science, stress the need to be "cautious" about supporting television efforts, and treat the medium as if it were a drug new to the market. Some of this mistrust springs from unfamiliarity with the form. It may also be traced to a historical reliance on, familiarity with, and bias toward, print.

Televised Science

In the 1950s and 1960s, it was easy for the scientific community to ignore mass television. Science, when it appeared on television at all, was most likely becalmed within a Sunday afternoon segment of "Omnibus," ridiculed in science fiction comedy, confined to a lecture, or hidden in a "nature" program. In the 1950s, programs frequently copied the lecture format. Cameras intervened to bring a scientist's words to audiences of millions rather than to hundreds, but the tone and manner of presentation resembled the classroom talk. By transmitting directly from laboratories or using realistic sets, directors evoked a sense of "being there"; viewers could feel that they were guests "in a particularly fascinating workshop . . . personally being shown the inner mysteries."[7] By remaining behind the laboratory bench, the televised scientist could preserve an appropriately dignified distance between teacher and pupils. This was a format successfully used by "Mr. Wizard" (broadcast from 1951 to 1966, and revived in 1972 and in 1976), which many commentators cite fondly as a "model" for science broadcasting.[8] In fact, the longest-running science program on television is the nature program "Wild Kingdom," which was first broadcast in 1962. Passing over descriptions of experiments, theories, hypotheses, and the value structure of science, each program in this syndicated series instead retells scientific facts about the natural world. The series is typical of the approach taken during the 1960s, one that is still popular today. The paucity of science programs on either commercial or public television may be one reason that scientists welcomed the PBS series "Nova" so enthusiastically when it was first shown in 1973.

"Nova" set the tone for the decade to follow. The series was created to bring, in the words of its first executive producer, "a consistent and *trustworthy* source of science [to] television."[9] The content ranges across the entire landscape of modern science, and offers a wide spectrum of material, from factual summaries to investigative pieces on the social context of science, to softer, almost sentimental programs on natural history. At the "harder" end, it resembles popular science magazines, especially *Scientific American*, in the relationships between segments, in uniformity of tone, and in philosophical approach. But "Nova" is a series in name and general theme only. Individual programs do not make reference to others in the series, and there is no continuing character, motif, or moderator. However, even though some proportion of each season's offerings are not originally produced by the WGBH-TV "Nova" staff, but are obtained from, or coproduced with, other production units, such as the science section of the BBC, there *is* consistency: all have splendid photography, clear writing, and unfortunately soporific narration.

The tone is authoritative, analytical, and objective—science knows and "Nova" conveys.

Most criticism of "Nova," external *and* internal, has centered, not on the technical quality of its productions, but around the definition of its role in bringing science to the public. Should the series be more investigative or interpretive, or should it strive simply to inform and entertain? In truth, it has been more the latter than the former. Even "Nova's" most controversial programs are mild compared to what appears on commercial television, yet it has acquitted its educational role well, supplementing broadcasts with coordinated printed materials for students.[10] The search for a more critical role has been inhibited, some writers assert, by the conservative environment of public television[11] and by the nature of its funding:

> In public television those who want to make programs must also raise the wherewithal, so the creative process is typically subordinate to the search for money. . . . though American public broadcasting defends its independence, nevertheless its producers too feel the impact of the "sponsor," that is, the underwriters who are the sources of program grants.[12]

Because of the limited local resources of public television stations, and the realities of tight federal funding, science producers must now find substantial underwriting from private industry.[13] Because these are corporate gifts and grants, not purchases of advertising time, the producers understandably shun controversial subjects, and particularly fear criticism from the scientific associations.

"Nova" is, of course, not the only science on television, nor are unconnected series the only workable format. Commercial network programs can reach far greater audiences: the audience for each "Nova" program averages 10 million; even a fifteen-minute segment on science appearing within a popular network show such as "60 Minutes" can draw about 40 million. The networks also regularly carry public affairs documentaries on topics related to science and technology. By the end of 1982, for example, ABC, CBS, and NBC each will have produced and broadcast series on the nuclear weapons debate, containing not only some history of science and political analyses, but also factual information on the physics, chemistry, and biological effects of the bombs.

Most messages about science and technology on television, however, are not deliberate attempts to inform the public. Rather, they are unintentional ("nondeliberate") communications, such as the images, or the real or hypothetical scientific information, present in drama and comedy, where a science "fact," setting, or theme may be chosen more for its entertainment than its educational value.[14] In the late 1970s, for example, over one third of all children's programs broadcast on Saturday mornings on eight Boston stations, public and commercial, had a science-related theme (e.g., a spaceship journey or a "bionic" superhero), or regularly included a character identified as a scientist.[15] In an extensive study of commercial television, George Gerbner found that scientific and technological themes appear in about one half of all commercial network dramatic or comedy programs, and that the appearance of these themes increased in frequency during the 1970s.[16] In these programs, the words "science" and "scientific" may be applied to pseudoscientific ideas (e.g., that

people can be transported back in time), the authority of science may be used to legitimate an action or statement, or a piece of scientific equipment may be introduced simply to set the scene.

There *are*, however, certain formats in which information about science can be presented quite successfully on television in both drama and documentary form:

1. Straightforward reporting of new results and long-accepted principles
2. Placing these facts in a scientific context, thereby outlining the processes and procedures of science
3. Placing scientific knowledge and research questions in social, cultural, philosophical, political, or historical context
4. Describing the values, goals, motives, and social system of science
5. Evaluating the performance of science in attaining social and cultural goals

Television is best at presenting the facts and principles of science without comment or context; it most neglects the process of science and the nature of scientific work.[17] When a plot or story line focuses on a single tightly defined problem, television tends to describe facts or ideas in isolation rather than in their scientific or philosophical context. Programs often do not outline what research led to a specific discovery, or describe what hypotheses were tried and rejected. In this regard, television's "performance" differs from that of print. Because of time constraints, research steps that may have taken months or years must be compressed into a few words, a few seconds of description. Further, the size of the screen places limits on how complex a diagram may be. In consequence, even in science documentaries, discussion of hypothesis-building or theory-building is omitted. As June Goodfield argues, exclusion of these aspects of science represents a significant failure in the popularization process, because

> the public needs to know about the actual nature of the scientific process. . . . The patterns, the limits, the nature of discovery, the balance of certainty and uncertainty must be explicit. . . . the methodology of science and the spirit of science should also be conveyed, along with their underlying relationship to the basic factual information. . . . practically no one has done [this] at all, for [media professionals] generally don't know how to, and scientists either have not bothered or, in some cases, have not wanted to be observed that closely.[18]

Television rarely demonstrates the intellectual power of science and the mathematical and statistical tools supporting it. Rather, the authority of science is represented as resting on primarily male experts; in television drama, characters with technical problems frequently suggest, "Let's ask X about it." Any information labeled as "scientific" is uncritically accepted as fact. Even science documentaries do not always differentiate clearly between levels and types of expertise in different research fields—but this may reflect general American attitudes toward experts, scientific and otherwise.

Although some programs faithfully describe scientific experiments or procedures, most ignore the painstaking, tedious, and frequently dull work of measurement and analysis. The "laws" and "theories" of the scientific characters of television dramas are ludicrous or pompous speculations that parody true theorizing. They do not test hypotheses in any rigorous way, and little attention is paid to experimental design or to testable prediction. To keep the action going, television has developed a casual attitude toward experimentation. For example, characters hurl chemicals together without measuring them, because—it is implied—accomplished researchers need not measure.

Television most neglects the tentative nature of scientific knowledge, a failing shared by both news and entertainment presentations, and one that inhibits the development of a more accurate image of careful observation and experimentation. In television drama, science is depicted as a confident, omniscient ally, whose word is acceptable without question, rather than as a system of inquiry continually accommodating change through explanation or the reinterpretation of results.

When television dips into the history of science, it tends to show science as a finished enterprise. Real science moves forward inconclusively to new things; television drama, toward artificial closure. Moreover, by focusing on individual accomplishments *in situ*, television neglects normal change within research fields,[19] just as by representing science as facts invented *in vacuo*, it neglects the processes producing those facts and the motives for the research. Without such context, the intellectual and social importance of scientific results may not be readily apparent to the audience, Norman Metzger believes that television's great mistake has always been "to confuse goal with style"—perhaps because the true nature of science is not always at the surface or made accessible by the scientists:

> The style of science is contentious, argumentative, full of human agonies and eccentricities, and deeply exciting. By and large, that style remains hidden behind a Potemkin structure that masks the realities; the intrinsic messiness of research is covered by a veneer of academic gentility, and the very often angry and acid disagreements in the pursuit of truth are wrapped into a tidy package of a reasonable theory held together by the proper experimental ribbons.[20]

The prominence of a few good intentional communications, in both print and video formats, has tended to divert discussions away from the multitude of inaccurate and exaggerated images. At a recent conference on science and the television industry, a Hollywood executive enthusiastically described to me and a molecular biologist a forthcoming television movie about "test-tube babies." The biologist seemed amused by the inflated estimates of current research knowledge, and it was easy to dismiss the program as being of less importance than more "serious" documentaries. Yet, even if that movie is unsuccessful by industry standards (the ratings), and even though it is "drama," not documentary, it will nonetheless present a set of imaginary scientific "facts," and possibly a false image of an important research field, to many millions of people. Furthermore, it will do so in a format crafted to have maximum emotional effect. The naive viewer, unfamiliar with real scientific research, has no reason to question the authenticity of these images, especially when they are set in

contexts of faithful re-creation of verifiable facts or settings, or within a trusted series. Gerbner found that six out of ten prime-time programs on commercial television involve "a theme or aspect of life explicitly and unambiguously related to science, technology, or engineering." And he calculates that, because the average viewer spends thirty hours per week in front of the television set, and because one third of that viewing is of prime-time dramatic shows, at least one hour of viewing in each weekday evening can include a program that "involves" science. "No other cultural or educational source," he warns, "comes nearer to the magnitude of that exposure period." Because there is little deliberate communication of science on commercial television (and almost none of the quality even of "Nova"), most of what the average viewer will be exposed to may be exaggerated or completely fictional images of science.

Why are such images of science important? Gerbner has uncovered a remarkable negative correlation between the amount of television viewed and public confidence in the scientific community, a finding he attributes to the "dubious" image of science presented in television drama. The groups on which public institutions depend for support are the ones that show "the greatest indication of an association between television viewing and less confidence in science":

> These are the younger, better-educated, middle and higher income, and generally confident groups, those that generally provide the bulk of interest in and support for science. As long as members of this group watch little or no television, their confidence in the scientific community is the highest of all groups. But that confidence level declines among those members of these same groups who watch more television.[21]

Sources of Mistrust

Television's technical ability to produce programs on complex subjects and its willingness to grapple with intricate ethical or political issues are not in question.[22] Why, then, is there not more science on television? Some of the failure may be due to the uneasy relationship between the scientists and the popularizers of science—a mutual accommodation of goals that is affected somewhat by media conventions, more so by the attitudes of scientists toward popularization and by the scientists' own constraints on information.

It is popularly argued that the mass media possess the power to "set the agenda" for public discussion; science, however, presents a special case, in that the agenda is defined less by journalists than by scientists. Popularized science does not consist simply of all scientific knowledge translated into nonmathematical language; rather, it consists of material sifted out in accordance with "accepted" interpretations of science shared by both groups. Science writer William Bennett believes that these interpretations originate with the source:

> that pool of material to which broadcasters are attracted, and from which their selections are made, exists independently of their concerns. It has been formed not by the broadcasters' selection procedures, but by the scientist's. It consists of these projects considered by scientific evaluators to be the most important or significant projects of the moment.[23]

I would add that those projects in the pool are the ones that scientists consider appropriate for public discussion. Scientists "manage" information in this way, Bennett believes, because they fear loss of control over their "sole source of wealth and power." All scientific information is managed within the peer review system, as scientists authenticate the work of their colleagues; when that information enters the public domain, through either print or video mass media, scientists lose control over its presentation and interpretation.

Control at the source is made possible primarily by the technical nature of the information. Most media professionals, even those who work exclusively on scientific subjects, have insufficient training to comprehend all the pertinent literature in just a few scientific fields. They must rely on researchers for interpretation and explanation, thereby cultivating a symbiotic dependence upon their source, a dependence that is unparalleled in news or entertainment treatment of other American social institutions. In politics, for example, many of the predominant media "voices" are political analysts, not politicians or government officials; but the scientist alone—not the science commentator or critic—speaks for science. For fields such as astronomy, where amateurs are skilled, articulate, and make independent significant contributions to the store of knowledge in the field, broadcasters still choose professional scientists for on-camera authentification or interviews. Moreover, when singling out persons to represent "attitudes within the scientific community," the media generally adhere to the community's own ranking and evaluation of importance.[24]

To maintain this delicate relationship, journalists must retain the favor of the scientists; many science journalists and producers also maintain memberships in one or more scientific associations,[25] an affiliation consistent with the traditional self-image of science popularizers. Editors and publishers of popular science magazines, for example, have long regarded themselves as proponents, not critics, of science. Throughout the last century, they described themselves as active "transmitters" of scientific knowledge, as "public stand-ins" for scientists, and as "interpreters" of knowledge, never as mere recorders or reporters of facts. Sharon Dunwoody has concluded from her study of science journalists that the traditional closeness between these reporters and their sources may be affecting "news selection and news-gathering behavior . . . mainly by emphasizing *cooperative* behaviors . . . in situations which should be highly competitive."[26] Little attention has been paid to the consequences of this situation for the type of information brought to the public. John Hulteng, writing on journalism ethics in general, cautions that a

> symbiotic relationship [between journalist and source] is unhealthy for the news consumer, the reader or viewer who believes his news report is telling him what is really happening, when actually it may be telling him only what an informal but nonetheless efficient cabal of news sources and reporters has decided he should know.[27]

Although the journalist or television producer may feel loyalty toward science, or may desire to accommodate a useful source, the scientist may, at the same time, be quite distrustful of the mass media. Whether spurred by fears of negative public opinion, by the belief that unguided public participation in science policy-making could be irrational, by personal desire for recognition, or

by the conviction that only scientists can truly explain science, scientists have been willing, from time to time, to participate in the popularization process. At other times, they have been equally *un*willing. Cooperation can take the form of granting an interview, supplying information, writing an article, or advising on a television production. Whatever the form, the extent of interaction serves as an indirect indicator of approval of popularization. In the first half of the twentieth century, the number of science articles published in general magazines, for example, appears to have been related to the level of participation by scientists as authors or interview subjects.[28] Increases in the 1920s in the overall participation of scientists and in the number of articles on science can be linked to the fact that after World War I an "activist leadership" in science attempted vigorously to influence public opinion and even to create a popular science magazine.[29] It is possible to see parallels here with the 1970s, when several scientific associations began to sponsor or publish popular magazines, and their members appeared to be more willing to write for them. Here, the scientists may have been reacting to widely published reports of declining public confidence in science.[30] As E.G. Sherburne observed about the "boom" in science magazines, not only have the media gatekeepers "discovered" science,[31] but the scientists themselves may now see increased incentives for opening the gate wider.

The Audience for Science

The popularization goals acceptable to scientists—education and information—conflict in most instances with the principal entertainment function of the mass media, whether print or video. This is not to say that the conflict is irresolvable, because, as Leo Bogart has noted, "in most of the mass media, most of the time, knowledge is embedded within layers of amusement, which represent the primary attraction for the audience."[32] The roots of the uneasiness between scientists and the mass media go deeper; the conflict is only a surface symptom of an ambivalence toward the audience that encompasses the "duality of elitist ideas and democratic popular thought."[33]

What *is* the appropriate audience for science? When the British physicist John Tyndall toured the United States in 1872-73, he lectured in crowded public halls on "the nature of light," and in the words of one contemporary magazine, practiced "to perfection the rare art of making science popular to the masses without detracting from its worth in the opinion of scholars."[34] But underlying the editorial observations that the Tyndall lectures were attracting the "most thoughtful" and "most cultivated" citizens, representing "all the intelligence and culture of the city," was an implication, echoed today, that perhaps only the "most cultivated" can and should be taught science. In summarizing the importance of the Tyndall lectures, *The Galaxy* of February 1873 wrote:

> Some have been inclined to carp at the lectures as *fashionable*, because they were attended by many well-dressed ladies, but this shows a bad spirit. If fashionable people take to common sense, it should certainly be a matter of congratulations. . . . It is really not necessary that everybody who goes to scientific lectures should

> be ragged and destitute of good manners. The object of science is not to flatter the "people" or to get votes by the arts that are so well-known to politicians.

The opposite perspective—the democratic ideal—was exemplified by this statement in the December 19, 1872, issue of *The Nation:* "It would surprise most people, we suppose, to know how many plain people follow with very real eagerness and with a fair degree of intelligence and a fair amount of profit such researches as those of Darwin, Faraday, Tyndall, and their compeers." One hundred years later, the economic relationship between science and society has changed, and public understanding of science is linked directly to public approval of research activities and of how public monies are spent.[35] Science now has a clientele. As biologist David Baltimore explains, the public does not need "to understand the details of the genetic code, but it is important that they understand that the funds they are contributing are being spent in a way that is generating new knowledge in that area."[36]

This economic reality, however, has not deterred serious questioning of how and to whom information should be given. Is the general public entitled to be informed about science and technology? Leon Trachtman, for one, asks for reconsideration of the validity of this premise that democratic public policy dictates. He argues that because current public information about science is inadequate, and therefore likely either to misinform or to build unsatisfiable expectations, we must examine carefully the reasons such communication has been attempted. To continue giving inaccurate information runs the risk of doing more harm than good: "When there is a scientific consensus, there is no need to inform the public except to recommend a proper course of action. When there is no consensus, why inundate the public with ambiguous and contradictory reports, but offer them no way of assessing or evaluating the reports. . . . Where it really matters, a person drowned in information about science may be in no better position to make choices than an almost totally uninformed person."[37]

A slightly different approach assumes that perhaps only a select group—not unlike those who attended Tyndall's lectures—should be the favored target of popularization efforts. In a 1978 national survey of public attitudes toward science and technology, Jon Miller, Kenneth Prewitt, and Robert Pearson identified a segment of the population that they labeled the "attentive public"—that is, people who are interested in science policy issues and generally informed about scientific matters. They estimate that this group, which is "highly supportive of the present structure and activities of the scientific community," is about 18 percent of the adult population of the United States. Their definition of "attentiveness" includes individuals who meet three criteria: a high level of interest in science; an adequate level of current information; and a commitment to a pattern of information acquisition that will assure a continuing level of knowledgeability. Because people are not only interested in issues or groups of which they approve, the attentive public also includes the "most well-informed and vocal critics of organized science in the population."[38]

In an era of limited resources for all social tasks, it is easy to see the attractiveness of a political strategy that regards this attentive public as a possible "surrogate" public for discussion of science policy issues. Jon Miller has

in fact suggested that "mass scientific literacy at any reasonable level is not a feasible objective." Science educators should fulfill first the needs of the attentive public, rather than attempt to bring science to the entire public. He writes:

> I would suggest that we ought to think of the interest specialization process in market terms and make a case to our students—or potential students—for the importance of science. At the same time, society would not function very well if everyone were mainly interested in science, so we ought to set our goals realistically. . . . The attentive public for science policy is a relatively small group . . . and it is important that those persons whose training, experience, and skills are appropriate to science policy matters participate in the system.[39]

Daniel Yankelovich has argued strongly against such a strategy. He believes that all people should have the opportunity to be involved in matters pertaining to science and technology policy. The public does have a stake—"In a democracy, we must involve the entire electorate in matters of such vital importance." Yankelovich warns that by attempting to make "common cause" only with the attentive public, the scientific community will be "enlisting on one side of a social-class battle,"

> because the "attentive public" is not so much a scientifically minded cross-section of the public as it is an educated elite who share certain outlooks and values with the scientific elite. To make common cause with them . . . implies that the mass of the public . . . are presumed to be the enemy. I think this is bad politics because it politicizes and contaminates science and technology issues with ideological, social-class issues.[40]

How the target audience is defined, therefore, can have a significant effect on how resources for popularization are allocated. Strengthening ties to science magazines aimed at an affluent college-educated audience assumes that science is an appropriate subject primarily for "elites" or for "the cultivated." Strengthening ties to the commercial television industry makes the assumption that all people should have access to accurate, thought-provoking information on science and technology and their impacts.

In the next decades, more opportunities for popularization of science will be made available through the development of cable television and other new technologies. A study made by KCET/28, the Los Angeles public television station, suggests that with a wildly expanding cable market, "the American audience will be treated less as a homogenized mass and more as a collection of varying interests, tastes, and desires," and that, in consequence, science programming could also expand.

> Of course, science programs of an entertaining nature will draw the largest audiences and will be the most immediately viable form of science programming in the television marketplace. For science programming of a more serious genre, such as "Nova" and "Cosmos," the potential is not so immediate and somewhat more complex to attain.[41]

In their survey of cable operators, these analysts found that few of the operators believed that a "pure" science program package would be attractive, but that

most felt a package "mixing science with [other] cultural programs"—the model used by American popular magazines in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries—might be "more viable." Yet biases about the audience for popularization persist: both the operators and the report writers describe science as "highbrow" or "elite" material, and appear to regard it as a subject suitable only for special audiences.

The tendency of scientists to recoil in horror from news coverage of a scientific controversy may often be simply an overreaction fed by uninformed beliefs about the process and effects of mass communication. R.W. Reid, discussing the production of television programs on science, suggests that advice during research and writing, filming and editing, can be the best link between the working scientist and the working producer, the connection he feels is most in need of attention. Scientists familiar with even the *basic* technical requirements of television would be better equipped to imagine "ways in which the communication of their ideas can be strengthened, rather than cheapened or distorted, by proper collaboration with television professionals."[42]

Even when the information presented is not positive, education takes place. In a recent interview, David Baltimore stated that he believed that "one of the most positive spin-offs of all the Recombinant DNA controversy was public understanding."[43] The very existence of controversy, and the fact that the debate entered the news, prompted many people to consider what types of research were being done and to learn more about the particular issue of Recombinant DNA. Baltimore believes that there is "a large element of the public which understand[s] these things [now], and didn't five years ago." What the public may now better understand is not (as Baltimore himself pointed out) "the details of the genetic code," but rather the value issues that surround the research.

I recently asked one of the younger, more aggressive science reporters what he thought of his colleagues' reporting of the Arkansas "creation-science" case and the science and society issues the debate raised. "Frankly, I'm bored with it," he said. "No one gets convinced; it is not a debate in which minds are changed because the scientific community is locked into a narrow reaction to Creationism." Although he was not sympathetic to the creationists, he felt strongly that the media—in particular, the scientific news press—had investigated the value structures of the creationists but had ignored the value issues in the scientific community's own hostile reaction to the creationists. "Science through its logic is attacking the mythology of Creationism," he continued, "and equating genuine myth with lies," but this part of the story was not being told adequately in either print or video coverage of the issue.

To that reporter and to a small, but growing, number of other media professionals, science is open for debate. They are confident that scientists can hold their own in a fair fight. They are themselves believers in the force of rationality. But they are also convinced that science is not only for the "attentives." The content of popular communication of science has been shaped historically by critical assumptions about the appropriate audience and why it must be well served—that is to say, shaped in large part by the scientific community's own values. Society might now be better served if the scientists made deliberate effort to close the distance between the lectern and the

audience, and to create open meeting places where both "the cultivated" and "plain people" can learn about science.

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[2]Frank Luther Mott, *A History of American Magazines*, vol. 3 (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1938), p. 496.

[3]See *An Education in Psychology, James McKeen Cattell's Journals and Letters from Germany and England, 1880-1888*, edited by Michael M. Sokal (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1981), pp. 339-40; and Michael M. Sokal, "*Science* and James McKeen Cattell, 1894-1945," *Science* 209 (July 4, 1980): 43-52. I am grateful to Professor Sokal for sharing his observations on Cattell's attitudes toward popularization.

[4]Eugene Garfield, "*Scientific American*—One Hundred and Thirty-Six Years of Science Journalism," *Current Contents* 21 (May 25, 1981): 5-11. See also Mott, *A History of American Magazines*, vol. 3, for a history of *Scientific American*.

[5]For example, *Scientific American*'s stand on publishing an article on the atomic bomb. See Gerard Piel, *Science in the Cause of Man*, 2d ed. (New York: Vintage Press, 1961), pp. 3-20.

[6]See, for example, Daniel Greenberg, "Scientific Magazines Bursting Out All Over," *Science and Government Report* 9 (1) (January 15, 1979): 1-2; William Bennett, "Science Hits the Newsstand," *Columbia Journalism Review* 19 (5) (January-February 1981): 53-57; William Bennett, "Science Goes Glossy," *The Sciences*, September 1979, pp. 10-15; and William J. Broad, "Science Magazines: The Second Wave Rolls In," *Science* 215 (January 15, 1982): 272-73.

[7]Greta Jones, Ian Connell, and Jack Meadows, "The Presentation of Science by the Media," a report from the Primary Communications Research Center (Leicester, England: British Library Board, 1978), p. 33.

[8]See Cleveland Amory, "Mr. Wizard," *TV Guide*, April 22, 1972, p. 48; George Maksian, " 'Mr. Wizard' Coming Back," *The New York Daily News*, April 1, 1976. Nowhere in this essay do I discuss the restraints imposed by the profit requirements of commercial television, a topic of considerable complexity. I should therefore point out that such programs as "Wild Kingdom" most likely survive because of some satisfactory combination of sustained high audience levels, relatively modest production costs, and sufficient advertising revenue.

[9]Michael J. Ambrosino, remarks in a news section on science and the media, *Newsletter of the Program on Public Conceptions of Science* 1 (4) (June 1973): 24, italics added.

[10]Print materials supplementing television series are published by several public broadcasting groups. The "Cosmos," "Search for Solutions," and "Life on Earth" series each had coordinated books published commercially. The anthropology series "Odyssey" coordinates posters, teachers' guides, and classroom magazines to its broadcasts; "Nova" produces program guides, offers copies of the script at low cost, and has a system of classroom distribution of videocassette copies of programs.

[11]Josephine Gladstone, "Remarks on the Portrayal of Scientists," *Science, Technology, & Human Values* 5 (32) (Summer 1980): 5.

[12]June Goodfield, *Reflections on Science and the Media* (Washington, D.C.: American Association for the Advancement of Science, 1981), pp. 25-26.

[13]Some recent underwriters include Polaroid Corporation (grants to "Natural History of a Sunbeam" and "Odyssey"); Mobil Oil ("Life on Earth" broadcast subsidy); Johnson & Johnson ("Nova"); and Phillips Petroleum ("Search for Solutions").

[14]The popular communication of science may be classified according to the intention of the communication. Explicit, deliberate presentations usually are based wholly in fact (for example, news coverage of a National Academy of Sciences report, or a television documentary on nuclear waste), but they can also be biographical or dramatic—for example, the "Oppenheimer" television series. The key to classification is the program's intent to tell something about science, either positive or negative, rather than the particular techniques chosen for telling. Intentional communication can take place in a general format, where the segment or article on science is but one offering in an editorial banquet, or else in a forum dedicated to science, where the entire broadcast or magazine is about science, and the viewer or reader watches or buys in order to learn about science.

Unintentional communication takes place when information or images appear in a context intended to entertain or inform, but not necessarily to provide information about science. The

scientific facts or fiction, the character identified as scientist, or the laboratory setting are usually incidental to the plot. Nevertheless some image and facts, true or false, about science are conveyed.

[15]Data from M.C. La Follette, "Wizards, Villains and Other Scientists: The Science Content of Television for Children," a report done for Action for Children's Television, Newton, Massachusetts, 1978. The study examined all television programs broadcast on eight Boston-area television stations from 7 A.M. to 9 P.M., July 5 through 11, 1977, with updating in July 1978. The content appears relatively unchanged since that study was done.

[16]George Gerbner, "Science and Scientists on the TV Screen," paper presented at the American Association for the Advancement of Science, Annual Meeting (Toronto, Canada), January 5, 1981. See also George Gerbner, "Health and Medicine on Television," *New England Journal of Medicine* 305 (15) (October 8, 1981): 901.

[17]The "objectives for science education" developed by the National Assessment of Educational Progress Task Force on Science (Ann Arbor, Michigan, 1969) provide a useful guide for analysis of the presentation of science on television.

[18]Goodfield, *Reflections on Science and the Media*, p. 88.

[19]Elihu Katz, with Daniel Dayan and Pierre Motyl, "In Defense of Media Events," in *Communications in the Twenty-First Century*, edited by Robert W. Haigh, George Gerbner, and Richard B. Byrne (New York: Wiley, 1981), p. 51.

[20]Norman Metzger, in *Science on Television* (Washington, D.C.: American Association for the Advancement of Science, 1975), p. 3.

[21]Gerbner, "Science and Scientists on the TV Screen."

[22]As Josephine Gladstone argues persuasively, television drama could provide an excellent vehicle for explaining the "ethical and social context within which science operates" ("Remarks on the Portrayal of Scientists," p. 5). In programs such as "Roots" and in social and political biographies, television has shaped entertainment to convey subtle aspects of ethical conflicts as well as social ideas. On public television, the "Synthesis" series, produced by the Western Science and Public Policy Communication Center at KPBS-TV (San Diego), addresses the interface of public policy and ethics in many of its programs.

[23]Jones et al., "The Presentation of Science by the Media," p. 30.

[24]Rae Goodell in *The Visible Scientists* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1977) argues that the scientist "visible" in the mass media is most likely to be someone who "has a 'hot topic,' is controversial, is articulate, has a colorful image, and has established a credible reputation [in science]."

[25]Sharon Dunwoody, "The Science Writing Inner Club," *Science, Technology, & Human Values* 5 (30) (Winter 1980): 14-22. Although Dunwoody studied print journalists, the closeness to source and friendships with other science journalists extends to journalists working in video formats as well.

[26]Ibid., p. 14.

[27]John L. Hulteng, *The Messenger's Motives: Ethical Problems of the News Media* (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1976), p. 84.

[28]See Ref. 1.

[29]Robert H. Kargon, *The Maturing of American Science* (Washington, D.C.: American Association for the Advancement of Science, 1979), p. 1.

[30]See the Summer 1974 issue of *Daedalus*, "Science and The Public: The Changing Relationship," especially the article by Amitai Etzioni and Clyde Nunn, "The Public Appreciation of Science in America," pp. 191-206, which reviews public opinion surveys.

[31]Quoted in Bennett, "Science Goes Glossy."

[32]Leo Bogart, "Mass Media: Knowledge as Entertainment," presented at American Association for the Advancement of Science Annual Meeting, Washington, D.C., January 8, 1982.

[33]The quote is from Edward Lurie.

[34]John Yates, "Professor Tyndall," *The Christian Union* 6 (18) (October 23, 1872): 343.

[35]This point has been made forcefully by Don Fuqua and Doug Walgren, "Decision-Making for Quality Science," *Science, Technology, & Human Values* 7 (39) (Spring 1982): 32-34.

[36]"An Interview with Dr. David Baltimore," *SIPIScope* 10 (2) (March-April 1982): 17.

[37]Leon E. Trachtman, "The Public Understanding of Science Effort: A Critique," *Science, Technology, & Human Values* 6 (Summer 1981): 10.

[38]Jon D. Miller, Kenneth Prewitt, and Robert Pearson, *The Attitudes of the U.S. Public Toward Science and Technology* (Chicago: National Opinion Research Center, University of Chicago, July 1980), p. 161. To be classified as a regular consumer of organized science information, a respondent must have stated either that he used one or two general news sources and two or more specialized science information sources, or else used three general information sources and at least one specialized science source. In the general survey, the most widely used source of specialized science information for all adults (including the attentives) appears to be the National Geographic Television specials, which 55 percent of the population reported watching. Over 10 percent stated

that they visited science and technology museums and natural history museums; 12 percent stated that they read one or more general science magazines.

[39]Jon D. Miller, "The Scientific Literacy of the American People: A Reinterpretation," *AAPT Pathways* (Proceedings of the Fiftieth Anniversary Symposium of the American Asssociation of Physics Teachers), 1981, p. 7.

[40]Daniel Yankelovich, "Changing Public Attitudes to Science and the Quality of Life," *Science, Technology, & Human Values* 7 (39) (Spring 1982): 23-29. This article also appears in *Quality in Science* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1982).

[41]*A Study of the Potential of Science Programming on Pay Television*, A Report to the National Science Foundation (Los Angeles, California: KCET/28, n.d.).

[42]R. W. Reid, "Television Producer and Scientist," *Nature* 228 (August 2, 1969): 458.

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DEBORAH SHAPLEY

The Media and National Security

How well do newspapers treat national security issues? How does television render this complex, difficult, and emotionally charged subject? Are newspapers so constrained by space (less than a thousand words for most stories), time (daily deadlines), and their professional rigidities (exclusionary rules about what is "news") that they cannot educate people about U.S. military capabilities, strategy, and foreign commitments? Does the circuslike busyness of television and its preoccupation with finding a certain kind of visual image limit what it can do in this field? Most Americans have little direct knowledge of the U.S. military; even those in military service or those engaged in defense industries do not, as a matter of course, have broad knowledge of the field. How, then, can ordinary citizens come to understand U.S. weapons, military capabilities, and the problems and challenges posed by the Soviet Union in this area? How do the various media handle the subject? How do they shape public perceptions? One way to address such questions is through specific examples. Two cases, one from newspaper journalism, and the other from television, may serve to illustrate how the media "do" stories in this field.

The first case is that of the neutron bomb story, which was initially raised by the *Washington Post* in June 1977, and which became a progressively larger issue, touching, in time, the president, many of the leaders of Western Europe, and public opinion both in this country and abroad. The story remained "news" until President Carter decided unexpectedly in April 1978 not to produce the weapon. The second involves CBS's prize-winning series of June 1981, "The Defense of the United States." The program sought to review in a single marathon documentary the whole of U.S. defense policy. CBS committed a record five hours of airtime to the subject, and spent a million dollars to produce it. This case might be subtitled "Worlds in Collision," since it describes how the CBS staff (and other television journalists) are required to "fight" the subject to extract from it those rare elements that make good film.

Clearly, other cases might have been discussed. The burden of these two—which are generally thought to be examples of *good* media coverage—suggests the kinds of difficulties the media have with the subject and explains why they rarely do it justice.

The Neutron Bomb Story

Experts in the national security field have developed an abstruse and highly specialized vocabulary to describe concepts that are meaningful to them. Terms like "counterforce," "mutual assured destruction," "flexible response," and the like are used so much by experts that they take on a life of their own. So one of the functions of investigative reporting in this area is to produce new facts, to draw attention to some event or chain of events that is completely counterintuitive or even surprising. Investigative stories derive their impact from their ability to go beyond the commonly accepted expert terminology, to find a story that confounds all the easy generalizations that professionals find so enticing. Sometimes, as in the case of Seymour Hersh's exposé of the CIA's attempt to raise a sunken Soviet submarine from the Pacific Ocean floor, the consequences of such reporting for policy are slight. On other occasions, however, as with the My Lai massacre story, it may have far-reaching implications. While some would maintain that the army has not recognized the full import of this incident even now, it is also clear that the exposé made an enormous difference at the time. Another role of investigative stories in the defense area is to bring developments out of the shadows imposed by secrecy and by complex systems of classification. Considering their wide-ranging impact, it is extraordinary that so many of the best investigative stories originate almost by accident. The neutron bomb story is a case in point.

It all began with a typical Washington press situation. The *Washington Post* had sent Walter Pincus to Capitol Hill in June 1977 to write daily stories on the Senate's handling of the fiscal 1978 appropriations bills for public works and for the departments of Health, Education and Welfare, Labor, and Agriculture. The $10.2 billion public works bill was the most interesting item, since it contained eighteen water projects that President Carter had stigmatized as pork barrel legislation and hoped to kill. Pincus, flipping through the text of the public works bill while waiting out a Senate appropriations committee recess, came across an intriguing line item in the budget.

For historical reasons, the budget for the U.S. atomic weapons program, run at the time by the Energy Research and Development Administration (ERDA) for the Department of Defense, is included in the public works appropriation. Looking through the section on appropriations for nuclear weapons, Pincus noticed a line item requesting funds for the production of an "enhanced radiation warhead" for the army's European-based LANCE missile. No additional information was offered, except that $3 million had already been subtracted from some unspecified classified amount.[1] (The *Post* later reported that the total cost of the neutron weapons program was $650 million.)

Pincus was perhaps the only reporter in Washington at the time who knew what the line item meant. Having served on the staff of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee in 1969 and 1970, and having conducted research on tactical nuclear weapons in Europe for Senator Stuart Symington (D-Mo.) when he became interested in the issue, Pincus had some "expert" knowledge of the subject. When Symington moved to the Joint Committee on Atomic Energy, the subject was further pursued. The Senator tried actively to oversee the army's tactical nuclear weapons program, going far beyond the Joint

Committee's habit in inquiring into these matters. Symington held hearings in 1973 on the army's request to modernize, by using new smaller-yield warheads, the seven thousand 1950s-vintage tactical nuclear weapons that were then stockpiled in Europe, hoping thereby to increase the willingness of West European governments to allow their use in battle. But Symington was a powerful senator who believed that making nuclear weapons more acceptable—and thus increasing the likelihood of their use in Europe—would serve to blur the distinction between conventional and nuclear war. In defense jargon, such weapons would lower the nuclear threshold. Symington, year after year, succeeded in denying the army's request. The 1973 hearings revealed also that the army had investigated the concept of neutron weapons in the 1960s but had rejected it. When the hearings were declassified, Pincus wrote a story about them in the *New Republic*.

Thwarted by Symington from its first choice of putting new, ordinary nuclear weapons into the LANCE missile, its 8-inch artillery shell, and its 155-millimeter howitzer shell, the army in the mid-1970s decided to take a second look at neutron weapons, and finally concluded that the technology had evolved to the point where it might be useful. A neutron weapon is a nuclear arm, a small hydrogen bomb set off by a smaller atomic device in the same cannister. But it is designed to minimize blast and heat, the destructive agents in most explosives, and to maximize neutron emissions. In doing so, it instantly irradiates humans and other living beings within its destructive radius. Neutron weapons technology had been developed at the national laboratories over the years: the 1960s concept, rejected by the army, was not certain to kill a soldier in a tank; the 1970s concept, which the army adopted, would certainly kill the soldier while leaving the tank intact.

It is impossible to know why the army, in opting for the neutron weapon concept—in secrecy, of course—did not realize its political implications. Later, when the weapon was declassified, the army insisted that a weapon capable of destroying people while doing no permanent damage to buildings was beneficial: the weapons would leave Europe physically intact while allowing the Allies to combat the Soviet military advantage in tanks. Hence, "cookie cutter" became one army nickname for the weapon. The army seemed oblivious to the fact that the neutron weapon could be an easy political target. Pincus's first story quoted from an Atomic Energy Commission manual saying that the weapon would cause "almost immediate incapacitation," with convulsions, intermittent stupor, and a lack of muscle coordination. "Death is certain in a few hours to several days," the manual went on to say. Compared to the one rad emitted during a dental X ray, up to 10,000 rads would be emitted in a neutron bomb's single burst. The weapon obviously resembled chemical weapons; once its potentialities were known, it was certain to be characterized as inhumane.

Quite by accident, Pincus had stumbled on what has sometimes been called "technology creep," modest improvements in technology that may, from time to time, carry large, frequently unnoticed qualitative changes in weapons capabilities.[2] It should be noted also that, though the army switched to another technology to modernize its tactical nuclear weapons, it did not abandon its old plans; with Senator Symington removed from the Senate, the army in 1977

requested ordinary nuclear weapons for the LANCE as well. So where one new weapon had been sought, there were now two!

Pincus therefore knew how to decode the line item in the public works bill. The army's request for production funds for the "enhanced radiation warhead" obviously meant that it had decided to switch to a technology it had once rejected, one that would certainly be thought by many to be inhumane. This was a journalistic triumph of sorts. Pincus was certainly aware of the influence of the *Post* in Washington political circles, and knew what the newspaper's decision to "play" the story by putting it on page one would mean. The headline on the first story read: "Neutron Killer Warhead Buried in ERDA Budget."[3]

In the print media, where word choice is critical, headlines have a particular weight. The *Post*'s headline writer, Robert H. Williams, explains that he used the term "killer warhead" because, while most explosives destroy objects and people, the neutron weapon destroyed *only* people. It was a "killer" weapon[4] in the same sense that "killer dogs" attack principally humans. Those who favored the development of the weapon might have insisted that the neutron bomb was *less* damaging—that other nuclear weapons are no less destructive, and are indeed more so. They might have called it the "clean warhead," emphasizing its positive qualities. But a story about a production go-ahead for a "clean warhead" was not likely to be very important news and would be unlikely to find a place on page one. The attention the *Post* gave to the story depended on the neutron weapon being characterized as uniquely evil, a "killer warhead," in short.

Pincus continued to give prominence to the story, though at first he had little to report. Senator Mark Hatfield (R-Ore.), who, like many senators, read the *Post* closely, was shocked by the story, and moved quickly to block funds for the weapon in the appropriations committee. This provided the basis for more stories. Since the president is required by law to approve production of all nuclear weapons, Pincus set out to discover the state of the president's thinking on the neutron bomb. Had President Carter in fact approved of the plans for production? President Ford, it seemed, had approved production plans before he left office, but Carter had not yet decided on the matter. These threads provided Pincus material for additional news stories. No one at high levels in the government seemed to know very much about the weapon; President Ford, it was said, had thought it to be a modernization of existing weapons. Television and other news media ignored the story, until NBC reporter John Hart obtained film of monkeys being irradiated with 4,600 rads of neutron radiation, in tests run by the Armed Forces Radiobiology Research Institute.[5] The graphic power of the film widened public and media interest in the story.

To the White House announcement that President Carter would decide the issue of production by October 1, 1977, Hatfield replied that the Senate ought not to vote appropriations for the weapon until the president had actually decided to proceed with production. Neutron weapons, envisaged not only for the LANCE, but also for the army's 8-inch and 155-millimeter shells, were part of what the army, according to Pincus, was calling a "battlefield" neutron force. Because there were discrepancies between the information ERDA had disclosed about the weapon and the information made available by the Department of Defense, there were new demands for full public disclosure. Senators asked the

Arms Control and Disarmament Agency to make an arms control impact statement on the weapon and its likely effects on the SALT talks. While Hatfield's attempt to bar funds was defeated in a tie vote in the Senate Appropriations Committee, he and other critics promised to raise the issue again when the public works bill reached the Senate floor.[6]

Amidst all this newspaper publicity, neither Congress, the media, nor the army thought to ask how the Allies regarded the prospect of neutron weapons. The government would later claim that NATO commanders had in fact been briefed on the weapons, but as far as could be ascertained, such briefings had hardly made clear the distinction between the "enhanced radiation warhead" and ordinary nuclear weapons. There was some doubt that it had been mentioned at all. When Alexander Haig, the Supreme Commander of NATO, joined in the administration's defense of the weapon, he characterized the Allied commanders' lack of serious objection as "enthusiasm" for the U.S. neutron weapons program. But certain European leaders objected seriously to Haig's characterization of their attitudes, and the seeds of transatlantic friction were sown.

The divisions within the alliance became more apparent after the Senate floor debate on the public works bill, at which, in a closed-door session, the neutron weapon was discussed. The president increased the pressure on the Allies to fall into line by announcing in July that he would move up the date for his decision about production from October 1 to August 15.[7] This statement sparked many secret diplomatic initiatives not reported in the newspapers. The Soviet Union mounted a propaganda campaign to persuade Europeans that neutron weapons were evil. While the European peace movements and the political Left were coalescing in their opposition to neutron weapons, leaders like Helmut Schmidt became convinced that Carter would indeed proceed with production, and prepared to face down domestic opposition.

Only when the *Post* and the Senate took up the neutron weapons issue did the army bestir itself to invent a rationale for it.[8] During the summer of 1977, the army made the implausible claim that Soviet forces in Europe could already operate in an "ordinary" nuclear battlefield, making the deployment of neutron weapons a necessity. Hoping to improve the image of their beleaguered weapon, the army changed its name from "enhanced radiation warhead" to "Reduced Blast/Enhanced Radiation Warhead," or RB/ER.[9] Had the RB/ER designation been used in the fiscal 1978 public works budget, even Pincus might never have noticed it or known what it meant.

President Carter, under conflicting pressures from both the Allies and Congress, decided to postpone his decision through the fall and winter of 1977-78.[10] The news now focused less on the weapon itself and more on how the president would eventually decide. *Post* stories increasingly stressed the likelihood of a presidential rejection. The *New York Times* emphasized the problems that the president's indecision was causing within the alliance. The significance of the Soviets' determination to have the weapon cancelled and its potential usefulness on the battlefield received new attention. Eventually, the *Times* scooped the *Post* in reporting correctly that Carter—contrary to previous indications and the advice of many of his advisers—would in fact defer

production.[11] The consternation of Schmidt and other alliance leaders at this reversal became a symbol of the indecisiveness of the Carter presidency.

The neutron bomb story was a journalistic success. It did little, however, to raise the general level of public awareness of the complexities of American defense policy. Pincus won the coveted Polk award; that an obscure budget line item had contributed to creating a major rift in the NATO alliance was regarded as a journalistic coup of no mean proportions. Investigative reporting had again proved its worth. Still, the question must be asked whether, at a more general level, the neutron bomb story did very much to satisfy what Symington and Pincus intended in raising questions about the employment of tactical nuclear weapons in European combat. Despite the *sturm und drang*, the Allies remained prisoners of their old dilemma—they wanted a U.S. nuclear defense of Europe, while resisting strenuously some of the unpleasant consequences.

Nor did the controversy do very much to help the army make sound technical choices. One result of Symington's efforts to defeat the earlier requests for more modern nuclear weapons was the army's decision to opt for the neutron bomb. As of this writing, the Reagan Administration has agreed to produce a number of neutron weapons, but has deferred all plans to install them in Europe. The inertia of the procurement system has prevailed; there has been no control through guidance or policy. Pincus's own view is that "people who think the military does things according to design don't understand this city."[12]

CBS's "The Defense of the United States"

The story of CBS's five-part series, "The Defense of the United States," illustrates some of the same tendencies. Much is achieved, but much cannot be attempted. Because of the rising tide of interest in defense problems early in 1980, several producers at CBS were convinced that defense merited exceptional attention. The Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, the sudden eclipse of the SALT II treaty, the hostage crisis, the growing public support for a military buildup—all pointed to the importance of defense. "CBS Reports," the network's main documentary unit, submitted proposals for programs totalling three hours to William A. Leonard, president of CBS News. Leonard became convinced (perhaps in part because of a meeting with a nuclear freeze group, Physicians for Social Responsibility) that defense was *the* story that year. He authorized "CBS Reports" to make five one-hour programs. Howard Stringer, executive producer of the series and later the executive editor of the CBS evening news, recalls that the staff of "CBS Reports" was flabbergasted by the assignment. Nothing so extensive had ever been done; the budget and airtime provisions were unprecedented. "CBS Reports" produces approximately twenty hours of documentaries each year, yet would do five hours on defense.

Making sense of defense on television is no small assignment. The subject—vast and complex and filled with emotionally charged issues—creates its own difficulties. The more serious question, however, is—in the language of TV journalism—to "find film," to find material that is graphically compelling. Because the issues and choices in the national security field are so often abstract, it is difficult to "find film" that illustrates them adequately.

As one associate producer of the CBS series explained, the best television occurs when it says, " 'I was there. I saw it happen. Let me take you with me and show you what I saw.' Then you let it play so that the participants in the action speak directly to the camera." Defense, she added, is so overwhelmingly an intellectual topic—especially the way national security experts explain it—that there is little opportunity to take the viewer along to experience it directly. In an earlier program created for "Bill Moyer's Journal," she had used "talking heads." These are frontal shots of experts gazing at the camera or the interviewer, explaining the subject. The only visual relief came from file footage of missiles in test flight. "Talking heads" and file footage, in her view, create "dead television," unless those being interviewed are remarkably lively or the interviewers exceptionally skilled. Indeed, to keep the defense expert "talking heads" from ruining the show, she explained, the staff gave Moyers a "hit list" of defense terms the "talking heads" could not use on camera, unless they explained their meanings.[14]

The "CBS Reports" staff divided its subject into five parts, one for each hour of the series. These were nuclear war, nuclear proliferation and tactical nuclear weapons, manpower and training, the military-industrial complex, and the Soviet Union. Crews set out almost immediately, even before the narrative of the broadcasts was clear, to gather whatever good visual material was available, hoping to avoid "talking heads" as much as possible. The research for the narrative required months of work; editing and reediting went on until almost the moment the series was aired. Following CBS custom, management gave the staff complete freedom, arranging for a final screening just before the programs were aired.

The programs were widely acclaimed; they were thought to be among the best television documentaries of recent years. An enormous range of defense issues was treated: U.S. preparedness for strategic attack and possible launch strategies; nuclear proliferation, dwelling particularly on the role of France in spreading nuclear technology to the Middle East; the proliferation of tactical nuclear weapons in Europe and the army's plans to use them in wartime; the quality of the men and women being recruited into the armed forces, the character of their training, and the condition of military equipment in terms of preparedness of the forces to fight in Europe or in the Middle East; the story of the F-18 fighter, raising questions about whether U.S. weapons are both too costly and too complex; finally, in the last broadcast, Walter Cronkite seeking to establish some measure of the Russians. Are they really ten feet tall?[15] Certain parts of the documentary, particularly those dealing with combat readiness and technological complexity, were said to be in the hard-hitting tradition established at CBS by Ed Murrow and Fred Friendly. CBS promoted the series heavily in advance; given its documentary character, it attracted an unusually large audience.

Looked at critically, the series provided a set of visual images, symbols, and experiences that communicated some aspects of the defense problem that the print media do not habitually treat. The reporting was good, but weakest at the conceptual level, where combining many subjects into a coherent whole seemed almost impossible. This difficulty was apparent in the summing-up statement of Dan Rather, the anchorman, at the close of the last show:

> And we're heading toward the largest military buildup in this nation's history with few questions asked. All of us as Americans want our defenses to be strong and secure. We face a dangerous decade and a resolute enemy. But will we make ourselves stronger by unquestioning faith in new weapons technology? Will our European alliance be strengthened by a strategy that might force us to destroy Europe in order to save it? Will we increase our national security by insisting there is a way to fight a limited nuclear war without mutual destruction? We hope these broadcasts have helped stimulate this debate, for on it may rest our survival.[16]

At its best, the series managed to communicate certain specific experiences important to the defense debate. Its best-known sequence, perhaps, was a simulation of what a 15-megaton nuclear blast would do to Omaha, Nebraska. The 90-second sequence, for which CBS paid a special effects house $90,000, follows the "Let me take you with me and show you what I saw" formula. We are first shown the peaceful city of Omaha, "in the heart of America's farmland"; Jerry and Diane Allen, a typical Omaha couple with two children, are talking about a nuclear attack, which, in the event of nuclear war, would almost certainly strike the city, given the location of the headquarters of the U.S. Strategic Air Command in the immediate vicinity of the city. We then see the blast, the mushroom cloud, the collapsing buildings, and numbers of burned people, who might very well include the Allens. Even the technical discussion that follows—in which expert "talking heads" explain how the radiation would reach Chicago, how people far away would be blinded by reflex glances at the fireball, how in six weeks, 2 million people would be dead—fails to neutralize the graphic effect of the film. Executive Producer Stringer has suggested that the network took a certain risk in simulating the destruction of Omaha, that the device of showing the horror could very well have backfired. "It could have come out as gory or sensational," he said, "but we weren't criticized for it, because it was tastefully done."[17]

What other moments in the series were most telling? In the fourth hour, "The War Machine," the navy is depicted as continuing to buy airplanes like the F-18, rather than vertical takeoff aircraft, so it can argue for building giant aircraft carriers to serve as floating airfields. The debate over whether to stop building giant aircraft carriers is an old one. In "The War Machine," Rear Admiral Gus Kinnear, commander of the Atlantic fleet, gives an emotional interview on the deck of a carrier, as steam from catapults wafts against the steel-gray deck and azure sea, and planes roar in the background. To Admiral Kinnear, an aircraft carrier is "the most beautiful thing in the world. . . . And it does get you always, particularly when you hear an F-14 go to burner and see it at night." As the film shows the silver plane and red burn of the takeoff, he is heard to say, "It's like the Fourth of July."[18]

On one level, Kinnear's statement is trite; that carrier admirals love their vessels is a commonplace. The viewer, however, is given a glimpse of *why* carrier admirals love their carriers, hence why the argument for vertical takeoff planes and smaller carriers will usually fail. An equally instructive moment occurs later in the same broadcast. After some distracting film of airplane dogfights, of airplanes not working, and of the complexities of the modern cockpit, the narrators seek to explain why the trend to build fewer, more complicated fighter aircraft may make U.S. forces more vulnerable in combat.

When Kinnear insists that he would prefer to have his brother or son enter combat in the highest performance plane—"Rather than being too expensive for the role, the question is whether you have put enough in them"—the Pentagon's Charles Meyers, Jr., known for his efforts to keep the F-18 simple and cheap, retorts that he would wish his son to be "the best trained fighter pilot the world could produce." "Complexity," he says, with compelling directness, "inhibits training."[19]

But the experience of the film does not always mesh so neatly with points made in the narrative. At the end of the second program, for example, American soldiers on military exercises in Europe do not recognize the simulated nuclear weapon that has just been fired—a disappointing "poop" on camera—and fail to respond properly. The instructors scold their soldiers, who are laughed at when they ask perfectly sensible questions like, how they can be expected to start counting, to measure their distance from the blast center, when a nuclear weapon has just detonated. The soldiers note that their protective masks, required equipment to survive a chemical weapons attack, will certainly melt onto their faces if they are close to a nuclear blast. The viewer is made to squirm at the foolishness of the American army, in contrast with the British, who are shown acting with great professional skill.[20] The message, however, is not at all clear. Is the American army incompetent, a point not explicitly made in the broadcast? Or, are the producers suggesting that the "integrated battlefield" of chemical and nuclear weapons—a favorite army concept—is something of a hoax? Or, is Rather correct when he says, in his summary, that this is a questioning of the U.S. strategy of destroying Europe with nuclear weapons in order to save it. Is the program suggesting that we ought not to use nuclear weapons in Europe at all?

The final episode—"The Russians"—was perhaps the least successful as television. It proved difficult even for Cronkite to "find film" of Soviet military hardware, to help illustrate Soviet capabilities and to illuminate the nature of its military threat. The official "file footage" supplied to CBS by the authorities in Moscow was scarcely more useful than that offered by the U.S. military on the American forces, in terms of its appeal to a television audience. Prominent Soviet figures were unavailable for on-camera interviews, and so deprived the program of newsworthy "talking heads." Cronkite was forced to depend on other devices to communicate his message. Ironically, one of the most effective of these was his interview with three Western journalists, seated in a small room in a Moscow apartment, discussing the Soviet Union. Visually, this was no more nor less than a seminar on film. Because the journalists spoke simply, however, avoiding the jargon of the military officers and the defense experts, the points were made clearly and explicitly. The interview proved to be one of the high points in the series. The Soviet Union's economic problems, military ambitions, foreign policy failures, the problems of leadership and ideology—all were explained with admirable clarity.[21] In this instance, the lack of visual excitement proved to be an asset.

At its best, television can certainly take the viewer along to witness meaningful events and communicate a larger message in the process. There is a parallel, clearly, between the CBS defense series' truly instructive moments and television's reputed strength in reporting on war, whether in Vietnam or in

Lebanon. It is the *experience* of war that television is able to "bring home," in a way, perhaps, that only literature does. The problem with the abstract subject of security is that it offers relatively few experiences for the viewer to share. Still, the CBS crews tried to find some: what it feels like to stand on the deck of an aircraft carrier; the kinds of planes our brothers and sons may have to depend on in time of war; what it would be like to witness a nuclear blast; how those who study Soviet behavior think about the mysteries of the Soviet regime.

At the conceptual level, television clearly has great difficulties in making abstract points. Also, since film is its mode of authentication, television journalism cannot play a story at length without such sources. It could not, for example, have played the neutron bomb story, which for weeks was only a line item in the budget, with many officials refusing to comment on it at all. Television made an impact with the story only once, when NBC's John Hart found film of experiments with monkeys. Since so many defense issues involve abstract nonvisual issues, television has an innate bias against giving them great play. Even when the debate involves a specific piece of hardware, the weapon is often in a design stage, and is often secret. If there is an extended congressional debate over a proposed weapon, television news editors find it difficult to satisfy the nation's curiosity by simply offering an "artist's conception" of the weapon.

Defense news, whether in the newspapers or on television, ought to be able to do more. A strong case can be made that, in a democracy, the media must play a role in assuring that voters are well informed, so they will be less influenced by demagoguery or propaganda. The media—newspapers and television—should find ways to cover national security subjects more extensively and in greater depth, even if this sometimes means discarding professional rigidities such as television's requirement for good film. Nonetheless, these two examples—of relatively good coverage—show why the media will find it difficult to change their treatment of defense news anytime soon.

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