Journal Of Popular Culture

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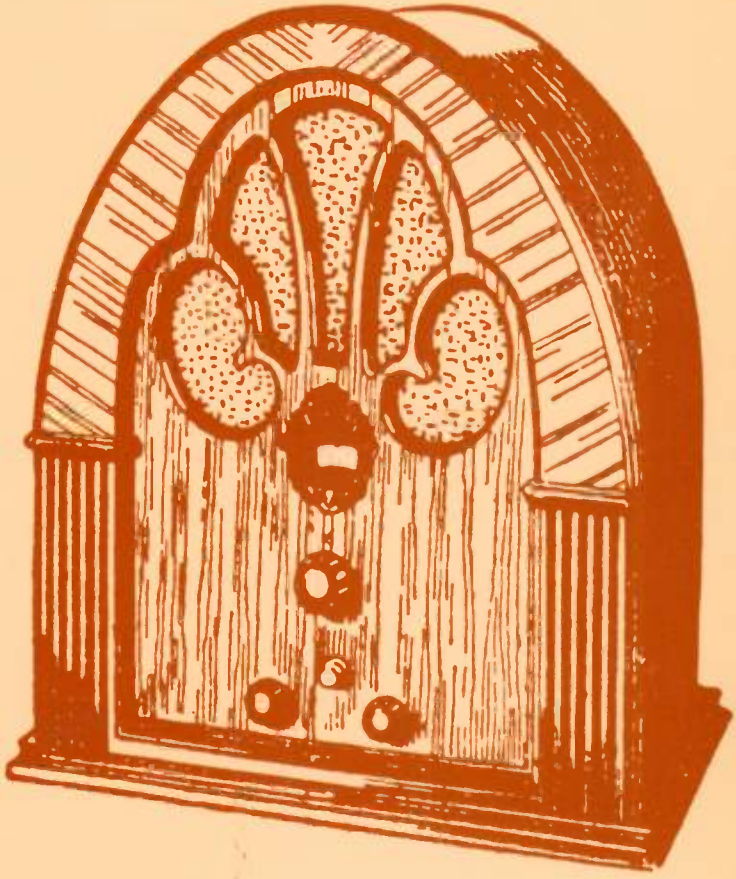

In-Depth

RADIO

JOURNAL OF POPULAR CULTURE

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Journal Of Popular Culture

XII:2 Fall 1979

CONTENTS

Leslie Fiedler

"Giving The Devil His Due"

By Leslie Fiedler

The title of my talk is "Giving the Devil his Due." I considered as alternative titles "The Marriage of Heaven and Hell," which would indicate to you who my true master is, and I also considered, I must admit shamefacedly, "Sympathy for the Devil" as a possible title. This will, however, be the last reference to Mick Jagger in my talk, which is going to deal chiefly with older examples of popular culture, since my whole point is to put things like the phenomenon of The Rolling Stones in a much larger context. And in order to establish that context, I must begin, as almost everybody else here has begun, with a definition.

I am going to define for you what I mean by "Popular Culture," and in the course of doing so I will also have to define what I mean by "values," without making it embarrassingly explicit. I am not trying to say to you that I consider my definition of popular culture (which is not a historical one, not a sociological one, not an economic one, but a mythographic or a literary-anthropologic one) the best possible definition of Popular Culture. But I would like you to know what I mean when I use that term, so that you can decide whether or not you agree with me. What I will be describing is what is called sometimes Mass Culture, a term to which I have no objections, though I would really prefer to speak of it as "Majority" Culture—"Modern Majority Culture." But nobody seems to know what I mean when I say that, so I'll settle for "Popular" or simply "Pop Culture."

Actually I am going to confine myself in what follows to talking about popular song and story, mostly story, which is to say popular literature. Ray Browne, who objects to us talking about popular literature rather than to other aspects of popular culture, will have to forgive me, but literature is what I know about, literature is what I am interested in, literature is what I am committed to. I use the term "popular" as opposed to "folk" literature, saving the latter to describe the literature of pre-literate society, and the literature of classes excluded from literacy and aristocratic or class-structured society. The former I use to mean majority literature in a mass culture, an industrial and post-industrial society.

Now Popular Literature is, as I use the word, a kind of literature that is not merely mass produced and mass distributed but is written *in order* to be mass produced and mass distributed, or at least, it is written in response, negative or positive, to the possibility of being mass produced and mass distributed. This kind of literature (and the same is true of the other popular arts, of popular culture in general), this kind of literature depends for its very existence, as well as its shape and texture, on certain developments in technology independent of the will or desire of its nominal author or authors; and it therefore changes as technology changes. I base my conclusions on the history of the novel, which I consider from its very origin to have been pop literature. Since it was invented by Samuel Richardson, the novel has changed in response to technological changes. When cheap paper was developed in the 1820s, the novel changed its form in response. When stereotyping was invented, the novel changed its form. When mass produced paperbacks became widespread in the United States, the novel changed its form. Clearly movies at this moment are similarly influenced, by developments in color, sound and so forth. This is point one.

Point two. Since the development of mass production technology is coincident with the rise of capitalism, mass-produced literature has always been dependent upon a market place where it is bought and sold, hopefully in very large quantities, in response to the mysterious process of popular demand which makes that marketplace operate. Popular Literature is and always has been since the time of Richardson commodity literature. It is commodity literature—I use the term not pejoratively to blame it but merely to describe it—and like all commodities literature is sold in the marketplace and changes with the conditions of the marketplace, as well as with the advance of technology.

The invention of the railway, for instance, changed the nature of the novel because it was possible to read in a railway car, as it had not been possible to read in a stagecoach, and pretty soon we had railway book stalls. Popular literature is a commodity, and like all commodities it is intended to be bought and taken home, where one of two things can happen to it. It can be used or played with and then thrown away, like Kleenex or a child's toy; or it can, for reasons hard to identify at least *a priori*, be kept and treasured, like a diamond or a grand piano.

One thing is clear: what determines the survival of such literature is not the critics, guardians of the values presumably implicit in high art, nor is it the lords of the marketplace—the masters of the media. At any point from the beginning of the development of the novel down to the triumph of TV, the naive of cryptoelitist Marxists of the Frankfurt school, let's say, or Leavis and his followers in England, or Herbert Marcuse and Dwight MacDonald in the United States, have believed that such literature is controlled by the masters of the media. But the truth is that the masters of the media are controlled by the marketplace. The man who sells popular literature or distributes popular music is a man riding a tiger. He never knows where it is going to go. He guesses, more times wrong than right. He hopes for the best, and if he guesses wrong he goes bust, and the next man

comes along and takes his place.

Now what determines what is consumed is a deep hunger which exists on the level of the unconscious or preconscious, not the conscious, mind. Nobody can control any medium if they think of it in terms of overt or manifest content. What really makes commodity literature or commodity art work is its covert, its encrypted content, which is only available to a cryptoanalytic critic. Yet popular authors, because their work is commodity literature, and because it is distributed in the marketplace, tend to think of it as private property. And in some ways it is. It is protected by law and the courts; it can be bought and sold; it can make a man filthy rich and if not celebrated, famous at least—and all in a moment, not slowly over generations or centuries. But the authors and the critics of popular art are wrong in a certain way because they tend to think of the persistence of popular art in terms of the humanist myth of secular immortality (thank you, Shakespeare). But unlike the high art of the Renaissance, popular art is lacking in qualities which I have called elsewhere "signature elements." For instance, when we see a painting of Christ on the Cross done by an eminent Renaissance artist, we do not say that is a picture of the Crucifixion; we say that it is a Rembrandt or that it is a Michelangelo, because painted in that work are signature elements: an eccentric, obtrusive or special style, a personal voice or a point of view eccentric enough to seem distorted to the viewer. Everybody knows an El Greco, whatever its nominal subject.

But Gutenberg and post-Gutenberg art, popular literature in this case, is more like the anonymous painting and poetry *before* the Industrial Revolution. More like medieval epic or folk ballad. The novel is even more like what follows it than what went before, more like movies and TV than it is like verse tragedy and classic epic. Gutenberg and post-Gutenberg literature contains *communal* dreams, shared myths or archetypes. And it is distinguished by the mythopoeiac color of its creators, their ability to sense what already existed in the popular mind, rather than by any unique vision or ability in executive skills. For this reason popular works of literature tend to pass immediately into the public domain.

This is point number three. Works of popular literature have the disconcerting habit—disconcerting to their authors especially—of passing into the popular domain.

For various reasons I have been reading recently and meditating on Cervantes' Prologue to the Second Part of *Don Quixote*. Some of you may remember that Cervantes was bugged because after he had published his first part, it took him eight, nine or ten years to publish the second part; and a false continuer picked up the characters of Don Quixote and Sancho Panza and put them through a series of degrading adventures in which the Don was portrayed as having betrayed his own beloved Dulcinea and having ended up in a mad house. This travesty and vilification of the book was accepted as his and was as successful as Cervantes' original Part One, thus driving him, leading him, compelling him to write Part Two. There's a marvelous essay on this written by Thomas Mann and called "*En Voyage*

with Don Quixote," in which Mann, from an elitist point of view, ends up saying that what Cervantes had not come to terms with is the disconcerting fact that a book can be a popular success *though* it is good, just as another book can be a popular success *because* it is bad. This is quite to the point. It illustrates what I mean, leading me to think a little about Dickens as well and about George Reynolds, who did those false continuations of *Pickwick* just after it had come out, continuations in which Pickwick went to France, against his character; in which Pickwick became a teetotaler, again against his character; in which Pickwick got married, again against his character. Yet in a certain sense Reynolds and that pseudononymous false continuer of *Don Quixote,* whoever he might have been, were right in a way, because characters in popular literature, as soon as they are created enter, as I have said, the public domain.

Moreover, we read them as if they have always been there, as if we have always known them. All authors can do with characters in popular literature is give them a local habitation and a name. But even the name becomes common property, the names of Pickwick and Sam Weller and Don Quixote, for instance, passing into the common language, becoming first metaphors, and then common nouns so that they belong finally to people who have never read such writers as Dickens, much less G.W.M. Reynolds, whom I doubt very many of you have read (though he is still read, I discovered recently, by writers in India).

As a matter of fact, one of the distinctions between popular and high literature can be made on the basis of this, as Edgar Allan Poe, in a review of James Fenimore Cooper, pointed out. There is a certain kind of book, he wrote, which is forgotten though its author is remembered (High Literature); and there is a certain kind of book whose author is forgotten though the work is remembered. And it is indeed true, isn't it, that at the present moment there are far more people today who can identify Hemingway than can identify Lt. Henry or Jake Barnes; while Sherlock Holmes is a familiar name to many people who never heard of Conan Doyle. And the name of Tarzan is known to everybody in the world, including those who never heard of the name Edgar Rich Burroughs.

I now come to point number four. Popular literature, non-elite, mass produced literature is not only independent of its author, but its original text, in which changes can be made that not only change but become a part of the text. I am, for example, currently working on Harriet Beecher Stowe. I have read *Uncle Tom's Cabin,* I suppose, fifteen or sixteen times. It was the first book I ever bought, when somebody gave me a little money for the first time when I was six or seven years old and said, "Go out and buy a book for yourself." Yet even now I cannot think of that book without thinking of Eliza leaping from one block of ice to another as she is pursued by bloodhounds. But there are *no* bloodhounds in Harriet Beecher Stowe's text. These were added in the dramatic version later on. Popular literature never seems the kind of literature that you are reading for the first time. It always seems like something you are reading for the second or third—or millionth—time. It is never finished, and anything that is added to it is OK.

I was amused to hear Stan Lee say the other day that it didn't make a bit of difference to him whether the name of the Incredible Hulk (I always have trouble with this: I have a grandson who loves that program and he always calls it the "Credible Hulk") is changed so long as the character is not.

Point number five. Not only is popular culture independent of the author and text, but it is independent of the medium in which it appears. No sooner was *Uncle Tom's Cabin* published than it was transformed into a stage play. Henry James is one of the few people, oddly enough, who has ever written any sensible criticism of *Uncle Tom's Cabin.* He remembered it chiefly from a stage play he had seen at P.T. Barnum's American Museum, where *Uncle Tom's Cabin* was competing with freaks and fake mermaids for the attention of the audience. Henry James said (and it is clear where the metaphor came from) that it leaped miraculously into a new element as a fish had leaped out of the water into the air. It is a characteristic of popular literature that it changes its medium because it never really belonged to any medium to begin with. Popular Literature is not "words on the page," as some critics would have us believe. Like all literature it is finally, essentially, images in the head. Once its images pass *through* words (the text is transparent, downright irrelevant) into our heads, such primordial images, or archetypes, or myths (call them whatever name you want that seems congenial) can pass out again easily into any other medium. They can be portrayed on the stage; they can be painted; they can be sculpted in stone; they can be turned into stained glass windows; they can be carved in soap. They still retain their authenticity and the resonance of feeling that was originally connected with them.

Not only can popular literature in Gutenberg form pass into other media, but it is *driven* to pass to other media by a kind of inner necessity: *driven* to pass to media which are accessible to larger numbers of people than can ever read print with pleasure and profit. You know, one of the things that used to vex me very much, but which I've come to terms with recently, is the rejection of literacy in a world where theoretically universal literacy is the goal. It turns out that most people, though they can learn functional Gutenberg literacy are never capable of reading print on the page with any kind of immediate pleasure and response with which they can read images on the screen. And there are cultures in the world now where people are passing from pre-Gutenberg culture to post-Gutenberg culture without passing through the Gutenberg stage at all. In India, for instance, there are people who only a generation ago were listening to the storyteller in the marketplace are now listening to the radio, seeing movies, and waiting for TV. Indeed, there is no reason why they should have to pass through the Gutenberg stage at all. One can apply here Trotsky's theory of uneven development; and say there is no need to go through any social process stage by stage—we can leap if we like, and sometimes we must.

A kind of inner necessity has brought a situation in which—disconcertingly to some, *thrillingly* to me—the novel, the popular novel, the *really* popular novel seems to have become a chrysalis or an embryo, a half-way form on the way to a movie, or to television. It is not completed until it

moves into that medium which can reach a larger audience than it could ever touch in its original form. Even in the nineteenth century, as I have said to you, popular works were turned into dramas almost immediately. Not just *Uncle Tom*; more people, for instance, also knew the story of "Rip Van Winkle" from its stage version than ever read it in print. And in the process of passing via the popular theater into the movies, which was the next step along the way, a further step in the disintegration of the authority of the individual author, in the humanist sense, occurs.

It is very hard to talk about the author of a moving picture. The first really popular maker of films in the world was D.W. Griffith, whose *The Birth of a Nation* was the first really popular film, shown to a mass audience in the year 1915 at an unprecedented two bucks a head—and they turned out in large numbers to see it. For a while at least he seemed to be trying to substitute the authority of the director-*auteur* for that of the person who had written the original "story." Many of you here, for instance, may think of Griffith as the author of *The Birth of a Nation,* since few of you, I suppose, are aware of the fact that a man by the name of Thomas Dixon, Jr., wrote two books called *The Leopard's Spots* and *The Clansmen,* both moving and immensely popular books, by the way, in their own time—fascist books, misogynist books, racist books, it is true, but so effective still, that I can't read them without a repressive shudder, for which I hate myself.

I once presided over a showing of that film to a bunch of Marxists, a Cine Club, in Athens, which had asked to see it. It was so left-wing a club that the Communists constituted the Extreme Right. The American embassy had felt considerable embarrassment about the showing of the film, and asked if I could say some words by the way of explanation about the historical moment at which the film had been made, as well as the one it purported to describe. And this I, as it turned out, *needlessly* tried to do, since at the showing of this movie at ten o'clock in the morning, this group of convinced left wingers rose to their feet and cheered as the Ku Klux Klan rode to the rescue of white womanhood. If Griffith was proud of himself, therefore, he can scarcely be blamed. And he was. If you see his films you will see that around the border of each of his titles, which were a necessary part of the silent film, there's a frame which says "*D.W. Griffith, D.W. Griffith, D.W. Griffith.*" As William Faulkner said in a marvelous funeral elegy to Albert Camus: *The only reason any of us works is to leave our names on the walls of the world, to say We were here.* So Griffith did.

But not all film makers. If you think, for instance, of favorite films of yours and mine like *Gone With The Wind* and *The Wizard of Oz* you will understand. Ask yourselves: "Who is the director of *Gone With The Wind?* Who were the script writers of *The Wizard of Oz?"* And if you don't know you need not be ashamed. The point is that the directors changed and the script writers changed. Nobody knew what he was doing; there was nobody. The archetype and myth wrote itself. Even Margaret Mitchell and L. Frank Baum disappeared in the process.

But there is a further step beyond the movie script. *Gone With The Wind* many of us have seen on the movie screen, but even more have watched it on

TV, watched and applauded despite its slander of Black People and defense of the Ku Klux Klan. It had the largest audience of any film ever shown on American television except for *Roots*—which had exactly the opposite views of slavery and Reconstruction, at least as far as overt or conscious ideas are concerned. But in the realm of Popular Art, overt or conscious ideas could not matter less. What matters is stirring up of the collective unconscious, the evocation of closely shared nightmares of race and sex: the drama of protecting little sister against the rapist, whoever she may be and whatever color: Black/White, White/Black. You can mix them and match them and it makes no difference in popular appeal. Is it white innocence assaulted by black bestiality? Is it black innocence assaulted by white brutality? The audience loves it in any case. And this leads me to my final point about popular culture: It is neither good nor bad—*it is beyond good and evil, as we define the terms, in whatever culture we may live.*

When television finally re-embodies the images of popular culture in flickering light and dark on the countless millions of screens, it thus moves then back to where they began and really belong: to our hearts and our homes and our heads. What we can see on television, we do not watch at the end of an outing, or on a special occasion, as when we go to a theater, but sitting half asleep in our chairs, or lying in our bed somewhere between dreaming and waking. But this represents the fulfillment of all to which the popular arts have aspired from the start.

People used to worry about the taste of the general readers, even in the last decades of the Victorian period, in England, which was the first great period of expansion in Popular Literature. The second, chiefly centered on movies, was the 1930s in the United States. And the third, centered on TV, is right now. Disturbed by the fact that the mass audience was reading not Conrad or James, but Rider Haggard's *She* and Bram Stoker's *Dracula* (which, by the way, are *not* mentioned in official histories of Victorian literature though neither has been out of print for one minute since the time of publication). The critics used to say, "Well, this is pretty sad, but at least they were reading," meaning that mass-culture was tolerable if thought of as a by-product of something that was socially valuable, namely, mass education. If one of the results of everyday education was that the working man, having acquired literacy, decided that he wanted to read junk, well that was all right but not highly encouraging. (Marx, by the way, was disturbed by this. Indeed, almost half of his first book, *The Holy Family,* is an attack on Eugene Sue, because Sue's *Mysteries of Paris* was what working people read, instead of what Marx in his academic German way thought they ought to be reading.) But at least Victorian critics could always console themselves by saying that the pleasures of reading even trash were at least *earned;* because people had sweated to learn their ABCs in school; and like any result of good true-blue Protestant hard work, literacy must, therefore, be good for you, and of value, good for something.

But watching movies and TV is not, in that sense, of value at all. What is fascinating is that nobody has ever been taught in school to read images on the screen. Nobody has to be taught to read images on the screen. And the

pleasures of TV are consequently available in a way that makes no separation between the learned and the unlearned, the refined and the gross, the diligent and the indolent; which is carrying the process of democratization too far! I mean, a *little* democratization of culture—OK. But not when one gets to the point where people sitting before their TV sets are typically people without any standards at all, or are (like me) a kind of renegade from high culture, who spends too much of their waking time watching the soaps. Does not this represent a flight to valueless vulgarity, self indulgence? hedonism! What we find television provides us is unmediated pleasure, instant, unearned, unworked for, unsweated-for gratification: gratification, moreover, that depends on sentimentality, lust, terror, as well as gross burlesque of the social institutions in which we most dearly believe or would like to believe.

Where is "value" to be found, then, in popular literature, if it does, as I have suggested, move relentlessly, inevitably, from *Clarissa* to *Pickwick,* to *Dracula,* to Sherlock Holmes, to *Jaws,* to the *Rocky Horror Shows,* to *Roots,* to *Starsky and Hutch,* to Mick Jagger? Now some of the works I have mentioned possess prized aesthetic qualities—shapeliness, elegance, architechtonic grace. Some of them even express estimable ideas—or at least seem to, though here we must be wary. It is easy to be pious about the lessons *Uncle Tom's Cabin* teaches us, as Tolstoi was pious about it. But essentially Mrs. Stowe's book is more about violence and sentimentality than social justice. If you look hard at her ideas about slavery, for instance, you will discover that her hatred of that institution is based on the same genteel notions as her opposition to smoking, cussing, going to the theater, attending opera, and having sex outside of marriage. And visible just below that sentimentality, as James Baldwin understood, is violence.

Harriet Beecher Stowe may have been read, as Ralph Waldo Emerson—of all people—once said, with equal pleasure in the parlor, the kitchen and the nursery. That is to say, the Lady of the House could read her, the cook could read her, the kids could read her. But at least, once more, they read it, had learned to read. They were, consequently, a little refined. Cultured. But present-day television is available to everybody including the unlettered Lady of the House, the sub-literate cook and the kids who don't read. Maybe, then, just *maybe* it is possible for us to say that the value of popular literature, like the popular arts in general, is that it joins together at the level of the unconscious people who are, on every conscious level, in this post-industrial society *divided.* Our religion divides us, our politics divides us, our attitude toward education divides us: the only thing that holds us together is *Kojak, Star Wars, Rich Man: Poor Man.*

Ken Kesey's *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest* began as a youth cult book of the 60s, but was turned, almost by mistake, into a popular movie. And I know why, having been present at a showing of this film in an audience which consisted nine/tenths of its original readers grown older, i.e., people who were liberated in all respects. They were, that is to say, against racial discrimination, against male chauvinism, and so forth; but were there cheering with the rest of the racists and sexists in the audience at

an anti-Black, hysterically misogynist film; because, I suppose, it touched places in the unconscious of both of which some of us were deeply ashamed. *But at least it joined us all together.*

Now Tolstoi in *What Was Art?* was willing to take the position which tempts me, as I reflect on this aspect of popular art; willing to say, OK let's throw out all the old aesthetic values along with the old ethical values; let's grant that the one thing about mass culture which seems of "value" is the fact that it joins everybody together—black and white, young and old, male and female, learned and unlearned, everybody. Tolstoi went so far as to argue that the only literature in the world which was finally endurable was a kind of literature which did join everybody together. And he was willing to substitute for the old snobbism an inverted snobbism; insisting that what pleased the few was probably bad, what pleased the many good. The old snobbism had taught that all books liked by a large number of people were probably no good; and all books treasured by a minority, like *Paradise Lost* were good. (Some students of mine once, by the way, when they were practicing something called "pejorative criticism" in the late sixties, criticism which had to be short and negative, used to say of *Paradise Lost*—"Too fucking long."). But to substitute one hard orthodoxy for another is to turn snobbism upside down, means to be willing, as Tolstoi was willing, to deny, not just Shakespeare and Michelangelo but his own *Anna Karenina.* This seems finally crazy, especially now that Tolstoi has so easily been built into the totalitarian culture of the Soviet Union. A friend of mine recently had a conversation with the greatest of the Americanists in that country and asked him how come they don't publish John Barth's *Sotweed Factor* in the Soviet Union, and this Russian said that it appeals to too few people; the money they have available for translation will be spent on *Rich Man: Poor Man,* which will move everyone.

It turns out, moreover, that Tolstoi was wrong in his assumption that the literature which appealed to everyone would move in the end to be literature based on Christian, humanitarian values. He was simply wrong. Nor was this literature, as the Marxists hoped and now try to enforce by law, based on humanist, egalitarian values. It turns out that literature which in fact does appeal to everyone, appeals not to what is highest in their natures but what is (in the view of most moralists) basest.

I became especially aware of this in an especially troubling way as I was recently reading Hitler's *Table Talk* and discovered that Hitler's favorite book was *The Last of the Mohicans,* that Hitler's favorite movie was *King Kong.* (I'll tell you what Hitler's favorite song was—it's just ridiculous: it was "Who's Afraid of the Big Bad Wolf?"). Now the first two of those happen to be favorites of mine. And it is disconcerting to learn thus that popular literature not only joins together the poor and the rich, the educated and the uneducated, male and female, children and adults, *but the good and bad as well;* that in the enjoyment of popular literature one is joined to those people who are felt to be socially reprehensible, wicked, whatever your social code and values may be. *Popular literature joins you with your worst enemies as well as your worst self.* Now that's

disconcerting!

The way I deal with this problem, a way which I hope you will find plausible, is by asking myself: Can not the same sort of things which I have been saying about popular literature be said of *all* literature? Are not the things I have said as true, if one reads cryptoanalytically—with attention to their concealed and covert values rather than to their overt and moral values, is not the same thing true of much High Literature as well? In *Paradise Lost* Milton was of the devil's party without knowing it; as was Whitman even less equivocally in *Leaves of Grass*. And what about *Pickwick* and *Huckleberry Finn?* Is it possible really to read *Pickwick* and Dickens' other Christmas Tales without realizing that under his pietistic posturing, he was bent on taking Christ out of Christmas for all time, and putting Dionysus in his place instead? How do the people celebrate Christmas in Dickens? They eat too much, they drink too much, they dance, they kiss each other under the mistletoe. And when the spirit of Christmas Past enters the scene, he turns out to be Dionysus disguised as Old King Cole!

All literature—all art—is the same. Cervantes was practically unread in the 18th century because critics said he was a secret defender of insanity, that the main function of *Don Quixote* was to blur the line between sanity and insanity by suggesting that the mad feel more deeply and are more sensitive than the sane. When I think of the books I have loved best in my life, I realize that what I admire in them is what I love in pop art at its most gross, flagrant, vulgar, brutal and unrefined: the mythopoeic power of the author. Never mind his ability to instruct and delight, to create beautiful, elegant, architechtonic forms to teach those things which we think are important for the future of mankind. Instruction and delight are optional—they can or cannot be present. They are not banned from literature; but they are not essential. What really moves us to transport—what Longinus called *Ekstasis*—taking us out of our heads and out of our bodies, out of our normal consciousness is the ability of all great books, great pop books—great elite books, to turn us again into savages and children: and releasing us thus from bondage not merely to the restrictions of conscience or superegos, but to consciousness and rationality, which is to say, the ego itself.

The function of all literature, those hallucinations projected with such vividness and authority that we take them for our own, though they were created in fact out of the paranoia of others. The not so secret secret motto of all literature is the opposite of Freud's injunction—"Where ego has been so powerfully constructed, let id joyously return."

Now there are many names for this process. Longinus, as I have said, called it poetically *"ekstasis."* Aristotle, in a condescending medical metaphor, called it *"catharsis."* Later prophets called it "alteration of consciousness" or "desublimation" or "regression in the service of the ego." There are as many names as there are philosophies and psychologies. But the name doesn't matter. What does matter is what the name describes, a therapeutic function of art, which makes it the heir of those communal orgies and blood lettings we have abandoned for the sake of civilization.

Literature always carries on an underground war, out of sight but not out of mind, not out of our deep mind: a war against all the values professed by all conformist defenders of whatever reigning culture; against spirit, against civilization, against self-control, against rationality, against sanity, against law and order. The artist, in this sense, was against not just the schoolmaster, the priest, the philosopher, the politician, the statesman, the policeman—but everything in ourselves which responds to that law and order appeal.

The chief value of majority literature is to remind us of what *all* literature is really about. I know that for me the value of reflecting, as I have now for some years, on the popular arts, has been to rescue me from the false notion of what letters mean into which I have been brainwashed by too many courses in English Literature: to deliver me from endless analyses which usually falsify the text, as well as of utopian hopes implicit in the Arnoldian Culture Religion. The function of literature is not to enable us to transcend the flesh. Literature does not come to us in the name of the Holy Ghost. Literature teaches us to remain faithful to our animal existence, to those dark gods, dark only because we have shrouded them, to the dark side of our deepest ambivalence toward violence, toward sex, toward our parents, toward our mates, toward our children, toward our secret selves, toward the daylight deities we are proud to boast we honor alone.

The popular arts are, in short—to come back to my title—a way of giving the devil his due. And that due we must give him, or die.

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Professor Fiedler's essay was read in slightly different form at the British-American Popular Culture Conference, Chichester, England, July 1978.

Leslie Fiedler

By Daniel Walden

In his earliest book, *An End to Innocence* (1955), Leslie Fiedler began his lifelong examination of the American novel and how it differs from its English and European progenitors. On the one hand he has dealt with grand themes, as in the trilogy comprising *Love and Death in the American Novel* (1960), *Waiting for the End* (1964), and *The Return of the Vanishing American* (1968), in which he fused analyses of America's greatest novels, its mythic heroes, and Freud. On the other hand Fiedler has dealt with the ethnic, racial and typological underlay of American life. In dealing with Indians, Blacks and Jews, for example, he touched on the wellsprings of our national experience and the contradictions between what we say we believe in and what we practice. In spite of our protestations, we define outsiders all the time—by color, or race, or class—and treat them accordingly. The result is that these individuals and groups are seen through the eyes of our novelists as they interact with our culture. Significantly, as Fiedler explains in "The Breakthrough: The American Jewish Novelist and the Fictional Image of the American Jew" (*Midstream* 4, Winter 1958), the entry of the outgroup, the immigrants, the people of color, into the American novel had to await the urbanization as well as the breakup of the longterm Anglo-Saxon domination of our literature which began just before the First World War.

That Leslie Fiedler has raised a storm over the years is a truism that few will quarrel with. Charged with various defects, literary and otherwise, he has been asked often whether he is provocative or provoking or both. Yet, in exposing "the basic erotic myths of American literature; the hypocracies and concealed despair of professional Westerners; the self-deceiving apologetics of 'radicals,'" he has taken his stand: "To know the weaknesses and failures of all these things and speak them out is the only way of repaying the debt one feels." *(New York Times Book Review,* Sunday, May 23, 1971.)

In 1978 Fiedler published *Freaks,* an eloquent examination of the grotesque, nature's mistakes, in myth, legend, literature, painting, science, film, and circus. Continuing his long preoccupation with popular culture. He was as usual erudite, imaginative, provocative and provoking. Although his interests have continued to evolve, however, it is with his essay "No. In Thunder" that he began to set the picture. At first profoundly political, then deeply literary, he came to a point where the textual critic and the socio-

literary critic blended. But he has also taken part in defining and playing a part in the new criticism that has emerged since "Modernism." Turning from the elite he crossed the border between High Art and Popular Art in order better to understand books, artifacts and aspects of culture which join all audiences, children and adults, women and men, the sophisticated and the naive. In his own words, in 1971: "I am convinced that criticism at the moment can no longer condescend to popular literature." At the same time he is resisting the temptation to embrace the point of view which urges that the only art worth preserving and praising is in the popular realm. Having moved through radical dissent, radical disillusion and the fear of innocence, he is now in a state of commitment and disaffection.

Leslie Fiedler is a man of this age. It may be that he will be seen as a man for all ages. In his work, it seems to me, is the proof.

Leslie Fiedler's critical and review articles, as well as poetry and short fiction, have appeared in such journals as *Kenyon Review, Partisan Review, Encounter* and *Mainstream.* His books include the following:

An End to Innocense: Essays on Culture and Politics, Beacon Press, 1955.
The Art of the Essay, Thomas Y. Crowell, 1958; revised edition 1969.
Love and Death in the American Novel, Criterion, 1960.
No! In Thunder: Essays on Myth and Literature, Beacon Press, 1960.
Pull Down Vanity and Other Stories, Lippincott, 1962.
The Second Stone: A Love Story, Stein and Day, 1963.
The Second Stone: A Love Story, Stein and Day, 1963.
Waiting for the End, Stein and Day, 1964.
Back to China, Stein and Day, 1965.
The Continuing Debate, (with Jacob Vinocur), St. Martins Press, 1964.
Love and Death in the American Novel (Revised new edition), Stein & Day, 1966.
The Last Jew in America, Stein and Day, 1966.
The Return of the Vanishing American, Stein and Day, 1968.
Nude Croquet and Other Stories, Stein and Day, 1969.
Being Busted, Stein and Day, 1970.
The Collected Essays of Leslie Fiedler, Stein and Day, 1971.
Published as five paperback volumes,

An End to Innocence,
No! In Thunder
Unfinished Business
To the Gentiles
Cross the Border, Close the Gap, (in 1973)

The Stranger in Shakespeare, Stein and Day, 1972.
The Messengers Will Come No More, Stein and Day, 1974.
In Dreams Awake, an anthology of Science-Fiction, Dell
Freaks, Simon & Schuster, 1978

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The Private Eye: From Print To Television

By Maurice Charland

In the popular mind, the embodiment of the private eye hero would most likely be Humphrey Bogart cast as a private detective in urban America's early 1940s.[1] Bogart's characterizations and the screenplays of his private eye films are "hard-boiled." They depict a world in which toughness is a requisite for survival. Hard-boiled detective fiction, popularized in pulp magazines such as *Black Mask,* differed significantly from the earlier "classical" detective stories which stressed the deductive powers of the detective and placed emphasis on reason. The hard-boiled genre seems to owe more to cowboy stories, were a two-fisted hero is involved in an adventure, than to its classical counterpart.

The major themes in hard-boiled private detective fiction follow from the world view of the narrator and/or hero. This world view defines a vision of society, crime, and law enforcement. The argument advanced here is that the television private eye exists in a different world than does the detective in literature: these two view America from different perspectives.

The hard-boiled detective story places emphasis on a decaying or less than ideal world; the television detective is primarily concerned with resolving the crises which add drama to his clients' otherwise ordinary lives. On television, things are as they appear to be: the police are decent men working to keep us safe, the villains are villainous, and the innocent appear so. There is little ambiguity.

The hard-boiled view of the world is one with Raymond Chandler's "mean streets."[2] There is a certain cynicism in the hard-boiled narrative, a jaundiced view not only of society, but of people as well. Life is seamy. Philip Marlowe's office door

> is a reasonable shabby door at the end of a reasonable shabby corridor in the sort of building that was new about the year of all-tile bathroom became the basis of civilization.[3]

It is a world populated by drug users, corrupt officials, ineffectual police, as well as sweet young girls blackmailing their own sisters. In such an atmosphere of decay the detective's role is far different than it would be in the classical genre of detective fiction.

John Cawelti points out that the drama of solution is subordinate to "the detective's quest for the discovery and accomplishment of justice."[4] The private detective operates outside the law. He is usually a moral man;

he might help a victim of circumstance beat a rap, but this is simply an extension of his personal sense of justice. This sense of justice is different for different detective heroes, but the basis for it remains the same: moral right rather than law. Mickey Spillane's Mike Hammer can be a vengeful executioner, and seem different from Chandler's Marlowe, but the difference is one of degree; in both cases they follow their own rules.

The hard-boiled detective has lower class manners. They are, however, his own; he has chosen them. Marlowe is college educated,[5] and yet would still rather work in his lonely little office where he can be his own boss. This rejection of "proper" behaviour, which is associated with the upper and middle classes, is an attack on the hypocrisy and emptiness he perceives within these classes. *I the Jury* and *The Big Sleep,* while in many ways not comparable, portray the rich as leading unfulfilled lives, indulging in gambling, sex, and drugs in their search for amusement. Sam Spade, Dashiell Hammett's hero in *The Maltese Falcon,* tells the story of a man named Flitcraft who, after a close brush with death, leaves his family and job to live for the moment, only to settle back into his old routine in another town. Spade is saying that to be truly alive one must be aware of how tenuous life is, and that he is not like Flitcraft, who forgot about death's constant threat and returned to his secure life-style. Spade has rejected middle class somnambulism.

From this lower class perspective, the hero can look at the city from the underside. He can comment on the hypocrisy of the rich and powerful as well as on the social institutions they control. By divorcing himself from society he can be a powerful American anti-hero figure, the only man with a soul in a land of sin. There is, in the hard-boiled detective story, an image of a less than ideal world, but the hero accepts this and uses its corruption against itself. A theme of universal guilt exists in the genre. The crimes in hard-boiled detective fiction have as their root a decaying society. Guilt cannot rest exclusively on one character; everyone is guilty to some degree. As Philip Marlowe says:

'Crime isn't a disease. It's a symptom. we're a big rough rich wild people and crime is the price we pay for it, and organized crime is the price we pay for organization. We'll have it with us a long time. Organized crime is just a dirty side of the sharp dollar.'
'What's the clean side?'
'I never saw it.'[6]

The detective novel is not tragedy, but in many ways it resembles tragedy. The detective cannot help but involve himself in his quest, but unlike the tragic figure who carries within himself that which will destroy him, the detective will be both brought to the brink of destruction and saved by that characteristic that sets him apart: his cynical, tough-minded, uncompromising outlook. Not understanding this, those who would have him "lay off" insure his continued involvement. He is not solving a crime so much as playing out his hand in a game he entered for a client who did not tell him the rules. Such clients are not victimized innocents, but they are caught in a web they helped spin.

The Maltese Falcon is about the dichotomy between appearance and reality. The characters are not who they say they are. Miss O'Shaughnessy introduces herself as Miss Wonderly, hires a detective only to shoot him, and expects that the love she hopes Spade believes she has for him will save her from the gallows. The falcon itself, the cause of the drama, is a fake. The deaths are meaningless. Spade is a hollow man, having nothing but his professionalism; he is even rejected by his secretary, Effie. In *The Maltese Falcon* there are no winners, no heroes.

The genre's nightmarish vision of America is clearest in Raymond Chandler's fiction. His hero, Marlowe, is not devoid of sentiment, as is Spade, but is lonely and alienated by what he sees. Chandler writes of Hollywood with contempt, and, as in *The Maltese Falcon,* the theme is that things are not as they appear:

> I smelled Los Angles before I got to it. It smelled stale and old like a living room that had been closed too long. But the colored lights fooled you. The lights were wonderful. There ought to be a monument to the man who invented neon lights. Fifteen stories high, solid marble. There's a boy who really made something out of nothing.[7]

Hollywood, like Brigid O'Shaughnessy, is attractive on the surface but corrupt beneath. Marlowe ceases caring: At the end of *The Little Sister* he doesn't try to stop the murder of Dolores Gonzales, the woman who would have escaped the law.

And why should Marlowe care? The most he can do is retain his integrity; the police and the courts are as corrupt as the rest of society. Marlowe's interrogation by the Bay City police is replete with rabbit and kidney punches. For Mike Hammer the police are too soft, for Marlowe they are goons. For both they are too often subject to external pressures which stop them from doing their job. They are ineffective, the detective must go it alone; and perhaps even he is corrupted by his environment. William Ruehlmann describes him as a psycopath.[8] All except Lew Archer have, according to Ruehlmann, lost their humanity, be they vigilantes like Hammer or dispirited souls like Marlowe. The suggestion is, in any case, that there is no relief to be found and that the only means of preserving one's dignity is to divorce oneself from the world.

The private detective in literature, then, is a lonely man with some sense of honour in an honourless world. It might seem reasonable to expect this theme to exist in television dramas, but an examination of the detective on television reveals that this is not the case. What one initially observes is that in spite of the large number of crime dramas on television, there are at present very few private detectives. Although detective dramas, hard-boiled or otherwise, were quite popular at the beginning of the 1960s, few new private detective series were launched after 1963, and a consequent dearth of such dramas set in. Furthermore, for the most part, television's detective dramas did not place much emphasis on themes of social decay or the loneliness of the American city.

The television private eye would often not be a loner: he might work for an agency, as did the heroes of "77 Sunset Strip," or have close personal

friends. If, as Robert Larka contends, Peter Gunn served as a model for most of television's private eyes,[9] we can conclude that the typical "PI" is somewhat different than his counterpart in literature. Gunn was modelled after Cary Grant and had an ivy league style of dress. Mannix was conceived of as a type of superman, not at all like the battered Marlowe. Even television's Marlowe (ABC-TV, 1959) had a flashy apartment and a white convertible. Larka concludes that "television's private eye could afford a fancy office, drive a new car, and encounter beautiful women wherever he travelled."[10]

Both of the current prime-time private detective series include characters related to the detective. Barnaby Jones, a detective out of retirement, is assisted by his daughter-in-law, while "The Rockford Files" often features the detective's crochety father. On television, the detective drama becomes a vehicle for a human interest story.

In crime dramas the emphasis is currently on the team; consider Starsky and Hutch or Steve and Mike of "The Streets of San Francisco." What we see is basically the "buddy system:" the detectives at Sunset Strip formed a little family with Kookie as kid brother. A later version of the program featuring Efrem Zimbalist, Jr., as a loner moving through dark "mean streets" did not enjoy much success in the ratings.

Horace Newcomb maintains that television is oriented towards the indoors, the "at home."[11] Newcomb contends that television's small screen size, which necessitates close-ups, and hence intimacy, and its presence in the home rather than in a theatre, as well as the high cost of "outdoor" studio sets, are factors which personalize television, which encourage an emphasis on personal relationships rather than broader themes. We have a detective hero not fighting for a place to fit in, but rather assuming a father figure role, as do Jones and Cannon in returning their clients' disrupted lives to normal. This tendency towards domesticity is demonstrated not only by the plethora of situation comedies on television, but also by the structure of many television dramas.[12] Newcomb points to "Ironside" where his staff became his "family" and much of the action took place in his office cum home, or in his personalized van (home on wheels?).[13]

In presenting a complete drama in less than sixty minutes, television has little time to develop characters of plots, notwithstanding those elements featured weekly as part of the series. Television must place emphasis on the story line and action. In order to keep the viewer, the accent is on fast-paced action, rescue scenes which can squeeze the last bit of suspense out of the plot. The tendencies both towards action and domesticity result in a great deal of "wheelie" scenes, scenes in which characters are driving in their cars. "Adam-12," the police car drama, was the apotheosis of the "wheelie" concept. The main characters could engage in small talk while driving around searching for dramatic adventure. The print medium seems hardly suited to endless scenes of Cannon gritting his teeth during some tire screeching Southern California chase, while television cannot provide the first person perspective of most detective stories.

On television, there would be little point in showing the detective alone, feet on his desk, musing; something must be happening. Since a major portion of the social commentary found in detective literature occurs in the thoughts of the protagonist-narrator, it is lost to the television medium. Furthermore, less complex plots demand that things be as they appear. The dichotomy between appearance and reality cannot be developed without injecting a degree of ambivalence foreign to this medium.

That which is taken for granted finds its basis in a set of assumptions which are derived from the basic myths of our culture. These myths, which are attacked in detective fiction, are left standing on television: crime is not the price we pay for being a "big rough rich wild people"; crime exists because we have criminals. Television, as a socially controlled medium, does not wish to offend, to paint a picture its public does not wish to see. The domestic orientation of detective programs ignores the social environment. One evil man has committed a crime and threatened the security of family and community. The detective will apprehend him and all will be well again. I.F. Stone has remarked that America believes in an evil incarnate, and that it blames social problems on the deeds of a few evil men who must be exorcised from society; the problems do not lie in the social environment.[14] Television detective dramas reinforce that belief.

On television, if it is not immediately clear who the criminal is, it is normally clear who is not. Consider the female-betrayor figure: In literature, her evil is not so readily apparent; on television she slinks across the screen.[15] Charlotte Manning, the psychiatrist-murderess in *I the Jury,* is not immediately flagged as a villainess: she's a demon in disguise. Her television counterpart, however, is much less subtle in her corruption. She may fool her victims, and perhaps the detective, for a while, but she does not fool the audience. The Miss Wonderly's who show up at Sam Spade's office may betray him, but the innocent-looking girl who asks Barnaby Jones to search for her kidnapped father will be innocent.

Involved in a less labyrinthine plot with less complex characters, the television private eye is not drawn into some complex vortex of corruption in which his client is inextricably caught. A theme of universal guilt does not crop up in television's detective dramas any more than it does in westerns with white-hatted heroes and black-hatted villains. The victims are most often middle class citizens leading uneventful lives until cruel fate dispatches some felon to do them harm. The crime, or conflict, is an anomaly. It is not part of the day-to-day world, and as such the proper order of things can be restored by the successful detective. In literature, the detective is involved in a near Sisyphean struggle with corruption; on television he is not. On television, the detective can succeed completely.

The hard-boiled detective is not suited to television. His cynicism and non-involvement in deep personal relationships make him an uncomfortable character for television to present. Television, as a socially controlled medium which often also responds to a lowest common denominator rating system, cannot portray America too far out of whack, nor can it glorify the nonconformist, particularly if he assigns himself the

roles of judge and jury, as Mike Hammer does. Newcomb describes television's writers as "walking the line between what is permissable in the way of violence and what is permissable in the way of moral judgement,"[16] and unless the scene is removed from the present, set perhaps in the thirties or forties, as was "City of Angels," it seems that this line leads to making the hard-boiled hero a cop.

Why would an eye be private? For money? Hard-boiled detectives never had much money, and television's highly paid freelance insurance investigator, Banacek, seemed to have more in common with the classical detectives. For not tolerating the force? Philip Marlowe may have been kicked off the police force for insubordination, but the implication then is that there was something wrong with the police, or with the detective. Neither assumption would sit well on television: One cannot base a series on the premise that the police are incompetent or corrupt, nor can one glorify a trouble-maker working outside of the system. In any case, the few down-and-out detectives who have been on television, such as Darrin McGavin as the "Outsider," have not enjoyed much success.

The trend now seems to be to feature hard-boiled police officers. These hard-boiled cops, such as Kojak, have many of the characteristics of their private counterparts, but have some claim to legitimacy. They can act as avengers, they can bend the rules, but they are not vigilantes. "Kojak" and programs like it do depict America as a seamy urban jungle. The essence of Los Angeles which Chandler distilled can also be found in Kojak's New York. Such programs imply that all is not well, and they provide a solution: more law and order, less coddling of criminals, and tougher laws. They do not, however, suggest that solitary righteousness is any type of solution, and while we know that neither Hammett's Op nor Chandler's Marlowe really will change anything, TV plots suggest that a team of "Kojak cops," or perhaps a Swat team, might.

The medium is regulated by public opinion, government, a ratings system, advertisers to some degree, and primarily by a desire to maximize profits and placate critics. Furthermore, technical and budgetary limitations weigh heavily upon it. We should not be too surprised if television in borrowing from print has vastly altered the substance it has taken. It is also possible that, in an age that sees things in corporate, or conspiratorial terms,[17] the Marlowes and the Spades have little appeal. After all, "Barnaby's 'shtick' is that he's semi-retired: his kind is passe."[18] Perhaps the moral ambiguity of much of the genre is no longer appropriate, and not even Mike Hammer is vengeful enough. Hit men, either self-appointed or government agents, seem to be enjoying much popularity, while Robert Altman's film treatment of *The Long Goodbye* has Marlowe as a loser in the seventies, out of touch with his age.

Notes

[1]Consider "The Big Sleep," directed by Howard Hawkes, or "The Maltese Falcon," directed

by John Huston.

[2]Raymond Chandler, "The Simple Art of Murder," in *The Simple Art of Murder* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1950), p. 533.

[3]Raymond Chandler, *The Little Sister* (Cambridge, Massachussets: The Riverside Press, 1949), p. 1.

[4]*Adventure, Mystery, and Romance* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1976), p. 142.

[5]Philip Durham, *Down These Mean Streets a Man Must Go: Raymond Chandler's Knight* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1963), p. 90.

[6]Raymond Chandler, *The Long Goodbye* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1953), quoted in Cawelti, *Adventure, Mystery, and Romance,* p. 150.

[7]Chandler, *The Little Sister,* p. 78.

[8]William Ruehlmann, *Saint With a Gun* (New York: New York University Press, 1974), p. 10.

[9]"Television's Private Eye: An Examination of Twenty Years Programming of a Particular Genre, 1949 to 1969" (Ph.D. dissertation, Ohio University, 1973), p. 152.

[10]Ibid., p. 172.

[11]*TV: The Most Popular Art* (Garden City, New Jersey: Anchor Press, 1974), p. 247.

[12]Bernard Timberg in an unpublished monograph described television plot structures as "minimythic." The minimyth, in which a domestic environment is disturbed and then returned to equilibrium by those in the "family," is a variant of the thesis of John Lawrence's *The American Monomyth* (New York: Doubleday, 1977), in which an innocent community is threatened, to be saved by an outsider, a redeemer hero (such as the Lone Ranger).

[13]*TV: The Most Popular Art,* p. 105.

[14]I.F. Stone, speech at McGill University, Montreal, 1974.

[15]In Western culture, there is a myth of the woman as evil: The first temptress was Eve. Traditionally, the blonde, fair-skinned woman is virginal while the evil one is dark and mysterious, as in the Child ballad "Cruel Sister." Although Hollywood makes much use of the "vamp" figure, she is just as likely to be blonde, as were many of Hollywood's sex symbols.

[16]*TV: The Most Popular Art,* p. 90.

[17]If the success of "The Godfather," or the popularity of conspiracy theories (CIA, FBI, *et al.*), is any indication, it would seem that the popular mind is more interested in corporate than individual intrigues.

[18]David Bowman, "Detective Melodrama on TV," *Journal of the University Film Association,* XXVII (2, 1973), 40.

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Beyond Nostalgia: American Radio as a Field of Study

By Alan Havig

The reasons for an oversight of such proportions no doubt are numerous. Even if they could all be identified they still might not adequately explain why radio, especially in its "Golden Age," has been left almost entirely to the nostalgia merchants and their patrons, private collectors of taped programs, radio premiums, and photographs of former stars. It is true, for example, that the astounding rise of television in the late 1940s submerged the serious study of radio that had begun in the 1930s among students of public opinion and mass communications. This interest might have infected other scholars, it could be argued, had not a new form of broadcasting so thoroughly eliminated its predecessor. This explanation is inadequate, however, in light of a parallel development in the motion picture industry. The addition of sound to silent movies did not discourage the study of the silents, as the addition of TV's picture to radio's sound did the study of audio broadcasting. We need to know why technological innovation had an impact on the perceptions of one medium which it did not have on the other.

One could also suggest that radio's content, its programs, were of such low quality that scholars have avoided them on artistic grounds. Radio's achievement was so limited, some would say, that its neglect is justified. Historians who will admit only traditional political or diplomatic research topics to legitimacy in their discipline, or students of literature for whom only serious writers produce "literature," might fall back on this argument. But the fact is that even the popular culture movement has shown little interest in radio, as compared with its healthy concern with film, music, and other forms of commercial entertainment. In its more than a decade of publication the *Journal of Popular Culture* has published fewer than a dozen articles on radio.

There are signs that radio is attracting serious scholarship. Teachers and researchers with a variety of preparations and affiliations have begun to focus attention on radio as an important mass entertainment medium from the 1920s to the 1950s. The articles assembled for this special section are evidence enough of that fact, but other work, completed and in-progress, deserves mention also.

Erik Barnouw's publications have been an important stimulus to research. His three volume *A History of Broadcasting in the United States,* the first two volumes of which deal with the pre-television era, embodies not

only the research and reflection of a scholar-teacher, but also the experience of a practicing broadcaster.[1] Barnouw's most recent book, *The Sponsor,* is a much-needed analysis of the role of advertisers in both radio and television broadcasting. Hopefully it will attract the interest of other researchers to this important subject.[2]

The rise of popular culture as an interdisciplinary movement is also producing an interest in radio. Some students of the past now perceive that mass leisure, as a part of social history, is a research area of great promise. Younger historians whose graduate training may have included mention of radio only in connection with Franklin D. Roosevelt's fireside chats, for example, now have a meaningful context in which to place the fact that F.D.R.'s constituents did not turn off their sets when he left the air. Such scholars see a need to explore the social significance of entertainment programming, as well as the political significance of presidential broadcasts. Evidence of a new interest in radio's historical importance is David Culbert's recent book on broadcast journalism: *News for Everyman: Radio and Foreign Affairs in Thirties America.*[3] In progress are other studies, including a book on the *Amos 'n Andy* program by Al-Tony Gilmore of the University of Maryland; one on radio comedy during the 1930s by Arthur Frank Wertheim of the University of Southern California; and a third on the history of radio programming, *Don't Touch That Dial! Radio Programming in American Life, 1920-1960,* by Professor J. Fred MacDonald of Northeastern Illinois University (to be published in early 1979). An additional resource is the continuing flow of memoirs of those who were active in the business of entertainment radio.[4]

A survey of the factors which explain an awakening interest in radio research must also highlight the increasing availability of resources. Of the many archives which recognize the importance of broadcast materials, in printed and audio form, several deserve mention. The Phonoarchive of the University of Washington contains an unmatched collection of CBS news broadcasts from the World War II years.[5] The Broadcast Pioneers Library in Washington, D.C. is assembling radio materials under the leadership of Katherine Heinz, and the Oral History Office at Columbia University has a Broadcast Pioneers project. The State Historical Society of Wisconsin some years ago established a Mass Communications archive which now contains a number of significant manuscript collections which pertain to radio, including some records deposited by NBC and its former executives. Dr. Marvin Bensman of the Department of Speech and Drama at Memphis State University has assembled a collection of radio programs which is of use to scholars of varied interests. Finally, Professor MacDonald at the Institute for Popular Culture Studies at Northeastern Illinois has established a Popular Music Exchange, which includes popular recorded music that was performed over the radio during the years.

Scholars now also have easy access to thirty-two important published sources in the Arno Press reprint series, *History of Broadcasting: Radio To Television.* Edited by Christopher Sterling of Temple University, the series includes reprint editions of such classic but out-of-print works as Hadley

Icons of a bygone era—the famous NBC chimes and a two-directional microphone from WMAQ (Chicago).

Cantril and Gordon W. Allport's *The Psychology of Radio* (1935), Paul F. Lazarsfeld's *Radio and the Printed Page* (1940), and Llewellyn White's *The American Radio* (1947). The series also contains valuable compilations of the Federal Radio Commission's (1927-1933) and Federal Communications Commission's (1934-1955) annual reports. The avaliability of older sources and the published results of recent research will go far to compensate for the neglect that radio has suffered at the hands of those who seek to understand

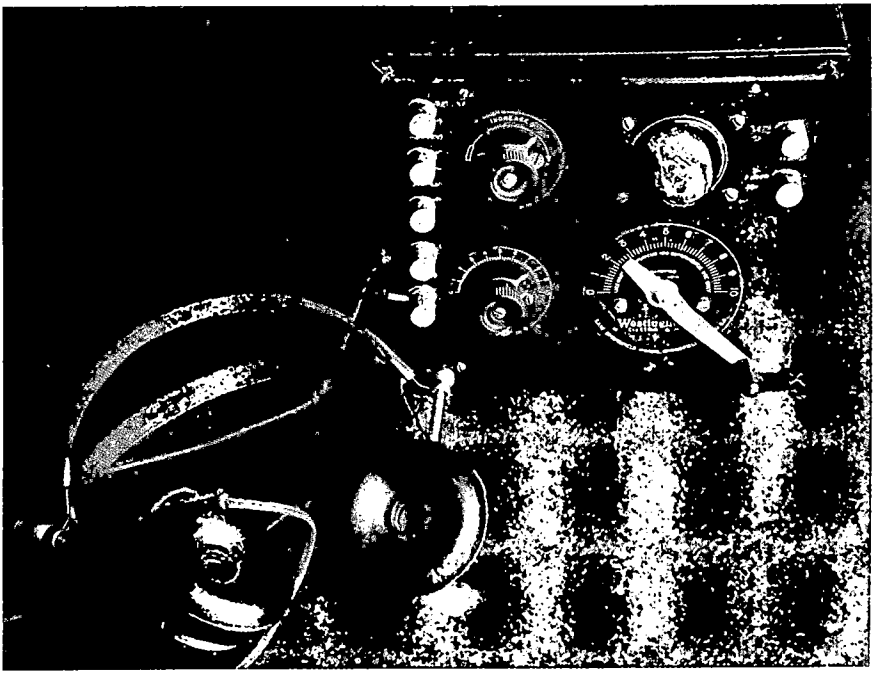
American society and culture.

II

Although radio will become a field of study for increasing numbers of researchers, there are many academicians who no doubt wonder why it should. It is incumbent upon those who see value in the study of pre-television broadcasting to formulate a rationale for their interest and labors. The studies alluded to above will themselves provide a part of that rationale. Another small part may be suggested here. Considering the history of radio in its broadest terms, what kinds of scholars might find the field a rewarding one?

Business historians might reasonably give low priority to entertainment entrepreneurs and organizations whose day has passed—P.T. Barnum of popular museum and circus fame, for example, or the vaudeville circuits established by the likes of B.F. Keith and Edward Albee. But they can hardly ignore the multi-million dollar broadcasting corporations which dominated radio as they continue to dominate television today. There is a need to assess the roles played by NBC's David Sarnoff and CBS's William Paley, men who, unlike most corporate executives, had to combine a talent for showmanship with management ability.[6] We could also use historical analyses of the administrative and financial relationships inherent in the concept of a broadcast network, with its central broadcasting corporation tied to affiliated local stations. Business historians with an interest in the 1930s will some day measure and explain the growth of the radio industry—including the networks, set manufacturers, advertising agencies, and related businesses—in the midst of general business failure and depression. The advertising agencies themselves deserve much more attention from historians than they have received. Although they were born with the age of mass magazines and cheap newspapers, they waxed fat on the revenues of broadcast clients. That the agencies came to dominate the production of radio programs during the 1930s and 1940s, and thus shaped program content for which the networks were responsible, raises questions about their relationship with those networks and the commercial exploitation of home audiences. The federal government granted broadcast licenses to radio stations, not to ad agencies. Yet the agencies created most of the programs. The causes and consequences of this remarkable condition need to be understood.

Historians and political scientists have shown a lively interest in the subject of governmental regulation of the economy. Some monographs do analyze the Federal Radio Commission's and the Federal Communications Commission's oversight of radio broadcasting,[7] although most publications on this topic deal with the more recent television era. In addition, with their political, legal, and administrative orientation, most books on the question of governmental regulation slight some important matters. The F.R.C. and the F.C.C. are unique among the independent regulatory commissions in that they regulated not only radio as business,



A Westinghouse one-tube radio receiver, with headphones, brought ideas, information, and new influences into thousands of American homes in 1922.

but also radio as an influential medium of thought and expression. As potential regulators of free speech they became involved with First Amendment freedoms in a way that the Interstate Commerce Commission and most other agencies could not. We need to know how in practice this power was exercized, and for the broadcast industry's radio years we do not have sufficiently detailed accounts. Though the Radio Act of 1927 and the Communications Act of 1933 denied to the government the role of censor, censorship can be enforced in subtle and indirect, but nevertheless effective, ways. Charges of censorship were rife during the 1930s and 1940s.[8] Can these charges be substantiated by solid historical research? With the exception of the saloon, radio and television are the only forms of mass commercial amusement to come under federal regulation. Others, such as the movies and vaudeville, experienced local censorship and industry self-regulation. Broadcast censorship is really a part of this larger question: in what ways would radio have been different than it was without the reality of external control by government commission? The same question, of course, applies to television.

There are good reasons why literary historians should also develop an interest in radio. A significant proportion of the total volume of popular creative writing since the 1920s has never appeared in published form. Radio, television, and movie scripts, whose words were spoken into

microphones and then forgotten, constitute an enormous volume of recent American writing, but writing that is not recognized as such. Bruce Lohof has pointed out the tendency of scholars "to equate the 'public culture'—even as we do the elite culture—with literature." And this occurs in spite of the fact that "a mere measure of our semantic environment is devoted to the printed word."[9] While the study of artifacts, of material culture, is a partial corrective of this condition, the analysis of what remains of the broadcast word is another. Whether the quality of what was (and is) written for broadcasting in any way compares with the quality of popular literature which has received scholarly attention will have to await the results of serious study. And serious study will come only when scholars overcome that bias which favors the printed page, the published book. Until the verdict is in, however, it seems safe to suggest that the best radio writers, such as Goodman Ace, Herman Wouk, Norman Corwin, Arch Oboler, Orson Welles, and Fred Allen, deserve as much study as such minor literary figures as the American Winston Churchill.[10]

The most prolific of all radio authors, and perhaps the most financially successful as well, were the creators of the daytime soap operas. And although males dominated the radio industry the most important of these writers were women, most notably Irna Phillips, Elaine Carrington, and Anne Hummert. The soap opera phenomenon received extensive study during the 1940s, but from perspectives which largely ignored the popular literary qualities of the scripts and the fact that the serial world was not only created for women, but also by them. What conclusions about radio soap opera would a literary or a feminist analysis yield today? We will not know until someone undertakes such projects.

Social historians will find that radio provided a ladder of social mobility for members of new stock ethnic groups. Historians and sociologists have explored the ways in which organized crime and urban political machines performed this function for groups whose success aspirations were blocked in social institutions, such as legitimate business, which enjoyed greater social approval.[11] A superficial knowledge of the ethnic origins of radio personalities, as well as the content of many of their songs and much of their humor, suggests that at least white minority groups found success in radio, success which had begun for many in vaudeville, burlesque, and the musical stage. The long list of such performers would include Al Jolson, George Jessel, Eddie Cantor, Fanny Brice, Jack Benny, George Burns, Milton Berle, Mary Livingston, Frank Sinatra, Jimmy Durante, Fred Allen, and Gertrude Berg. Collective biographical profiles of a large number of radio actors, actresses, writers, and musicians will document the extent to which the careers of Benjamin Kubelsky (Jack Benny) and John Florence Sullivan (Fred Allen) were typical of a general phenomenon.[12]

Another aspect of radio's history worthy of study is its relationship with mass communications research. It was no accident that social scientists developed an interest in measuring public opinion and the social effects of the media during the 1930s, the decade of radio's full flowering.

Whether the stimulus to research came from apprehension over the Nazi's use of radio for purposes of propaganda and social control, or a milder concern about the psychological effects of supposedly harmful soap operas or children's adventure programs, researchers at such institutions as Princeton, Columbia, Harvard, and Ohio State Universities developed techniques of communications research with radio very much in mind. What was probably the best-known institutional embodiment of this new field, Columbia's Bureau of Applied Social Research, began its work under Paul Lazarsfeld in the late 1930s as the Office of Radio Research. Its Director has described the work of the Office, which was undertaken with Rockefeller Foundation funds, as "the first major research project on mass communication;" its goal was to study "the effects of radio on the American society."[13] Scholars who would understand the origins of modern social research must recognize that at least one of its roots lies in the medium of radio.

III

This list of research topics related to radio, which is by no means exhaustive, deals with what might be called the external context in which broadcasting operated from the late 1920s through the post-World War II era. As scholars investigate radio in its economic, political, and social settings they will elaborate on the implications of such statements as David Culbert's recent assertion that "Radio is central to an understanding of the United States during the decade of the Depression."[14] They will make increasingly clear the connections between broadcasting and American life—the sources on which it drew for talent and program content; the effects it had, and the assumed effects that it in fact did not have, on listeners; the degree to which it reflected dominant concerns in the mass population; the roles it played as escapist amusement during the Great Depression and the Second World War years; and the economic and political constraints under which it operated. This is one broad area of future radio research, but there is a second, equally important and equally neglected.

Two specialists in mass communications research have made an interesting point about their field, and by extension the study of radio. "It is a most intriguing fact in the intellectual history of social research," observe Elihu Katz and David Foulkes, "that the choice was made to study the mass media as agents of persuasion rather than agents of entertainment."[15] Radio research must demonstrate that this "agent of entertainment" is a worthy area of study in its own right, as a popular artistic phenomenon as well as a social one. Aesthetic analysis of the radio experience must join the social analysis called for earlier. It must rest on a study of the programs, especially the network programs, and the performers to which Americans listened for thirty years.

The job of developing a radio aesthetic, an exploration and appreciation of radio's popular artistic achievement, was begun while network radio still lived by some of the better radio critics and columnists.

But it has not been attempted since their time. As scholars now begin to revive the critical commentary of Jack Gould, John Crosby, and other journalists of the 1940s, they must strive to demonstrate that at least some part of radio's massive volume of writing and acting achieved excellence. They must be explicit about what criteria apply to past radio performance as they separate the mediocre from the meritorious. Their analysis of radio's dramatic, comedy, and musical achievement will draw on the established fields of literary and theatrical criticism, as well as on popular culture's own emerging standards of evaluation.[16] When this work is well under way, I think, it will be domonstrated that radio programming, more than just occasionally, rose above its admitted limitations as the product of mass commercial enterprise.

Horace Newcomb has provided a model for devloping a radio aesthetic in his discussion of contemporary television. In his book *TV: The Most Popular Art,*[17] Newcomb searches for the most appropriate means of understanding television, of making sense out of the confused variety of programming which has appeared on the medium since the 1950s. He employs the useful concept of formula, drawing as he does so on the valuable work of his mentor, John Cawelti.[18] Newcomb's discussion of television's formulas—the situation comedy, the domestic comedy, the western, doctor, and lawyer programs—makes clear that this popular artistic medium has created its own formulas, or shaped to its own needs formulas such as the western which predated the coming of TV. The question is, did radio do the same in its day? How did radio function to shape its own formulas, its own characteristic programs, some of which, indeed, were later taken over and altered by television?

During the 1930s and 1940s the most reliable Hollywood box office staple was the western. Yet westerns never successfully made the transition to radio. Despite notable successes like *Gunsmoke,* which appeared as radio was dying in the mid 1950s, westerns were never as successful on radio as were comedy programs, dramatic series, and several other categories of programs. Why not? What was it about radio that denied westerns the success that they had already found in the movies, and that they would subsequently find on television? Is the western a uniquely visual formula requiring, as John Cawelti has pointed out, spectacular scenery and vast open spaces which give the sense of wilderness and the quality of isolation to the town, the ranch, or the fort? Was purely verbal drama inadequate to the grandeur of the western's setting or the violence of its action? As radio research gives serious consideration to defining the radio aesthetic, such questions will be addressed and hopefully answered.

Consider also the radio comedians, certainly the greatest stars of network radio and also perhaps the men and women whose radio achievement was the greatest. Many of them learned their trade in vaudeville, burlesque, and other forms of live entertainment. What alterations did radio, as an audible medium with an unseen home audience, force on their comic art? What new, unexpected creative opportunities did it open up for the comedians who served their apprenticeship in variety halls

and vaudeville houses? Another part of the radio comedians' education, at least as observers, was the comedy of silent movies, as well as the films of the sound era featuring the likes of the Marx Brothers, W.C. Fields, and others. Can the student of radio's artistic achievement uncover influences and relationships among these contemporaries-in-comedy that will provide an understanding of the radio comedians which we so far lack?

Numerous additional questions suggest themselves. What role(s) did radio directors play in the production of programs? Was it in any way as significant as the role played by some Hollywood directors? Apparently not, but research will substitute knowledge for hunches. What of the role of radio writers? What working relationship existed between star performers on regular series and their "authors?" How active were performers in editing scripts, in originating ideas for routines and sketches, or, as in the case of a few like Fred Allen and Orson Welles, in writing entire scripts? How extensive and effective was network, sponsor, and agency interference with artistic freedom? Did these organizations, wielding the blue pencil, blunt radio's achievement and force on it a degree of mediocrity that it otherwise would not have had?

The point is made. The agenda is set. As an American social and cultural force, as a mass entertainment medium, as a commercial enterprise, as an art form, radio deserves the serious attention that scholars to date have not given it. Thus, the purpose of this "In-Depth" section of the *Journal of Popular Culture* is twofold. First, it offers a broad perspective—in terms of subject matter as well as scholarly methodology—on the research and writing of the history of popular radio. Second, and more important, the following essays challenge scholars in all disciplines to turn to the old recordings, the old scripts, and the old radio logs—to utilize oral history, and to probe specific programs, genres, and personalities—and to discover untapped sources to bring to light the story of radio's role in American life in the twentieth century.

Notes

[1]Vol. I: *A Tower In Babel* (to 1933) (New York, Oxford University Press, 1966); Vol. II: *The Golden Web* (1933-1953) (New York, Oxford University Press, 1968); Vol. III: *The Image Empire* (since 1953) (New York, Oxford University Press, 1970).

[2](New York, Oxford University Press, 1978)

[3](Westport, Connecticut, Greenwood Press, 1976)

[4]Recent examples include Irving A. Fein, *Jack Benny; An Intimate Biography* (New York, G.P. Putnam's sons, 1976), and Milt Josefsberg, *The Jack Benny Show; The Life and Times of America's Best-Loved Entertainer* (New Rochelle, New York, Arlington House Publishers, 1977).

[5]As described in Milo Ryan, *History In Sound* (Seattle, University of Washington Press, 1963).

[6]Beginnings have been made on this assignment by Barnouw's history cited above and by such popular treatments as Robert Metz, *CBS: Reflections In A Bloodshot Eye* (New York, New American Library, 1975), and David Halberstam, "CBS: The Power and the Profits," *The Atlantic,* 237 (January, 1976), 33-71; (February, 1976), 52-91.

[7]Carl J. Friedrich and Evelyn Sternberg, "Congress and the Control of Radio-Broadcasting," *The American Political Science Review,* XXXVII (October and December, 1943), 797-818, 1014-1026; Murray Edelman, *The Licensing of Radio Services in the United States, 1927 to 1947: A Study In Administrative Formulation of Policy* (Urbana, Illinois, University of Illinois Press, 1950); Glenn A Johnson, "Secretary of Commerce Herbert C. Hoover: The First Regulator of American Broadcasting, 1921-1928," (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, University of Iowas, 1970).

[8]See the documents included in H.B. Summers, comp., *Radio Censorship* (New York, The H.W. Wilson Company, 1939; Arno Press reprint, 1971).

[9]Lohof, "Popular Culture: The *Journal* and the State of the Study," *Journal of Popular Culture,* VI (Winter, 1972), 457-58.

[10]Robert W. Schneider, *Novelist To A Generation: The Life and Thought of Winston Churchill* (Bowling Green, Ohio, Bowling Green University Popular Press, 1976); this is not meant in any way to disparage Professor Schneider's informative study, only to suggest that writers for the electronic media deserve attention also.

[11]See Daniel Bell, "Crime as An American Way of Life: A Queer Ladder of Social Mobility," in his *The End of Ideology; On The Exhaustion of Political Ideas in the Fifties,* New Rev. Ed. (New York, Collier Books, 1962), 127-50; Humbert Nelli, *Italians in Chicago, 1880-1930; A Study in Ethnic Mobility* (New York, Oxford University Press, 1970), 125-55; Robert K. Merton, *Social Theory and Social Structure,* Rev. Ed. (New York, The Free Press, 1957), 71-82.

[12]For a discussion of Jewish mobility through popular entertainment see Irving Howe, *World of Our Fathers* (New York, Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1976), 556-73.

[13]Lazarsfeld, "An Episode in the History of Social Research: A Memoir," *Perspectives In American History,* II (1968), quotes from p. 291 and 276 respectively.

[14]Culbert, *News For Everyman,* 4.

[15]"The Use of the Mass Media as 'Escape'; Clarification of a Concept," *Public Opinion Quarterly,* XXVI (Fall, 1962), 378.

[16]For discussions of developing a popular culture aesthetic see John G. Cawelti, "Notes Toward An Aesthetic of Popular Culture," *Journal of Popular Culture,* V (Fall, 1971), 255-68; David Madden, "The Necessity For An Aesthetics of Popular Culture," *Ibid.,* VII (Summer, 1973), 1-13.

[17](New York, Anchor Books, 1974), 21-24 and passim.

[18]Cawelti, "The Concept of Formula in the Study of Popular Literature," *Journal of Popular Culture,* III (Winter, 1969), 381-90; *Adventure, Mystery, and Romance: Formula Stories as Art and Popular Culture* (Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1976); *The Six-Gun Mystique* (Bowling Green, Ohio, Bowling Green University Popular Press, [1975]).

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Radio's Debt to Vaudeville

By John E. DiMeglio

The scriptwriting team was stuck. Headed by the "king of all gag men," the group had hit a snag—that is, until the "king" called out to one of his court, "Frank, look through the vaudeville file." After a few more suggestions, related to established *vaudeville* material, the *radio* script team breathed more easily. The comedy files, the "trade secrets" of the "king," were loaded with tried and true material, a great part of it from vaudeville, and they served as the weekly reservoir for radio show after radio show.[1]

Vaudeville material was fitting as the core of this radio gag king's comedy, for he had been a vaudeville writer, work that included among his clientele many Palace headliners.[2] But, even the prime talent of two-a-day bigtime vaudeville that played to reserved seats could not withstand the combined onslaught of three factors. Sound movies and their much cheaper admission prices, the ever-deepening Great Depression and its money crunch, and the ready entertainment of radio were the doomsday of class vaudeville. Its live stage shows lost out to technology and shrinking pocketbooks. Vaudevillians, their writers and managers, and most importantly, their audience, bade a mixed farewell to a genre of show business that had reigned as number one for approximately a quarter-century.

An ex-vaudevillian, Charlie Chaplin, had long since become the silent movie great he was. Joined by many other former vaudeville headliners, such as Buster Keaton, Stan Laurel, and W.C. Fields, the movie world held no particular awe for vaudevillians who knew their live stage form was decaying. When movie opportunities beckoned, vaudevillians took them: Al Jolson, Fred Astaire, Marie Dressler, Leo Carrillo, Mae West, Ray Bolger, Joe E. Brown, Benny Rubin, Jack Haley, and the dynamic Marx Brothers comprised but a partial list of Hollywood gains and Palace losses.[3]

Commercial radio, starting years later, also "raided" vaudeville for headliners. Phil Rapp, who wrote for Fanny Brice's first radio show in 1931, said, "Radio was like television is now [1953]: trying to scoop up everybody, trying to fill the broadcast schedule with headliners."[4] Some recent popular works clearly illustrate the significance of this crossover of vaudevillians to radio. Of 36 photographs that are grouped in the opening pages of one book, 13 are of ex-vaudevillians. In another, Irving Settel's *Pictorial History of Radio,* five famous acts are shown on its picture cover: Will Rogers, Groucho

Edgar Bergen and his dummy, Charlie McCarthy, emerged from vaudeville to become one of the top comedy shows in radio history.

Marx, Kate Smith, Fannie Brice, and Edgar Bergen with Charlie McCarthy. On the inside cover are mentioned the names of Fred Allen, H.V. Kaltenborn, and Gracie Allen. Eight famous *radio* personalities, and *vaudeville* patrons had already enjoyed the great majority of them by the time they graced the air waves. A third work, commemmorating NBC's first half-century, uses photographs to bring a visual message to its readers, supplying an instant reference to radio and television giants in history. On the front cover, Johnny Carson, Liza Minnelli, George Burns, Jimmy Durante, and Groucho Marx appear. Vaudeville score: three of five, as well as the daughter of a vaudevillian. On the back cover, Bob Hope, Milton Berle, and Howdy Doody share space. Two of the three were vaudevillians and the cumulative score is raised to five of eight. Starting with the book's "Foreword," the following appear in sequence: Bob Hope, Bing Crosby, Rudy Vallee, Edgar Bergen with Charlie McCarthy and Clark Gable, Eddie Cantor, Al Jolson, George Burns and Gracie Allen, Jack Benny, Fred Allen and Portland Hoffa, and Bob Hope again. Except for Clark Gable and Portland Hoffa, the names are those of one vaudeville headliner after another. Included in other photos in the same publication were the following ex-vaudeville artists: Will Rogers, Weber and Fields, Ed Wynn, Red Skelton, Jimmy Durante, and Fanny Brice.[5]

Only two years after bigtime vaudeville "officially" died, a *Radio Guide* columnist described a "luncheon of radio comics at the Algonquin." All were former headliners of the vaudeville boards. But, by this time radio was claiming them as its own. The same edition featured the latest reader votes for the radio "Star of Stars," where one entertainer would win the gold medal which represented the *Radio Guide* Award. Far in front was Joe Penner, followed by Bing Crosby, Eddie Cantor, Jack Benny, and Rudy Vallee, all veterans of vaudeville. Of the next ten finishers, five had been featured in vaudeville.[6]

Temptation exists to say that radio could not have succeeded had it not been for the entry of former vaudevillians into its electronic programming. But, even the most pronounced devotion to vaudeville, vaudevillians, and the belief that vaudeville has been woefully denied its proper place of significance in America's history could not result in such a conclusion. To be sure, radio would have attained its greatness and power even had vaudeville not existed. Vaudevillians, as well as anyone else, understood that. After Ed Wynn finished his first Fire Chief broadcast, he remarked to his announcer, Jimmy Wallington, that he had worked on stage for twenty years to become famous as the Perfect Fool. Then, because of one broadcast which reached an audience greater in number than he had amassed in his entire stage career, "I am no longer the Perfect Fool. I am the Fire Chief."[7] Yes, facts had to be faced. Radio was bigger and would make it on its own. But, just as surely, the knowledge and experience of ex-vaudevillians, ex-vaudeville writers, and ex-vaudeville managers eased the way.

After all, the audience, though more vast, was the same that vaudevillians had entertained. Eddie Cantor, who had headlined at the Palace, remarked that when he stood at the microphone, he "could see the

A young Jack Benny in the mid-1930s, not long after he left vaudeville for broadcasting.

Fort Worths and the San Antonios, the Kansas Citys, Omahas, Detroits and Clevelands, all the places [he had] played on the road."[8] Perhaps more important than anything in the early radio comedy success of former vaudevillians (which is another way of saying nearly all radio comedy) was that very factor, their awareness of comedy tastes coast-to-coast. Six and even seven days a week, a minimum of twice a day, in exhausting cross-country tours, vaudevillians learned what made people laugh. Still, it was one thing to entertain several hundred people at a time, live and in person. It was quite something else to bring laughter to an unseen audience of millions.

Studio audiences were an innovation. Their behavior was a subject of serious debate. Eddie Cantor told how studio ushers "shushed" the audience. His announcer, Jimmy Wallington, told their studio audience in 1931 and at the start of 1932, before each broadcast,

> Ladies and gentlemen, you are here as guests of Chase and Sanborn. We ask you to co-operate with us in not applauding, not laughing, so that our listening audience can have the illusion of hearing a show without distraction.[9]

The situation was soon changed. Cantor claimed that his *Chase and Sanborn Hour* came "to life" and went to "the top" because of the active participation of the studio audience. Said he, "It was this simple—the minute the studio audience began to laugh, the listeners laughed too." And the mail poured in.[10]

Either Cantor changed his convictions or was later misunderstood. Strangely, in a popular magazine column he was cited as the only one present at a particular meeting of several radio comics (all ex-vaudevillians) who was opposed to studio audiences. In that same meeting, Ed Wynn and Joe Penner said they favored studio audiences, Jack Pearl made it clear that he could not work without one, and Jimmy Durante said, "I don't give a damn whether we have audiences or not."[11]

The great majority of radio comics, however, and certainly those with roots in vaudeville, preferred—even needed—a responsive studio audience. In fact, had it not been for the ex-vaudevillians, the studio audience, especially one encouraged to laugh and react, might never have been part of the radio (and television?) scene. Ed Wynn was credited with this breakthrough, though varied versions have been recorded.

In a chapter titled "Flop Sweat," former radio actress Mary Jane Higby asserted that Wynn exploded because "a soundproof glass curtain was lowered" in front of the audience at his first Texaco radio show. "He insisted that the curtain be raised." Larry Wilde also mentioned the elimination of glass curtains, stating that Wynn "refused to go on radio unless he could hear the people laugh as he was used to in the theatre." Wilde wrote that, as an experiment, Wynn got his wish for his first appearance, the trial proving to be "an instantaneous success." Sam J. Slate and Joe Cook, on the other hand, summarize that Wynn began that first broadcast without an audience of any kind. As the show progressed Wynn became more and more uneasy, openly expressing his frustration at doing comic material and not

hearing any response. Slate and Cook then wrote that "the announcer quickly recruited all the humanity in the area—electricians, cleaning women, telephone operators, and performers" and that Wynn then gave a highlight performance. Yet, though their story emphasized the decisive action taken by the announcer, they concluded, "So Ed Wynn was the father of the studio audience." His own son would have agreed. He wrote that Wynn demanded and got a studio audience—and without a glass wall.[12]

Power decisions, though, are rarely made by the performer. Bringing audiences into the studio, then removing the glass partitions that separated them from the entertainers, was a management decision. In this case, John Royal was the executive. Royal was an NBC vice-president, referred to by many performers as "Mr. Radio." They understood and responded to his power. And what had Royal done prior to joining NBC? A one-time press agent for the great vaudeville attraction, Houdini, he had gone up the vaudeville ladder to manage some of the most important theaters in the most powerful of vaudeville circuits, the Keith-Albee operation.[13]

Occasionally, however, performers asserted themselves, regardless of policy decisions. A prime example involved ex-vaudevillian Mae West, who was scheduled to appear on the radio show "Hollywood Hotel." Her former stage experience entered the picture at dress rehearsal. Scheduled to be interviewed and then sing to the accompaniment of the Raymond Paige Orchestra, she requested that a spotlight be put on her during the song. The director, Bill Bacher, not seeing the need for a spotlight which would mean absolutely nothing to a home audience, refused. West announced that she would not sing unless there were a spot. The director, no doubt used to getting his way, gave no ground. When the program was aired, the interview went as planned. Then the Paige Orchestra played the opening bars of West's song. At that point, the one and only Mae West spoke into the microphone, "I'm supposed to sing a song here. But I—don't—think—I'm—going—to—do—it." And off she went.[14] Vaudevillians had compiled years of knowing how to do things that were best for them and their audiences, seen and unseen; or, at least , so some thought.

The general conclusion was that the audience the radio performer could see—and to which the entertainer obviously played—benefitted the unseen audience. As one writer put it, "The audience in a radio studio actually helps the listener to hear a better program!" The same writer gathered together a long list of comedians, or as he called them, "scintillants... who absolutely refuse to perform without a visible audience to whom they can play."[15] The list, top to bottom, is of former vaudevillians, yet does contain one notable error, the name of a bright wit who would have preferred absolutely no studio audience—Fred Allen.

Allen spoke derisively of studio audiences:

> Who knows what's in the so-called minds of those people? Our show is just a place for them to come in out of the cold. They're not like audiences at a Broadway play. Try charging ten cents a ticket, and how many would be sitting out there?... If we had our way, we'd play the show without any audience at all.[16]

Allen was not alone. *Variety* printed an article in 1931 which described studio audiences as a motley group of low-class people whose I.Q. hardly exceeded 22. George Burns commented late in his career that laughs were easier to get from an audience that had paid to see the entertainer instead of from the "very critical" audience which pays nothing.[17] Yet, studio audiences led to success and even the independent and tough Fred Allen accepted them. The reason was simple. In vaudeville, Allen carried out the dictates set forth by the magnates, the best example being E.F. Albee, a dictator supreme. To go against Albee was to virtually commit vaudeville suicide. In radio, the dictates were those of the sponsor. The new Albee was General Mills! (Chalk one up for vaudeville).

To sum up, many vaudevillians ventured into radio and not only proved to be instant successes but were among the biggest stars of the new medium. Vaudeville had given those performers valuable experience. "What a training ground[18] that was!" proclaimed Ken Murray. Milton Berle echoed, "It was a training ground, school, and college all in one." Jack Haley referred to vaudeville as the place "where you learned your craft. . . ."[19] Like remarks were repeated constantly. Jack Benny was recently described as "one of vaudeville's darlings for fourteen years." The authors added, "It was in vaudeville that he learned the tricks that were to make him the princely pittance radio pays him."[20]

The list of those who "learned the tricks" is very long, but in closing, five vaudeville personalities who made it *big* in radio will be cited, none of them yet mentioned in this article. In 1925, Jim and Marian Jordan left vaudeville and went into radio—and "Fibber McGee and Molly" stayed around for a long, long time. "Sam 'n' Henry" was the name of a vaudeville act, popular enough that it went on Chicago radio in 1926. Two years later the principals, Freeman Gosden and Charles Correll, switched from "Sam 'n' Henry" to "Amos 'n' Andy" and in 1929, Pepsodent and NBC knew they had one of the great winners in show business history.[21] The final name may not be a fitting close to many, but one should keep in mind that in vaudeville, the closing act was very often the bottom of the talent barrel, referred to as the "chaser," for the theater patrons generally filed out during that final performance. This final name should serve to illustrate that vaudeville—and radio—encompassed all types. Yes, even Walter Winchell was a former vaudevillian!

Notes

[1]Arnold M. Auerbach, *Funny Men Don't Laugh* (Garden City: Doubleday and Company, Inc., 1965), ix, 13, 20-21. In this book, Auerbach did not identify the actual name of the "king," using the name of Lou Jacobs instead. Auerbach worked for Jacobs before joining the Fred Allen Show. Even years later vaudeville material would rescue electronic entertainers. Milton Berle, on the September 7, 1977 NBC "Tomorrow Show," hosted by Tom Snyder, stated that whenever he went blank on his live television show, he would cull up old routines and material from vaudeville. Indeed, the early Berle program had "Vaudeville" in its title.

[2]*Ibid.*, 32.

[3]See John E. DiMeglio, *Vaudeville U.S.A.* (Bowling Green: Bowling Green University Popular Press, 1973), 159-162. The Palace was the most important of all theaters to vaudevillians.

[4]As quoted in Norman Katkov, *The Fabulous Fanny; The Story of Fanny Brice* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1953), 243.

[5]Sam J. Slate and Joe Cook, *It Sounds Impossible* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1963); Irving Settel, *A Pictorial History of Radio* (New York: Grosset and Dunlap, 1967); Robert Campbell, *The Golden Years of Broadcasting* (New York: A Rutledge Book—Charles Scribner's Sons, 1976).

[6]Martin Lewis, "Along the Airialto," *Radio Guide* (Northwestern Edition), III (April 21, 1934), 6, 11.

[7]Slate and Cook, *Impossible,* 119.

[8]Eddie Cantor, with Jane Kesner Ardmore, *Take My Life* (Garden City: Doubleday and Company, Inc., 1957), 219.

[9]*Ibid.*, 213.

[10]*Ibid.*, 213-214.

[11]Martin J. Porter, "Reviewing Radio," *Radio Guide* (Northwestern Edition), III (April 21, 1934), 7, 27.

[12]Mary Jane Higby, *Tune In Tomorrow* (New York: Cowles Education Corporation, 1968), 80; Larry Wilde, *The Great Comedians Talk About Comedy* (New York: The Citadel Press, 1968), 365; Slate and Cook, *Impossible,* 30-31; Keenan Wynn, as told to James Brough, *Ed Wynn's Son* (Garden City: Doubleday and Company, Inc., 1959), 89.

[13]DiMeglio, *Vaudeville U.S.A.*, 6; Slate and Cook, *Impossible,* 70-71, 74-75.

[14]Higby, *Tune In,* 64. Bacher was prepared, however, and Dick Powell entered the breach, singing another song.

[15]Jack Banner, "Putting the S.A. in its Place," *Radio Guide* (Northwestern Edition), IV (April 20, 1935), 9.

[16]As quoted in Auerbach, *Funny Men,* 120.

[17]Higby, *Tune In,* 82; Wilde, *Great Comedians,* 142.

[18]Further comment on the training ground aspect of vaudeville can be found in DiMeglio, *Vaudeville U.S.A.*, 15-17.

[19]Bill Smith, *The Vaudevillians* (New York: Macmillan Publishing Co., Inc., 1976), 73, 131, 200.

[20]Hubbell Robinson and Ted Patrick, "Jack Benny," in Lawrence W. Lichty and Malachi C. Topping, *American Broadcasting* (New York: Hastings House, Publishers, 1975), 334.

[21]Settel, *Pictorial,* 65, 100.

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Black Pride And Protest: The Amos 'N' Andy Crusade

By Arnold Shankman

Social historians writing about the 1930s invariably mention the phenomenal popularity of the "Amos 'n' Andy" radio program. That the program was a favorite of white Americans is unquestionably true, but few scholars have bothered to investigate the reactions of Afro-Americans to "Amos 'n' Andy." Despite the publication of valuable studies on the ways Negroes have been depicted in motion pictures,[1] insufficient attention has been given to the treatment of blacks on radio programs. Moreover, one of the best-known articles on this subject incorrectly asserts that when the "Amos 'n' Andy" show was first broadcast on a nationwide basis, "it was *too new* and too popular to attract any organized resentment among Negroes and Negro organizations at the time of its infancy." Arthur Frank Wertheim, author of another study on the subject, concludes that "by late 1931 it was clear that most black people wanted 'Amos 'n' Andy' to remain on the air."[2] To be sure, as Wertheim shows, some blacks either enjoyed "Amos 'n' Andy" or personally found it to be innocuous, but a large number strongly objected to two white "clowns [wh]o continue nightly [to] exhibit the undesirabl[e] type of Negro... thereby exploiting the race."[3]

Capitalizing on this anti-"Amos 'n' Andy" sentiment was Robert Vann, the Afro-American editor of the Pittsburgh *Courier*. In 1931 Vann launched a campaign to have "Amos 'n' Andy" removed from the airwaves. Nearly 750,000 Afro-Americans signed their names to petitions demanding that the National Broadcasting Company cancel the popular series, and, at Vann's request, on October 25, 1931, hundreds of black ministers delivered "self-respect" sermons to their congregations. In the end Negroes were unsuccessful in their attempt to remove the objectionable program, and it continued to be broadcast, first on radio and later on television, for three more decades. But the 1931 campaign, though it did not succeed in achieving its objective, was not without positive results. Scores of blacks—and even a few whites—wrote the *Courier* to express their sentiments about the way radio and the movies portrayed the Negro. Many of these writers confessed that, prior to the time the *Courier* launched its crusade against "Amos 'n' Andy," they had never realized how the entertainment industry degraded Afro-Americans. Moreover, blacks began to give serious consideration to the use of economic boycotts to force sponsors of radio programs to demand that networks present a more objective portrait of the Afro-American. Finally, and perhaps most surprising of all, blacks started

to question the demeaning stereotype of the Negro that appeared in the comic strips of the Afro-American press. Thus, it seems erroneous to dismiss the "Amos 'n' Andy" crusade as insignificant or irrelevant.

Given the extraordinary ratings of "Amos 'n' Andy," what seems most surprising about the 1931 campaign is not that it failed but rather that it was attempted. "Amos 'n' Andy" was based upon the "Sam 'n' Henry" program, a radio show that Charles J. Correll and Freeman Gosden had devised for Chicago radio station WGN in 1926. "Sam 'n' Henry" was an immediate hit with Chicago audiences, but WGN was not prepared to broadcast the program nationally or to pay the two comedians as much money as they thought they were worth. Therefore, two years later, when their contracts expired, Correll and Gosden quit WGN and went to work for rival station WMAQ. Because there was some question as to whether the "Sam 'n' Henry" show was the property of Correll and Gosden or of WGN, the two white actors devised a new series, "Amos 'n' Andy." Amos Jones (Gosden) and Andy Hogg Brown (Correll) were two blacks who had moved from Atlanta to Chicago to seek their fortune. In the Windy City the newcomers had purchased a broken down automobile, a swivel chair, and a desk. After having made these investments Amos and Andy formed the Fresh Air Taxicab Company, "Incorpulated." Amos, a trusting hard worker, obeyed the domineering but lazy Andy. The two soon befriended George "the Kingfish" Stevens, a con man and organizer of the Mystic Knights of the Sea, Algonquin J. Calhoun, a shady lawyer, and a host of other characters whose voices were, in most cases, supplied by the versatile Gosden and Correll.[4]

The new program was even more favorably received in Chicago than "Sam 'n' Henry" had been. Within a few months Pepsodent Toothpaste Company agreed to sponsor the show nationally, and on August 19, 1929, "Amos 'n' Andy" was first heard on network radio. The program quickly gained a national following.[5] Six nights a week radio fans in all parts of the

In blackface as Amos (right) and Andy, Gosden and Correll appeared in a feature film, "Check and Double Check," in 1930.

country eagerly tuned in the fifteen minute soap opera, and in December 1929, they deluged Correll and Gosden with over 30,000 Christmas cards. By 1930 the program was more popular than any other show on the air, and its two stars were the highest paid performers on radio. Perhaps the most flattering compliment Correll and Gosden received came when a Virginia lady proudly named her twin sons Amos and Andy.[6]

Devotion to the program often took extreme forms. A Gastonia, North Carolina textile mill rearranged its work schedule so that day shift employees would be home before "Amos 'n' Andy" was broadcast. When it was discovered that Americans preferred listening to "Amos 'n' Andy" to the movies, hundreds of theaters postponed showing features until after the radio show was over. Telephone operators noted a significant decline in the number of calls placed when "Amos 'n' Andy" was on the radio. Many fans, it was reported, made it known that they would not answer the phone while the program was on the air. In some time zones the program was broadcast early lest the network be accused of ruining the sleeping habits of the nation.[7]

Examples of fan loyalty to "Amos 'n' Andy" are legion. One motorist in Washington, D.C., told a policeman who had stopped him for speeding that he was hurrying home so that he would not miss " 'Amos 'n' Andy.' It's five minutes to 6," he declared, "and I haven't missed them in months." Prisoners at Leavenworth rioted when the warden refused to let them hear the program, and after NBC interrupted one broadcast to announce that two oil tankers had collided, the network received over 1500 angry telephone calls. "The fans did not ask the identity of the ships or if any lives were lost," one man observed. "What they wanted to know was the end of the love story of Amos and Ruby Taylor." To placate the public, NBC hastily announced that a resume would be broadcast the next evening. Evidently only a message from President Herbert Hoover could "bump" the show from the airwaves.[8]

Not everyone liked "Amos 'n' Andy" though. Benjamin Brawley, the distinguished black historian, denounced the program as one that degraded Afro-Americans. In Chicago, Bishop W.J. Walls, president of the Board of Religious Education of the A.M.E. Zion Church, became furious when he learned that "Amos 'n' Andy" was being compared favorably with the works of Paul Dunbar and the comical skits of Bert Williams. " 'Amos 'n' Andy," he insisted, "emphasized the moronic and silliest type of black man." Furthermore, the program mocked black women. "If a woman is not a tool," the bishop complained, "she becomes a senseless, bossy wife or a tyrannizing vampire, using no reason and aspiring to nothing worthwhile, even in a funny way." Worst of all, Walls feared, black youths listening to the show would learn "to laugh at the shortcomings of the race." Several black professionals agreed with Walls that the program represented Negroes as illiterate, dishonest, foolish, shiftless and insipid. "We have not been clever enough to realize... that Amos and Andy... was ridiculing even the professional and better class of Negroes in the estimation of the white world," acidly complained Charlotta Bass, an influential black journalist.[9]

Perhaps what bothered Bass and Walls was that "Amos 'n' Andy" was the only representation of Afro-Americans on the radio in the early 1930s. Thus many listeners did not view the program merely as a comedy show about blacks; rather they saw "Amos 'n' Andy" as an accurate representation of the life-style of American Negroes.

It was Robert Vann of Pittsburgh who awakened large numbers of Afro-Americans to the nature of "Amos 'n' Andy." According to Andrew Buni, Vann's biographer, the black editor hoped that an "Amos 'n' Andy" campaign would boost the circulation of the Pittsburgh *Courier,* which he owned, and help transform it from a local to a national newspaper. Whatever financial considerations may have prompted Vann to launch his crusade, there is no question that his campaign caused many Afro-Americans to believe that "Amos 'n' Andy" insulted them and that the program deserved to be taken off the air.[10]

Vann's crusade was noteworthy. Even though the editor sought more readers for his paper, he had already built up a formidable circulation, second only to that of the Chicago *Defender.* In time he would have more readers than *Defender,* and his paper would become, according to Buni, "the nation's leading black weekly, with a circulation of a quarter million and an influence that touched every black community in the country." By 1930 the paper circulated in more than forty states. It printed news from scores of Southern communities, making it attractive to Dixie's blacks and also to Northern and Western Negroes who had been born in the South and had relatives still living there. Intellectuals liked the columns of George Schuyler, whom some called a black Mencken. Thousands of others read the paper because it printed news about black society, Negro athletic leagues, and the efforts of Afro-Americans to combat discrimination.[11]

Vann launched his attack on April 25, 1931. In an editorial aimed at blacks ignorant of the "evils" of "Amos 'n' Andy," he pointed out that whites assumed that the program fairly represented the lifestyle and aspirations of the typical Negro. "It is now a common thing," the Pittsburgh editor mused, "for [white] salesmen to enter a Negro business place and begin by asking, 'Did you hear 'Amos 'n' Andy' last night?" Often Negro laborers were referred to as Amos or Andy, and whites assumed that their Afro-American employees would be as carefree and improvident as the two radio characters.[12]

Perhaps Vann could have tolerated two successful black comedians earning $6000 per week, but, as he observed, "The men playing the characters are white. The company employing 'Amos 'n' Andy' is white. The people reaping the financial gain from the characterizations are all white." Only Negroes, the editor lamented, "would stand for th[is exploitation]." Hoping to prove that Afro-Americans did not enjoy the program and did not relish being called Amos or Andy, Vann asked his readers to write the *Courier* and express their opinions about the most popular program on radio.[13]

The April 25 editorial struck a responsive chord. Scores of Negroes agreed with Vann that "Amos 'n' Andy" was "a disgrace to the Negro race,"

Without blackface makeup, Freeman Gosden (right) as Amos, and Charles Correll as Andy, broadcast to the nation in the early 1930s. (NBC photo)

and their letters "flood[ed] the *Courier* office." As one woman would later write:

> American Negro, wake up! wake up!
> Show radioland you must be treated fair.
> So get ready to join the mighty force
> To push old Amos 'n' Andy off the air.[14]

On May 2, 1931, the black weekly proudly proclaimed, "this fight [is] destined to be heard all over the country." And so it was. Within two weeks mail had been received from nearly half the states of the Union, and a careful perusal of the contents of these communications convinced the *Courier* staff that "no one wants to be an Amos and not a soul in the business world like to feel that Andy represents the Negro ideal of business operations among Negroes or white people."[15]

With each passing day the volume of mail increased, and Vann redoubled his efforts to promote sentiment against the program. He noted that Madame Queen, one of the leading stars of "Amos 'n' Andy," was a bigamist and that another character, a white lawyer, regularly called his black male clients "boy." Moreover, observing that the theme song of the program was taken from the musical score for the racist movie, "The Birth of a Nation," Vann bitterly commented, "significant, eh!"[16]

At the urging of the *Courier* the NAACP began to investigate the possibility of asking the Federal Radio Commission to remove the "Amos 'n' Andy" show from the air. "There is little doubt in the minds of some of the ablest lawyers," Vann optimistically predicted, "that the Radio Commission will rule that the 'Amos 'n' Andy' propaganda is harmful to a portion of the citizenry of the United States and therefore a proper subject for review by the Commission."[17]

The *Courier* resolved to circulate anti-"Amos 'n' Andy" petitions to interested blacks in each of the forty-eight states until it had 100,000 signatures. Then it would turn these petitions over to the NAACP as ammunition in the battle against "Amos 'n' Andy." But Vann had underestimated the popularity of his crusade, for within nine weeks more than 275,000 Afro-Americans had signed his petition. Hastily the number of signatures desired was revised upward to 1,000,000. This proved to be too ambitious a goal, but before interest in the campaign waned, approximately 740,000 Afro-Americans had added their names to the *Courier* petitions.[18] The Radio Commission ignored these documents.

Unquestionably the most fascinating aspect of the *Courier* crusade was that it persuaded blacks in all parts of the nation who had never before written letters to a newspaper to write the Pittsburgh weekly to make known their feelings about "Amos 'n' Andy." Many also addressed themselves to the topics of race pride and the status of blacks in America. Limitations of space prevented the *Courier* from publishing every message received, but for several months as many as twenty or thirty representative letters were printed each week. A number of correspondents confessed that "Amos 'n' Andy" offended them and that they thought a crusade against the program "and all others who attempt to belittle the Negro" was long overdue. "The only criticism I have to offer regarding this movement," commented E.D. Porter of Pittsburgh, "is that it should have been started a year ago. Nevertheless it is never too late to do good." Similar sentiments were expressed by Miss E.S. Maury, secretary of the Plainfield (N.J.) Negro History Club. She feared that the program had been on the air so long that "it will be a hard fight to undo the wrong already done and to change the impressions already created."[19] Perhaps she also worried that whites who were not particularly prejudiced might start to think of blacks as ignorant, scheming, and dialectical of speech because they liked the plot of "Amos 'n' Andy."

Some even thought that the radio show actually was a deliberate plot on the part of whites "to belittle the Negro." According to one minister, the program was but one of "the insidious methods the white man will take to destroy the aspirations of the American Negro." "The whites like this program better than any other," an Ohioan insisted, "because it shows the Negro just as they should like to see him." The show was not a comedy, complained Spencer Haynes of Detroit; it was merely "rubbish." "If these men were first class comedians," he added, "they would be able to make the whole world laugh without trying to humiliate the Negro group." A black woman living in Boise, Idaho, was certain that the antics portrayed on

"Amos 'n' Andy" "causes the Negro to receive insults from ignorant whites."[20]

Among the most vocal proponents of the *Courier* crusade was Albion Holsey, secretary of the National Negro Business League. He feared that "propaganda of the 'Amos 'n' Andy' type" discouraged blacks from establishing businesses and persuaded whites that Afro-Americans were "commercial dunce[s]." Others echoed his ideas. Because of the unfortunate stereotypes reflected on the program, G.G. Fenton wondered "what Negro could ever convince the white banks that a Negro business is worth a dime. Do you know banks laugh at Negro business?" According to several correspondents, if blacks were constantly represented as being "unable to conduct such small businesses as restaurants and taxi cabs along intelligent plans," people could not help but conclude "that Negroes are born dishonest and incapable."[21]

Especially upsetting to Afro-Americans was the poor grammar used by "Amos 'n' Andy." *Courier* subscribers did not believe that most blacks spoke that way. To be sure, confessed Julian Hayes of Charleston, West Virginia, "some of our own people [do] talk and act like an Amos or an Andy," but was this any reason for Negroes to be "punished to the extent of listening to two men of another race making a monkey [sic] out of us just for the sake of a few dollars?" Every day "from morning 'til night" Hayes heard whites ask each other, "Did you hear the 'Amos 'n' Andy' program last night? They can certainly imitate a nigger." Little wonder then that if J.W. Rawlins of Detroit had had his way, "'Amos 'n' Andy' [w]ould be run out of town as spreaders of propaganda to keep the Negro before the whites in his primitive state, who after 65 years of freedom is still in his infancy."[22]

Typical of the exchanges that offended Rawlins and others was the following:

> Andy: "Amos, take dis lettuh—Mr. John Smith"
> Amos: "Where he at?"
> Andy: "Mr. John Smith at Boston, Massachusetts."
> Amos: "B-O-S-T-O-N—BOSTON. Wait a minute, heah how yo' spell Massachusetts?"
> Andy: "Dat's easy: M-A-S—Wait a minute, hea. M-A-S, MAS I tell yo' whut yo' do. Change dat to Ohio, O-I-O."[23]

Perhaps this was the crux of the matter. Whether or not whites seriously believed that Negroes were like children or that they said "I'se regusted" or "Oh, wah!," some did think that "Amos 'n' Andy" accurately represented the average black. In fact, one white man living in Los Angeles was positive that the Ku Klux Klan was behind the anti-"Amos 'n' Andy" crusade, and he maintained that "next to Abraham Lincoln, [Correll and Gosden] have done more for your race than anyone else." This opinion was by no means unique; neither was it confined to the so-called "lower-class" white. Louis Dean, a black student at the University of Cincinnati, was shocked when one of his professors asked him if the characters on "Amos 'n' Andy" were typical of most Negroes. Edward Ryan, the only Afro-American working for a company in New York City, showed an anti-"Amos 'n' Andy" editorial to

five of his white co-workers, all of whom had graduated from college. "There wasn't one who could see a single thing wrong in 'Amos 'n' Andy' that was offensive to the Negro," he sadly reported. "One white fellow had the gall to say: 'The Pittsburgh *Courier* is stirring up race prejudice!'"[24]

It should be noted, however, that a few Caucasians recognized that "Amos 'n' Andy" was offensive to blacks. A white Philadelphian told Robert Vann that "if two Negroes were on the air making fun of poor, ignorant white people, the whites of the country would run them off in one night." David Keene of Pittsburgh reported a similiar experience; a white friend expressed amazement to him that the "black race has permitted such mockery to go on this long." Taking a point of view much like that of the two Pennsylvania whites was the Toledo *Times,* a white daily, which concluded that "Amos 'n' Andy" put an "unfavorable label" on blacks. The Rochester (N.Y.) *Times-Union,* another white journal, called the program an anachronism seeking to portray Negroes as "pretentious, sentimental, happy-go-lucky child[ren] of nature." The *Times-Union* was sure this stereotype represented "echoes of a fading tradition. Enjoy them while you can," it advised. "For their children may boast a Harvard accent, honestly acquired."[25]

At least two Southern whites expressed opposition to "Amos 'n' Andy." A nameless Charleston, South Carolina, woman whose family had owned slaves was upset that the program was so popular. "I cannot understand any self-respecting broadcasting station being willing to drag down a race that has accomplished so much," she sadly commented. Wilt Holley, pastor of a Methodist Church in St. James, Missouri, asked if he could sign the *Courier* petition. "To a man born, bred, and raised in the South, in the Good Old South and one who holds most precious his 'Dear, Old Black Mammy," the "Amos 'n' Andy" program was "an abomination and very misleading." But these two Southerners were atypical; most white residents of Dixie—and elsewhere—found the program enjoyable. When told of the protest the average white was likely to respond that it was the work of a few hypersensitive Afro-Americans who were unrepresentative of the mass of Negroes.[26]

Black critics of "Amos 'n' Andy" did not think of themselves as hypersensitive. In their minds the program was evil because it promoted race prejudice. Dawson Johnson of New Orleans was certain that because of the program "in thousands of homes little children are being educated to the American prejudices by receiving their greater impressions of the Negro depicted by the two infamous characters." Echoing these sentiments was Joseph Dyches, a black minister, who ominously warned that youngsters regularly listening to "Amos 'n' Andy" might never get "a proper impression of our people." Dyches's warning took on added meaning a few weeks later when Maurice Giles of Los Angeles reported how embarrassed he had been when a little white boy called out to him, "Hello, Andy! Is yo' regusted?" A New York black noted that not only native American children but also foreign born adults "from the poorest homes and environments, people who are scarcely able to speak English. . . know enough about "Amos 'n' Andy" to ridicule our race by taking on the speech and mannerisms of

these clowns."[27]

Whites mocking blacks by comparing them to Amos or Andy sometimes did so at their own peril. For example, P. Arthur Terry became incensed when a soda clerk in a Manhattan drugstore called him "Andy." The Brooklynite "told him plenty" and confessed, "The cop on the corner shouldn't have been on duty. You would have read about it. By 'it' I mean what I would have done to this informal pale-face." Terry's reaction was not unique. When a chaplain at the federal penitentiary at Leavenworth indicated his approval of "Amos 'n' Andy" black prisoners "challenged [him] to physical combat."[28]

Were these protesting Afro-Americans in fact too sensitive to the alleged faults of "Amos 'n' Andy?" Were they unduly prone to insist that the message of the program was "black is inferior and white in superior?" To some Negroes the answer to these questions was "yes"; they were certain that the anti-"Amos 'n' Andy" campaign was "much ado about nothing." The Reverend William Howard of Arlington, Virginia, a supporter of the *Courier* campaign, admitted:

> One Sunday morning after my sermon when I presented your petition and gave some members a chance to speak pro and con, for or against it, my leading official spoke so against the petition that he prevented or influenced many from signing it.[29]

Why would Afro-Americans refuse to sign the petition? Why would some blacks report that they had to "shame colored students and stop them from tuning in" to the program? Why would Felix Parrish of Detroit report that "Some of our leading Negroes, it seems like to hear themselves burlesqued over the air, and instead of criticizing this horrible thing... say to you that you hate the truth?" Some, to be sure, opposed the *Courier* campaign for economic reasons. For example, a Columbus, Ohio, student teacher was afraid that to sign her name to such a petition would "cause her to lose her job." Others, however, were persuaded that the "Amos 'n' Andy" show was entertaining. An unidentified fan of the program from Cleveland argued:

> Most of the people who have written to you...have not listened to "Amos 'n' Andy" VERY MUCH. The more you listen to these TWO CLEAN MINDED YOUNG FELLOWS, THE MORE YOU LIKE THEM.[30]

W.P. Burrell of Newark, New Jersey, seconded the above viewpoint. "Amos and Andy," he declared, "introduced...new and cleaner comedy." According to him, "Correll and Gosden were the first blackfaced entertainers not to use the word '*nigger*' in their sketches." Therefore, Burrell considered "Amos 'n' Andy" to be superior to Porgy and Bess, and he suspected that those who complained about the radio program did so only because whites, not blacks, were making money from the show. The New Jersey man insisted that "Amos 'n' Andy" did nothing that was not being done by black comics. Similar sentiments came from Charles F. Allen, a Chicago black, who insisted that "all of the characters portrayed by

Correll and Gosden are true to life."[31]

John Lamar of Speigner, Alabama doubted that "it will net us anything to have them ["Amos 'n' Andy"] abolished from the air." He enjoyed their dialect and was convinced that when "we examine the vernacular of our comedians, cartoonists, major and minor poets, we find that we have no fight against 'Amos 'n' Andy.'" In his opinion, Correll and Gosden were making an honest living and bringing less opprobrium to the black community than Negro hoodlums or "deceptive" race leaders.[32]

A Chicagoan, E. Hansford Hold, blamed blacks, not Correll and Gosden, for the "greater part" of "ridiculing the Negro." According to Hold,

> We are constantly meeting an Amos [and an] Andy every day of our lives, and, yet, as soon as we learn that someone of another race is taking advantage of our minstrel inclinations and making money, we put up a howl. Just what are we trying to get at anyhow? Are we trying to stop them from ridiculing us or are merely jealous?[33]

F. Marshall David, writing in the Gary *American,* an Indiana Afro-American newspaper, thought that the *Courier* campaign was "reaching the Pike's Peak of stupidity." Although sometimes bored by "Amos 'n' Andy," he was sure that they only slightly exaggerated Negro life and that Correll and Gosden "have not as yet amused the American public with any idea which is not sizeable within the Negro race.... If the Negro in America has produced a distinct type of humor," he asked, "why hide it?"[34]

Even several supporters of the *Courier* petition asserted that Correll and Gosden fairly reflected some traits of Afro-Americans. Cleveland Allen of New York City, who gladly signed a copy of the *Courier* protest, admitted that he had never heard anything suggestive or lewd on "Amos 'n' Andy" that "would reflect [adversely] on the morals of the race. They do present what may be regarded as a clean skit, free from any profanity or remarks that are indecent." Another man, B. Newson of Norfolk, Virginia, saw no reason to assume that the antics of "two clowning comedians" would "tear down the accomplishment[s] and pride of the race."[35]

For rather different reasons it was difficult to condemn Correll and Gosden as deliberate enemies of the Negro race. The two amiable comics regularly addressed black professional and social organizations and for several years they entertained black children at picnics sponsored by the Chicago *Defender.* Furthermore, before the first "Amos 'n' Andy" broadcast, radio station WMAQ and the Chicago Urban League had consulted 150 prominent blacks in the city to get their reaction to the proposed program. Ninety percent reacted favorably to the idea. Moreover, Correll and Gosden regularly visited Harlem barbershops and pool rooms in search of material for their program. Robert Abbott, editor of the *Defender,* was a leading proponent of race pride, and he was proud that "Amos 'n' Andy" spoke to black groups and donated their time to amuse Afro-American youngsters each year. Abbott marveled in 1931 that on one picnic Correll and Gosden were greeted by "a salvo of applause that could be heard for miles" and that they were the unquestioned stars of "the hugest fun day in the history of Chicago." Given such stories in a militant black

newspaper, it is understandable that some Afro-Americans would have ambivalent feelings about "Amos 'n' Andy."[36]

More than one Negro came to believe that Robert Vann had no real antipathy towards Amos or Andy but rather that he was merely trying to sell newspapers. Frank Godden, a student at Tuskegee Institue, acidly commented, "The so-called race leaders are getting together to stop these two comedians, not that they see a great deal of harm in it, but they want to get before the eyes of the public—[for they are] craving publicity." Godden maintained that black newspapers would do better to focus their attention on the evils of lynching and racial discrimination. Others also questioned the motives of the *Courier* in launching its crusade, and finally the newspaper felt obliged to refute its critics. "When we started our protest against the 'Amos 'n' Andy' type of Negro," it angrily argued, "we did it solely in the interest of RACIAL SELF-RESPECT."[37]

Evidently the anti-"Amos 'n' Andy" theme about which the *Courier* expounded each week had some effect on apathetic blacks. Men and women who had never before objected to the radio show now found it distasteful. These Afro-Americans no longer wanted to be told that they belonged to the "class of Negro[es] who are willing to sell the name and honor of the race." There was something shameful about being called "Uncle Toms who sit [every] evening behind closed doors and laugh" at the antics of their harmless clowns; rather they seemed to be "money-mad" propagandists attempting to prove "that twelve million Negroes belong to an inferior race...to a race unable to think or to do [anything] intelligently and constructively." A Memphis couple confessed that they had tuned in the program until they found out that the two comedians were white; thereafter they refused to waste their time keeping up with the show. A similar letter came from Private Kermit Gantt, who was stationed with the Army in Arizona. "At night for a while we would listen to 'Amos 'n' Andy,'" the soldier wrote, "but we no longer do so. Rather than listen to them now, we get a concert orchestra."[38]

Some, like Private Gantt, registered their opposition to "Amos 'n' Andy" by listening to other programs; others, however, decided that stronger action had to be taken. Perhaps the most effective weapon blacks then could use against the radio show was to organize an economic boycott of Pepsodent. J.R. Ware, a Negro physician in Port Huron, Michigan, urged Afro-Americans to banish Pepsodent from their medicine chests. Continued purchase of the toothpaste, he feared, would be interpreted as "tacit admission that this radio burlesque is an actual portryal of Negro life." One week after Ware wrote the *Courier* the paper reported that a black dentist no longer recommended Pepsodent to his patients. This encouraged Althea Hart of New Orleans. To her, Negroes who still purchased that brand of toothpaste were "doomed morons" fit only for a "nut factory." She hoped that the boycott would work, for otherwise there was little hope for the future advancement of the race.[39]

Support for the boycott of Pepsodent came from those who had noted the way American Jews had caused the Dearborn (Mich.) *Independent*, a

newspaper owned by the Ford Motor Company, to abandon its anti-Semitic editorial policy. Jewish salesmen refused to "sell his tin lizzies," and Jewish attorneys carefully studied the unsubstantiated allegations in the Dearborn newspaper and "nearly broke Henry Ford in lawsuits because of libels against certain Jews." In the end, the Detroit auto magnate was forced to apologize "and not only to do that but [to] c[o]me to New York City while the Jews were trying to raise several million dollars and [to] sp[eak] in the drive and give money also."[40]

But the boycott did not work. Not enough blacks participated. On the one hand, many had ambivalent feelings about "Amos 'n' Andy," and on the other, many race leaders had not yet fully recognized the economic clout of Afro-Americans. An even more important reason that it failed to attract support from opponents of "Amos 'n' Andy" was that to some blacks it seemed incongruous to boycott Pepsodent for sponsoring a program degrading to blacks and simultaneously to purchase the *Courier,* which featured objectionable comic strips about Afro-Americans. These strips featured blacks playing dice, stealing chickens, and fighting over "yaller gal[s]." A number of correspondents complained about "Sunny Boy Sam," a syndicated comic strip which appeared in the *Courier* in 1931. "Sunny Boy Sam" personified every obnoxious quality in the white stereotype of blacks. He was lazy, improvident, illiterate, and, worst of all, he was stupid. In short, contended Louis Dean of Cincinnati, he represented "the very same stereotype which we now oppose." How could one piously argue that whites were malicious when blacks portrayed members of their own race as ignoramuses or as "grass skirted dancers?" Walter Moore of Muncie, Indiana, was so irritated he alleged that "Amos 'n' Andy" received "their ideas from Negro papers and they also watch Negroes when they are out in public."[41]

It was recognized that it was not only the *Courier* but also Negro entertainers who were "making light of the whole race." Many were displeased when the NAACP awarded the Spingarn Medal for 1930 to Richard B. Harrison for his portrayal of "De Lawd" in "Green Pastures." Both C.R. Scott of Houston and J.W. Rawlins of Detroit were upset when the award was made. Rawlins was furious that the prize for "achieving the biggest thing worthwhile to the race" could be given to a man who "should have been run out of town." Loren Miller, a columnist for the Los Angeles *California Eagle,* refused to sign any *Courier* petition until the document "called for the banning of literally hundreds of other black face acts performed by Negroes in which we take such delight." To Miller, it was pernicious for blacks to laud such individuals as great artists. "Uncle Tom," he sadly concluded, "is equally vicious whether his black face is natural or corked on." Others also coldly observed that the Afro-American was "always making an Uncle Tom of himself to the white man." In short, a New Yorker declared, "we must first respect ourselves in order to be respected by others."[42]

During the next three decades millions of blacks came to recognize the wisdom of Clifford Morris' works. Ambivalence about "Amos 'n' Andy"

disappeared once Negroes began to combat all forms of "Jim Crow" discrimination. Boycotts were staged in Negro ghettos against department stores which refused to employ black salesclerks, Afro-American newspapers ceased the publication of offensive comics, and, in some cases, began to ban advertisements for hair straighteners and skin bleaches, and black entertainers made progress—albeit slight progress—in upgrading the image of the Negro on the radio and in movies and plays.[43] But "Amos 'n' Andy" remained on the air for another quarter century and continued to enjoy great popularity.

"Amos 'n' Andy" was among those programs able to make the transition from radio to television. Even though Correll and Gosden were living in Hollywood in the 1950s and had to be paid $2,500,000 by the Columbia Broadcasting Company for twenty-year rights to the program, it was decided to employ black actors and actresses to portray the characters that the two whites had made famous.[44] Moreover, the dialogue used by Amos, Andy and the Kingfish in the television version was considerably more refined than that employed by Correll and Gosden.[45] Between 1952 and 1954 eighty-one half-hour segments were filmed, and although the show had tolerable ratings, it never was the success of the radio program. Syndicated for nearly a decade after the last segment had been filmed, it became one of the mainstays of daytime television. Unfortunately the series did little to promote the careers of most of its black stars. Unlike Correll and Gosden, who had become rich for their work on the program, Spencer Williams (Andy) and Alvin Childress (Amos) were poorly paid. In 1961, Williams subsisted almost entirely on his veteran's pension. Childress eked out a meager living in the 1960s by working as a temporary clerk in a government office; in the 1970s he returned occasionally to television, playing bit parts on such shows as "The Jeffersons." So the show that had made millions for whites yielded next to nothing for Afro-Americans.[46]

As early as 1939 Julius Adams, a black writer, predicted that it would be "suicidal" for "Amos 'n' Andy" to become a television program. Such a show, he believed, "would grate against sensitive blacks." Adams was prophetic. Just before the Columbia Broadcasting Company televised the first segment of "Amos 'n' Andy" James Hick, a columnist for the Baltimore *Afro-American,* told the network "not to waste their time sending us pictures or releases" relating to the program.[47] One week after the television premiere of "Amos 'n' Andy" the NAACP publicly condemned the series and called upon blacks to boycott the show. Before long the U.S. Armed Forces was pressured into keeping the program off of its overseas network, and individual stations in the United States agreed not to carry the show. When the network announced that no more segments of the show would be made, the battle was but half over, for reruns continued to be broadcast for nearly a decade. Finally network officials announced in the mid-1960s that the program would no longer be shown. The eighty-one television films were consigned to network archives.[48] Curiously, those who demanded an end to "Amos 'n' Andy" in the 1960s seemed unaware of the 1931 crusade.[49]

What then was the importance of the 1931 campaign? Admittedly the

ambivalence then of a number of Negroes as to the harm caused by "Amos 'n' Andy" helped insure that the crusade would be unsuccessful. But it is likely that even if all blacks had opposed the radio program, the show still would have been broadcast. Afro-Americans were invisible people in the thirties, and few whites really cared what they wanted. So perhaps at first glance the *Courier* campaigns seems to have failed. In a sense that is doubtless true. But if the *Courier* failed in achieving its objective, its campaign was not without positive value. By causing blacks to question the image of the race projected by the entertainment industry and even by Afro-American periodicals, the "Amos 'n' Andy" petition drive helped awaken "latent racial pride." W.W. Nelson, a Negro physician in New Bedford, Massachusetts, did not expect the "Amos 'n' Andy" fight to result in victory, but he hoped that "it at least [will be] an eye-opener to thousands who feel that the Negro is asleep in his own best interests." Even if success was unlikely, blacks still had to act. As Miss Nadine Waters, a native of Ohio living in Paris, France, pointed out, "To have ignored such insidious propaganda would have affected every department of our intelligence." "We must keep fighting until Ethiopia will stretch forth her wings," argued Josephine Bishop of Brooklyn. Victory would not come in a day, but as long as blacks constantly were "hitting the nail right on the head... if you keep pounding [at discrimination,] it can't stay up—it must go down."[50]

Notes

[1]Donald Bogle, *Toms, Coons, Mulattoes, Mammies and Bucks, an Interpretive History of Blacks in American Films* (New York: Viking, 1973); Peter Noble, *The Negro in Films* (New York: Arno Press reprint, 1970); Daniel Leab, "All Colored—But Not Much Different: Films Made for Negro Ghetto Audiences, 1913-1928," *Phylon,* XXXVI (September 1975), 321-39, and Leab, *From Sambo to Superspade: The Black Experience in Motion Pictures* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1975); Thomas Cripps, *Slow Fade to Black: The Negro in American Film, 1900-1942* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1977).

[2]First quotation from Edward Clayton, "The Tragedy of Amos 'n' Andy," *Ebony,* XVI (October 1961), 67, hereafter cited as "Tragedy." Wertheim, "Relieving Social Tensions: Radio Comedy and the Great Depression," *The Journal of Popular Culture,* X (Winter 1976), 516, hereafter cited as "Radio Comedy"; There is no mention of the 1931 campaign in Joseph Boskin, "Sambo," in *The Great Fear,* Gary Nash and Richard Weiss, editors (New York: Holt, Rinehart, Winston, 1970), 165-85. The 1931 crusade gets brief attention in Stanley White, "The Burnt Cork Illusion of the 1920s in America: A Study in Nostalgia," *The Journal of Popular Culture,* V (Winter 1971), 530-50 and in Norman Kagan, "Amos 'n' Andy: Twenty Years Late, or Two Decades Early," *ibid.,* VI (Summer 1972), 71-75, hereafter cited as "Amos 'n' Andy,"; see also "Amos and Andy on Television," *Ebony,* VI (May 1951), 21-22, 24.

[3]Letter from Walter Beal of Boston to the editor, Pittsburgh *Courier* (PC), August 29, 1931. Whenever possible, either in the text or in the notes, the writer will try to indicate the hometown of *Courier* correspondents.

[4]Correll and Gosden did not do female voices. Until 1939, when Ernestine Wade was hired to supply the voice of Sapphire, women never spoke on the program; they were only referred to. During the 1940s several Afro-Americans were employed by Correll and Gosden to provide voices for some of the 160 characters that appeared on "Amos 'n' Andy." [Correll and Gosden,] *All About Amos 'N' Andy* (Chicago: Rand McNally, 1929), *passim;* Charles Donaldson, *Popular Radio Stars*

(Washington: Washington Service Bureau, 1942, p. 5; Francis Chase, Jr., *Sound and Fury, an Informal History of Broadcasting* (New York: Harper's, 1942), pp. 180-81; Chicago *Defender*, July 5, 1930; New York *Times*, February 2, 1930; "Amos and Andy on Television," *op. cit.*, 21-22, 24; Wertheim, "Radio Comedy," p. 502.

[5]At one time "Amos 'n' Andy" "held" two-thirds of the entire American radio audience. Charles J. Correll and Freeman F. Gosden, *Amos 'n' Andy* (London: Constable, 1932), *passim;* New York *Times*, August 18, 1929; Russel Nye, *The Unembarrassed Muse: The Popular Arts in America* (New York: Dial, 1970), p. 394; Kagan, "Amos 'n' Andy," p. 71.

[6]Another fan, who lived in Trenton, New Jersey, set up a taxi and garage business, which he named the Fresh Air Taxi Cab Company. New York *Times*, February 2, March 2, March 16, April 2, 1930; "Amos 'n' Andy: The Air's First Comic Strip," *Literary Digest*, CV (April 19, 1930), 42; Wertheim, "Radio Comedy," p. 512.

[7]New York *Times*, February 2, June 7, 1930, May 10, October 13, 1931; "Amos 'n' Andy," *Literary Digest, op. cit.*, pp. 37, 41; "Amos 'n' Andy," *Newsweek*, IV (July 14, 1934), 27; William E. Leuchtenburg, *The Perils of Prosperity, 1914-1932* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1958), pp. 197-98; White, "Burnt Cork Illusion," *passim.*

[8]New York *Times*, May 26, 1930, May 11, October 9, 1931; Clayton, "Tragedy," p. 66.

[9]Bishop W.J. Walls, "What About Amos 'n' Andy?," *Abbott's Monthly*, (Chicago), I (December 1930), 38-40, 72-74; letter from Walls, who lived in Chicago, PC, May 23, 1931; see also Charlotta Bass, "On the Sidewalk," Los Angeles *California Eagle*, April 17, 1931; Floyd Calvin, "Funny Side of Radio Broadcast," PC, June 6, 1931; S.A. Haynes, "Amos 'n' Andy," Philadelphia *Tribune*, February 1, 1935.

[10]This crusade is given only slight attention in Andrew Buni, *Robert L. Vann of the Pittsburgh Courier* (Pittsburgh: The University of Pittsburgh Press, 1974), pp. 227-28. Buni underestimates the number of people signing the *Courier* petition.

[11]*Ibid.*, pp. ix,x, 81, 134-35; Roland Wolseley, *The Black Press, USA* (Ames: Iowa State University Press, 1971), p. 49; Maxwell Brooks, *The Negro Press Reexamined* (Boston: Christopher Press, 1959), p. 37.

[12]PC, April 25, 1931.

[13]*Ibid.*

[14]Poem of Mary Parker, resident of Los Angles, *ibid.*, June 20, 1931.

[15]*Ibid.*, May 2, 1931.

[16]Joseph Carl Briel's "The Perfect Song" had deliberately been chosen as the theme for the "Amos 'n' Andy" program. *Ibid.*, May 16, 1931; New York *Times*, July 27, 1930.

[17]PC, May 9, 30, June 13, 1931.

[18]*Ibid.*, May 16, 30, June 13, 27, July 11, 18, August 1, 8, 22, October 3, 17, 24, 31, 1931; see also New York *Times*, June 29, 1931.

[19] Letters from B. Scroggs (Pittsburgh), PC, May 2, 1931; Porter, *ibid.*, May 9, 1931; Maury, *ibid.*, May 30, 1931.

[20]Letters from the Reverend E.J. Guy (Pittsburgh?), *ibid.*, May 2, 1931; Arthur Tucker (Canton, Ohio), *ibid.*, May 16, 1931; Spencer Haynes (Detroit) and Mrs. C. Buckner (Boise, Idaho), both in *ibid.*, May 30, 1931; New Jersey paper quoted in Kagan, "Amos 'n' Andy" p. 72.

[21]Letters from Albion Holsey, *ibid.*, May 30, 1931; G.G. Fenton and J.T. Chandler (n.p.), *ibid.*, June 6, 1931; P. Arthur Terry (Brooklyn), *ibid.*, May 2, 1931.

[22]Letters from Rawlins, *ibid.*, May 9, 1931; Hayes, *ibid.*, June 27, 1931; see also letters from Herbert Moten (Troy, Ohio), *ibid.*, May 16, 1931; L.F. Coles (Philadelphia), May 23, and June 27, 1931.

[23]Kagan, "Amos 'n' Andy," p. 72.

[24]Irvin Cobb, "Introduction," *Amos 'n' Andy*, p. vi; letters from Ellery May (Los Angeles), PC, September 19, 1931; Louis Dean, *ibid.*, August 15, 1931, Edward Ryan, *ibid.*, May 23, 1931.

[25]*Ibid.*, August 29, 1931; Toledo *Times*, n.d., quoted in *ibid.*; letter from Keene, *ibid.*, May 16, 1931; Rochester *Times-Union*, n.d., quoted *ibid.*, June 6, 1931; see also letter from G. Seitz, a white man from Detroit, in *ibid.*, May 2, 1931.

[26]*Ibid.*, October 3, 1931; letters from Holley, *ibid.*, August 15, 1931; Norman Jones, Secretary of the Memphis NAACP, *ibid.*, May 23, 1931.

[27] Letters from Johnson, *ibid.*, June 6, 1931; Dyches (n.p.), *ibid.*, June 20, 1931; Giles, *ibid.*, August 15, 1931; James Morse (New York City), *ibid.*, June 20, 1931.

[28]Letters from Terry, *ibid.*, May 2, 1931; the Reverend Henry Pykins (Leavenworth, Kansas), *ibid.*, August 1, 1931.

[29]Letters from Louie Williams (Cleveland), *ibid.*, June 6, 1931; Michael Campbell (Montclair, New Jersey), *ibid.*, May 30, 1931; the Reverend William Howard, *ibid.*, October 31, 1931; see also letter from Dr. W.W. Nelson (New Bedford, Massachusetts), *ibid.*

[30]Letters from Helene Scott (Cleveland), *ibid.*, July 4, 1931; Felix Parrish, *ibid.*, August 29, 1931; Mrs. G.M. Baker (Columbus, Ohio), *ibid.*, October 24, 1931; unidentified Clevelander, *ibid.*, May 23, 1931.

[31]Letter from Burrell, *ibid.*, June 13, 1931. Allen to Chicago *Daily News;* quoted in Wertheim, "Radio Comedy," p. 515. One might also note that in 1930, Miller and Lyles, a black comedy team, threatened to sue Correll and Gosden for stealing their material. The Afro-American comics insisted that they had invented the word "*regusted.*" See Los Angeles *California Eagle,* May 9, 1930.

[32]Letter from Lamar, PC, June 6, 1931.

[33]Letter from Hold, *ibid.*

[34]Davis in Gary *American,* n.d., quoted in Kansas City (Kans.) *Call,* January 2, 1932.

[35]Letters from Allen, *ibid.*, August 15, 1931; Newson, *ibid.*, May 30, 1931.

[36]It was alleged that Harlem blacks were avid fans of the program and that they eagerly listened to the show in their homes or in the streets, where loudspeakers broadcast the program. Correll and Gosden, *All About Amos 'n' Andy,* p. 11; PC, June 12, August 22, 1931; Chicago *Defender,* August 22, 1931; Kansas City *Call,* November 28, 1930; "Amos and Andy on Television," *op.cit.*, p. 22; Wertheim, "Radio Comedy," p. 515.

[37]Letter from Godden, PC, July 4, 1931; front page editorial, *ibid.*, October 10, 1931; see also similar letters that appeared in the PC in the summer of 1931.

[38]Letters from H. Wendell Winslow (Gary, Indiana), *ibid.*, June 13, 1931; J.C. Parker (Detroit), *ibid.*, June 27, 1931; Abner Roberts, Sr., (Pittsburgh), *ibid.*, October 3, 1931; James Morse (New York City), *ibid.*, June 20, 1931; Mr. and Mrs. M.L. Simmons (Memphis), *ibid.*, June 6, 1931; Gantt (Nogales, Arizona), *ibid.*, September 5, 1931; see also letters from P. Arthur Terry (Brooklyn), *ibid.*, May 2, 1931; L.F. Coles (Philadelphia), *ibid.*, June 27, 1931; J.C. Campbell (Montclair, New Jersey), *ibid.*, July 18, 1931; Felix Parrish (Detroit), *ibid.*, August 29, 1931.

[39]*Ibid.*, May 16, 1931; letters from Ware, *ibid.*, May 9, 1931; Althea Gibson, *ibid.*, May 23, 1931.

[40]Letter from L.F. Coles (Philadelphia), *ibid.*, November 28, 1931.

[41]Letters from Stella David (Clifton Forge, Virginia), *ibid.*, June 6, 1931; Louis Dean, *ibid.*, July 4, 1931; Walter Moore, *ibid.*, November 26, 1931. On "Sunny Boy Sam" see John Stevens, "Reflections in a Dark Mirror: Comic Strips in Black Newspapers," *Journal of Popular Culture,* X (Summer 1976), 239-44.

[42]Letters from C.R. Scott, *ibid.*, July 18, 1931; J.W. Rawlins, *ibid.*, May 9, 1931; Alida Campbell (Washington, D.C.), *ibid.*, August 1; Clifford Morris (Comstock, New Jersey), *ibid.*, September 19, 1931; the Reverend J.C. Turner (Mt. Vernon, Ohio), *ibid.*, November 21, 1931; Loren Miller, "On Second Thought," Los Angeles *California Eagle,* November 6, 1931.

[43]For example, in 1932 blacks protested when a radio broadcast sponsored by Ovaltine used the word "*nigger.*" Ovaltine promised that the offensive word would not be used again on any program it sponsored. With time Sunny Boy Sam "cleaned up" his act and became respectable. Stevens, "Dark Mirror," *passim;* PC, November 12, 1932. For more on department store boycotts see Robert Weisbord and Arthur Stein, *Bittersweet Encounter: The Afro-American and the American Jew* (New York: Schocken edition, 1972), pp. 45-46.

[44]Even after "Amos 'n' Andy" went on television Correll and Gosden continued to broadcast their radio version of the program. Some Negroes praised the two whites for using black actors instead of themselves appearing in blackface. New York *Times,* March 20, 1957; Marilyn Fife, "Black Image in American TV: The First Two Decades," *The Black Scholar,* VI (November 1974), 9; Thomas Cripps, "The Noble Black Savage: A Problem in the Politics of Television Art," *The Journal of Popular Culture,* VIII (1974-75), 688.

[45]Spencer Williams, who played Andy, refused to use dialogue like "*dis here.*" This greatly upset Gosden, and finally Williams told him, "I ought to know how Negroes talk. After all, I've been one all my life." Clayton, "Tragedy," p. 70.

[46]*Ibid.*, pp. 66-73. Children appeared on "The Jeffersons" in 1975.

[47]Cripps, "Noble Black Savage," p. 688; Hick quoted in Kagan, "Amos 'n' Andy," pp. 72-73.

Curiously enough, Billie Rowe of the Pittsburgh *Courier* praised the first televised showing of "Amos 'n' Andy." Vann was dead at this time. See Kagan, "Amos 'n' Andy," p. 73.

[48]In the fall of 1961 ABC broadcast a cartoon series about animals called "Calvin and the Colonel." Correll and Gosden supplied the voices for the characters, and the show closely resembled "Amos 'n' Andy." Mediocre ratings and protests from civil rights groups led to the cancellation of "Calvin and the Colonel." Kagan, "Amos and Andy," p. 73; Cripps, "Noble Black Savage," *passim;* "Television Q & A," Charlotte *Observer,* April 24, 1977.

[49]New York *Times,* July 7, September 21, 1963, June 6, 1964, February 20, 1966; Clayton, "Tragedy," p. 72; Paul Jones, "Amos 'n' Andy," Atlanta *Constitution,* June 28, 1975.

[50]Letters from Sam Reading (Philadelphia), PC, May 9, 1931; Nelson, *ibid.,* October 31, 1931; Waters, *ibid.,* October 17, 1931; Bishop, *ibid.,* June 27, 1931.

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Radio's Home Folks, Vic and Sade: A Study in Aural Artistry

By Fred E.H. Schroeder

In its essence, radio of the "golden age" is pure oral production designed for pure auditory experience. Most criticism and appreciation for radio drama ignores the aural artistry and tends to be textual, sociological, historical or nostalgic in approach. Certainly each of these is valid, but the more they are intertwined with the essential sound communication, the closer we can come to understanding the total phenomenon. This interdisciplinary "anthropological" approach to the aesthetics of traditional oral literature was proposed to American folklorists in a trend-setting address by William R. Bascom a quarter-century ago,[1] and although some of the factors that the folk-collector was admonished to record are irrelevant to radio drama (gestures, facial expressions, exchanges between artist and audience, etc.), others are significant. For example: What is the character of the audiences? How are they situated? Do they regard the performance as ritual, fact or entertainment? These introductory points may help to explain why I will be relating the art of the radio comedy series *Vic and Sade* (broadcast 1932-1946) to the arts of folk narration, and why the nature of the radio audience will help us to understand the operation of some of the oral-literary techniques in this quarter-hour daytime program whose audience was estimated to be as large as seven million listeners.

The scripts of *Vic and Sade* were all written by one person, Paul Rhymer, and a number of these have been collected by his widow, Mary Frances Rhymer[2], and published in two volumes with introductory essays by Ray Bradbury[3] and Jean Shepherd.[4] Some of my references are drawn from these collections, others from undated and untitled recordings in my library. Readers are urged to acquaint themeslves both with the published scripts and with a sampling of recorded programs, because the art of *Vic and Sade* is inseparable from the voices of the five talented actors who played the roles.[5] In the meantime, a brief descriptive history of the program is all the necessary background that is needed for understanding my critical remarks. *Vic and Sade* began with two primary characters, but very soon added a third one, an adopted son, Rush, who was apparently Sade's orphaned nephew. Later, Sade's uncle, Fletcher Rush of Dixon, Illinois, joined the program; in World War II, when the actor who played Rush was called into military service, a new boy, Russell, was substituted. Finally, in the last days of the series, it briefly became a half-hour evening show with a number of supporting characters. Essentially, however, *Vic*

and Sade was a four-character play—Victor Gook, Sadie and Rush (or Russell) Gook, and Uncle Fletcher.

My analysis of *Vic and Sade* takes four approaches: context, genre, technique and function. In reality, of course, these approaches overlap and are separable only for convenience in understanding. In the most elementary analysis the main function is entertainment, the relevant genre is comedy, and the context is golden age daytime serial radio. But these simple labels lead to simplistic analyses so that we read into them the current nostalgia-cult for escapist soap opera. Certainly *Vic and Sade* shared the context of real soap operas, such as *Young Widder Brown, Stella Dallas* and *Pepper Young's Family*. It shared the audience, which was largely married women, and the environment for listening, which was the home, and it shared the soap opera's commercial sponsorship, in this case Proctor and Gamble's products such as Ivory Flakes and Crisco. Like the soap operas, *Vic and Sade* was a weekday phenomenon and flourished during a period that almost perfectly coincided with the presidency of Franklin Delano Roosevelt, containing therefore the revolutionary and traumatic backdrop of the Great Depression and World War II. Like the soap operas, *Vic and Sade* ignored the backdrop, and again like the soap operas it was marked by a continuing cast of characters who never listened to the radio.

The context is therefore not unique. It is popular culture of a specific historical period. But it does not fall into the same genre as other members of its contextual class. First of all, it is comedy, rather than melodrama. Secondly, it is not a serial and consequently lacks that most common characteristic of a serial, the cliff-hanger ending that sustains a continuing audience. The literary analogue for *Vic and Sade* is therefore the short story rather than the novel. The creative and technical demands upon the author were thus quite different from those of the author of the serials. Suspense is unnecessary, but unity is required. Non-serial drama must have a beginning, a middle and an end for each episode. The eight or nine-minute duration of day-time radio context is too long for gags or extended jokes, but far too brief for any derivation from the theatrical traditions of stage comedy such as is our inheritance from Greek Old Comedy with its sustained topicality and political satire, or Greek-Roman New Comedy, with its boy-meets-girl, boy-wins-girl in opposition to the will of the older generation. The brevity of the episodes is only one reason for this separation from stage comedy; the length of the run is another. Paul Rhymer wrote over two thousand playlets with the same four characters; a standard stageplot will not withstand the audience's incredulity of such a long run. An unending *serial* plot will resist incredulity, and that is the way of the standard soap opera. A detective, legal, medical, adventure or comedy *team* incorporating a regular series of "guest villains," problem cases or irritating intruders will, too, and that is the way of such long runs as *Tarzan, Nick Carter, Nancy Drew, Dick Tracy, Perry Mason, Gunsmoke, I Love Lucy* and *Mary Tyler Moore*.[6]

The search for genre once more brings us back to the daytime serial,

because *Vic and Sade* is like nearly all of the daytime serials in being current domestic drama about ordinary people. But this point of contact is only tangential, because the majority of serials' "ordinary people" operate in a milieu of upwardly-mobile wish-fulfillment figures for trapped and frustrated ordinary women listeners. Both televsion and radio soap operas abound in doctors, lawyers, architects, artists and actors who are husbands or lovers, or who may even be the main female characters. These are not ordinary people. A comparison of telephone directory Yellow Page listings of those professions with the white pages will provide all the statistical proof of their rarity that we need. The exceptions to the "wish-fulfillment" cast of characters, such as *Pepper Young's Family, One Man's Family* and *The Goldbergs* in radio, and *All In The Family* and *Mary Hartman, Mary Hartman* in television are not exempt from the characteristic of striving for upward mobility. *One Man's Family* and *All in the Family,* like *Vic and Sade,* are not serials, but neither are they daily programs. The long-running radio program *One Man's Family* also shared the characteristic of not having outside or guest characters, but it was a low-keyed melodrama, not a comedy. Norman Lear's television programs are satires of a topical nature, and in spite of all their debts to soap operas and domestic comedy, their overt satirical purpose and their specific allusions to current political, social and economic issues and fashions guarantee that they will be historical period pieces, soon requiring footnotes to explain quips about Watergate, Spiro Agnew, Fidel Castro and Johnny Carson.

Obviously *Vic and Sade* is also an artifact of its time. Radio drama is. Yet, aside from allusions to Mr. Gumpox's horse and wagon (he is the garbage man), the apparent uniqueness of Rush's going to high school (Sadie went only to elementary school), and such now-rare activities as going for a spin in the neighbor's car (the Gooks don't own a car), there is hardly a word to identify the dramas as stories of the 1930s. To the best of my knowledge, there are not allusions to World War II. *Vic and Sade* is timeless. But it has a sense of place more specific than any serial drama or domestic comedy with which I am familiar. The city in which the Gooks live is Crooper, in central Illinois, forty miles from Peoria. (It is undoubtedly patterned after Bloomington, where Paul Rhymer attended Illinois Wesleyan University.) Cities are referred to daily. They are nearly all midwestern, some real, others fictional, like Dismal Seepage, Ohio; Drowsy Ear, Minnesota; and Yellow Jump, North Dakota. Moreover, the Gooks's home on Virginia Avenue has an aura of permanency. The living room easy chairs do not change their positions, the dining-room table and bureau are never replaced, the porch swing only changes with the seasons. Thus, although the geographic location is quite specific, the home and its furnishings have the same timelessness as do those of the comic-strip characters Dagwood and Blondie. Indeed, this may be the genre to which *Vic and Sade* belongs.

Yet this still begs the question, leading us to ask what the genre of *Blondie* may be. Inquiring into the technique of *Vic and Sade* may be of some value here. Structurally the dramas are simple and have few variants.

One, two or three of the characters are at home, and one other person enters, or there is some other outside intrusion such as a letter, a telephone call, a newspaper article or a passerby in the street or alley. There is never a scene that goes farther than the front porch, attic or cellar. All outside occurrences, even in the alley, are reported from within. There are no place or time transitions, no signals of "meanwhile" or "later." In short, *Vic and Sade* has perfect Aristotelian unities of action, place and time. But their midwestern world is immense, peopled with a large number of ordinary friends and acquaintances with exotic names and weirdly unique pasts and personalities. Rush's friends include Blue-Tooth Johnson, who shares his delight in the unending series of Third-Lieutenant Clinton Stanley books (Third-Lieutenant Stanley's exploits range from playing Yale and Harvard simultaneously to bashing an Arab sheik with a camel wielded by the hind feet); Rotten Davis, a high-school dropout whose grandstanding acts are the talk of the town (Rotten took the blame for the collapse of a porch in the three-hundred block of Center Street, shouting his confession while frantically running about wearing an aviator's helmet and carrying a suitcase); Rooster Davis, who had twenty-five seats at the Bijou Theatre roped off with a sign stating that they were "Reserved for Mr. Davis," and Smelly Clark who had his age changed from sixteen to twenty-one.

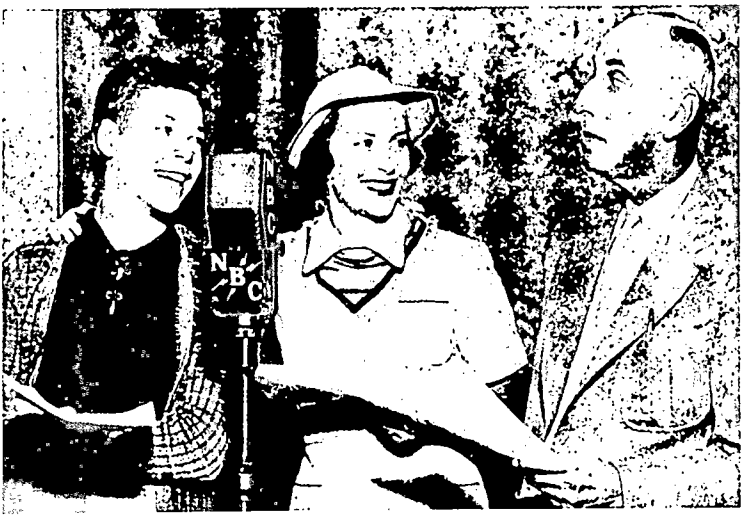
Vic's friends include especially his lodge brothers of the Sky Brothers of the Sacred Stars of the Milky Way: Robert and Slobbert Hink of Hoopestown, Y.Y. Flirch, Homer U. McDancey, H.K. Fleeber and Rishigan Fishigan of Sishigan, Michigan. Sadie's best friend is Ruthie Stembottom, whose husband Fred is a constant irritant to Vic, and among her other acquaintances are Bertha Joiner, who went dotty from reading dime novels (and who only wore one shoe), Francis Kleek (also of Dixon) who always forgot to remove the shoehorns from his shoes, and the members of the Thimble Club, Mis' Husher, Mis' Razorscum, Mis' Applerot and others. Uncle Fletcher's not always clear memory is a teeming jungle of impossibles: Irma Flo Kessy, who was in the habit of slapping her husband's face in public, Henry Fedrock, who invented an electric fingernail file and later died, Walter Hoygawper who married a woman sixteen and three-quarters years old, Charlie Keller, formerly of Sweet Esther, Wisconsin, where he was an armed guard in the Wisconsin State Home for the Obstinate, and others.

This mad roster should not cause us to forget the other realities of *Vic and Sade*. Its primary characters were ordinary people; their homelife was completely unnewsworthy. It was daytime radio with the same audience of housewives who listened to *The Romance of Helen Trent* and *Ma Perkins*. It was low-keyed, without shouting, bickering, slapstick or raucous studio audience. It was regional, and one nods in partial agreement with comparisons to *Penrod, Winesburg, Ohio,* and *Dandelion Wine*. Rhymer was from Illinois, the program was broadcast from Chicago, the sponsoring company was in Cincinnati. Yet for thirteen years it drew an immense audience nationwide. We must look deeper, although the explanations already implied are certainly valid. It is non-threatening entertainment. It

is closely related to serial domestic drama. It is middle-class, middle-America in milieu.

Jean Shepherd's explanations for the popular appeal and the artistic quality of *Vic and Sade* are of two sorts. First, he identifies it with Theater of the Absurd. It is surrealistic. Shepherd is quite right about this. The surrealistic painters, the Absurd dramatists, the fantasy novelists all take familiar objects, familiar situations, familiar persons and distort them, much or little, and place them into surprising and disturbing environments and juxtapositions. But *Vic and Sade* neither surprises nor disturbs. It remains familiar and ordinary as neither Dali, Magritte, Beckett nor Ionesco does. And Theatre of the Absurd does not win audiences of millions of "white-pages" housewives.

Shepherd also points to Paul Rhymer's ability to write real dialogue rather than comic one-liners. Rhymer wrote "with an absolutely true ear for the rhythms and inflections of American speech." There is a pattern, rhythm and texture to Rhymer's scripts, whether we read them or hear them, that coincides with the overall unity of these eight-minute interludes. The unities of time, place and action are coupled with a beginning, middle and end that is necessary for non-serial art. In many cases, the *Vic and Sade* dramas end as they began: one opens with Russell reading from Third-Lieutenant Stanley, and ends with his re-reading the same passage. In between, there is a style of presentation that has the same strange unity as a Chekov play—performed in the style of Orson Welles' Mercury Players of the 1930s. In the episode just referred to, Vic, Sade and Russell go their separate oral ways, pursuing their own thoughts. Russell reads from his book, Sade reads the social page of the paper concerning Miss Pom Pom Cordova, and Vic, drowsing in his easy chair, is awakened by Russell's interruptions, and thereupon joins Sade's thoughtline. Vic introduces the information that Miss Pom Pom Cordova was instrumental in helping E.W. Smith break his habit of stealing horses. Sade is skeptical of both Pom Pom and E.W. Smith, but agrees, in a dry tone, to give a going-away party for Miss Pom Pom, who is one of very, very few women ever to have been selected as honorary members of the Sacred Stars of the Milky Way. At the beginning and at the end of this episode the dialogue as performed overlaps; in the middle of the drama, there is a lucid exchange of questions and answers, but throughout there are ironic asides from Sade, and disgruntled murmurings from Russell, whose oral rendition has been ignored by his parents. The recorded performance is marred by an obvious headcold for Bernardine Flynn, the actress who played Sade, and a few flubbed lines by Arthur Van Harvey, who played Vic, and yet it is a perfectly wrought drama, with a unified texture. The announcer's introduction is significant too, as I will explain later. He says: "...the placid tableau argues that our friends are spending a quiet evening at home...." This announcer, as Jean Shepherd says, is somehow part of the drama. Once again, Shepherd is right. Paul Rhymer wrote the introductions and closings (not the commercials), and they do share the same literary word choices that are part of Vic's and Rush's (or Russell's) dialogues. But I wish to take the word



The principal cast of *Vic and Sade*: (left to right) Billy Idelson as Rush, Bernardine Flynn as Sade and Art Van Harvey as Vic.

tableau as a transition to my next point.

The *tableau* is one of the conventions or "laws" of folk narrative identified by the Danish philologist Axel Olrik in 1909.[7] These epic laws of folk narrative have withstood the test of time, according to such modern folklorists as Alan Dundes and Jan Brunvand. A surprising number of these conventions apply to *Vic and Sade*. My original reason for looking into folk traditions, however, was because of the brevity of these radio dramas. The usual length of a drama (90 to 120 minutes) as we meet it on the stage, in film and on evening television seems to derive from classical tradition. Folk drama, on the other hand, can vary from minor skits to cycles and mummeries that might last a day or more. Frankly, my search for folk drama analogues has been cursory, because I doubted that they would yield demonstrable causal antecedents or a developmental line. That is to say, I doubt that Paul Rhymer, confronted by the problem of writing an eight-minute drama, sandwiched between two commercial messages, performed in a new medium in which the actors were invisible and remote from the audience, pondered whether to draw upon the tradition of the mystery play, the Nigerian skit, the Elizabethan interlude or the burlesque routine. Or that he studied comic strips, Chaplin movies or Grimms' fairy tales to learn how to write for radio.

But I do not doubt that there are successful patterns and conventions of oral narrative that storytellers know, *consciously, unconsciously,* as the result of indoctrination and apprenticeship, and *subconsciously*, as a part of cultural conditioning and as a genetically-endowed deep structure of archetypes. I realize that I have mixed together the argot of several schools

of anthropology and psychoanalysis, and I realize that I have said *and* rather than *or* or *and/or*. I have also deliberately used the folk-term *storytellers*. Paul Rhymer is a storyteller, working in a new context in which all communication is by means of voice, an art form that had only one predecessor in the strictest sense, this being the phonograph record. Aside from the strictest sense, though, there is the immensely long tradition of story telling. Modern folklorists are now keenly aware of how gestures, facial expressions, movements and audience responses are part of the act of storytelling, but a great deal of storytelling has always had a "radio" quality around dim fires in straw huts, igloos and caves. It does not seem necessary that we must picture blind Homer, or white-suited Mark Twain, or the African Ogotomelli as frenetically performing for their audiences like Jerry Lewis or Danny Kaye. They may have done so, but I still think it safe to speculate that there has always been a tradition of storytelling that is strictly *oral-aural,* with little or no dependence upon visual experience, and that verbal-entertainment radio drew upon that tradition. It may be a partial explanation of why we in radio's golden age so often listened together in the dark.

The two preceding speculative paragraphs are intended to establish some basis for a folk narrative tradition that any artist of the word can draw upon, consciously, unconsciously and subconsciously, regardless of whether the artist is or is not a member of a traditional society, and, concomitantly, that the audience will respond to these traditions with affirmation, if not always with conscious understanding.

The *tableau* (a *visual* formation) is identified by Olrik as one of the common characteristics of folk (*oral*) narrative. Some major participants are held, frozen as it were, in a closely grouped formation while the narrator comments. In highly developed form, this continues in the Japanese *kabuki* (and of course in the woodblock prints deriving from *kabuki),* in the *haiku* poem, in European grand opera, in television drama, and, of course, in comics. In *Vic and Sade,* the announcer often begins with a *tableau,* and it is very rare to have an episode end with action or movement. This leads me to another of Olrik's laws, that of low-keyed, calm openings and closings. To Olrik, it was almost as if the storyteller, bard or singer felt obliged to make the exit from fantasy into reality as easy as the entrance. *Vic and Sade* episodes do not end on a climax, surprise or emotional upbeat. They end flat, and usually are capped by a statement from the announcer, "So ends another brief interlude in the small house half-way up on the next block."

The last phrase was repeated regularly for thirteen years. It is only one example from *Vic and Sade* of Olrik's Law of Repetition. Repetition, Olrik believed, provided emphasis to the narrative, while Claude Levi-Strauss feels that repetition makes the structure of the myth apparent.[8] In either case, the significant fact is the sensory medium—sound—which is temporal and ephemeral. Spoken sound is capable of many patterns—meter, cadence, loud-and-soft, alliteration, caesura, scales and so on. Verbal repetition, however, is the only one that conveys meaning and is therefore doubly emphatic. The sound-patterning that is achieved in *Vic and Sade* by

repetition is not found in regular serial dramas. It is too stylized for serious dialogue in the naturalistic mode, drawing attention to artifice and texture of composition. In comedy, or in poetic narrative, or in heroic drama, either artifice or art is proper, and the device of repetition is shared with folk narrative. Let us remember, though, that the medium is radio, and comedy or not, there is no other way of producing pattern than by sound. There are few radio programs that were really memorable. I believe that all memorable radio dramas used repetition and patterned speech.

One "law" of Alex Olrik does not apply. This is his law of two characters for a scene. Very likely the reason for this "law" was that storytellers are hard-pressed to perform more than two characters at once. Radio had no such creative limitations (except for ventriloquists) at the production end, but it was soon found that for listeners, more than four voices were a crowd. Even so, it is remarkable how many *Vic and Sade* dramas used only two characters. And (although here I speak from an impression rather than from statistical study) it does appear that repetition increases with the number of characters. Thus, in *Vic and Sade*, two-character episodes are unpatterned dialogue; when another character is introduced, the litany begins. Paul Rhymer seems to have recognized that when more than two characters are used, the device of repetition is needed to maintain unity and to reduce noise.

Olrik also describes the "law of the single strand," that is, unity of plot, and the "law of internal logic," according to which there is an internal validity to the happenings, no matter how fanciful they may seem to the outer reality. This is more akin to the transformations of modern structuralism than simply to Coleridge's "suspension of disbelief." It is not the audience who *permits* the surrealism of *Vic and Sade,* rather, it is the structural consistency or internal logic that makes the plots valid and reasonable.

Earlier in this essay I spoke of Vic and Sade Gook as being *ordinary* people. Somewhat later I mentioned some of the extraordinary people and occurrences of pseudo-Bloomington, Illinois. These are in polar opposition, but they are both true. Whenever such a paradox occurs, we may well suspect that myth rather than mere folktale is what we are dealing with. Myth, in the terms of Levi-Strauss, mediates between conflicting opposites. Which brings me finally to the function of *Vic and Sade.*

The audience for *Vic and Sade* was women. Housewives, in a day when Rosalind Russell characters and Rosie the Riveter were the only models for "career" women. Housewives, in a day when there was no escape from the tedium of housework, and the almost exclusive companionship of other housewives and children. Divorce was not a socially acceptable solution to incompatibility; working wives were frowned upon until war work after 1942; higher education or continuing education was regarded as useless luxury for women; and all this social disapproval was intensified in lower and middle income families, where inachievable escapist popular culture was the only balm. Frothy Hollywood musicals, "silver screen" gossip magazines, true romance pulps, women's formula novels and radio serial

melodrama offered unrealistic patterns for fantasizing. *Vic and Sade* did not belong to this class of entertainment, but as one looks carefully into the episodes, it becomes increasingly clear that Sade is the main character. *Vic and Sade* is about Sade.

Some information that we can learn about the character Sade includes the fact that she did not go beyond elementary school. She is not an intellectual. Her husband and son speak in a language that she does not comprehend. Rush picks up a bookish style of discourse from *Third-Lieutenant Stanley,* and this contributes greatly to the oral texture of the program. Vic is an ironist who gently but humorously satirizes the trivial boyish antics of Rush and the housewifely minor crises of Sade's life by means of hyperbole. A passage from a script entitled "Nicer Scott Has a Ten-Dollar Bill" will illustrate. Rush's friend "Nicer" is confronted by a moral dilemma as a result of his sudden riches:

RUSH: ...They'd (his parents) put it in Nicer's savings account down at the bank. See, that's always been the big *trouble* with sizeable gifts. They're no *good.* Nicer's got a whole slew of uncles an' aunts that send him money every Christmas.... He likes the ones that send him fifty cents up to three dollars because he gets to spend them kind of amounts without anybody interferin'.
VIC: An interesting slant on the financial problems of our very young. Reminds me of the days when I was a coral-lipped baby, my soft blue eyes an' golden hair....
RUSH: Mom, Nicer wants me to stay all night with him. He needs my moral support. After what's happened he's all unstrung.... Why, right this minute Nicer Scott's sittin' over on his front steps pale as a ghost. His fingers are twitching an' he's turning alternately hot an' cold. He complains of a buzzin' in his skull an' spots before his eyes. Chilly perspiration beads his forehead an' an occasional convulsive shudder racks his frame. He licks his lips with agitation an'....
VIC: You're quotin' word for word from Third-Lieutenant Clinton Stanley.

Sade's speech patterns, on the other hand, are marked by malaprops, distorted proverbs, mixed metaphors and skewed similes. "Every night of the universe," "just as calm as your necktie," "I'd like to have your divided attention," "easy as rolling off a duck's back," "when somebody gets married I get as excited as a horse," "squeeze my pennies 'til the eagle howls," "kick a home run," and so on. But the tone and the context is never degrading to Sade. It is not like Archie Bunker's ignorant use of language, which is designed to place his social and political pronouncements into the mouth of one to whom we will feel superior;[9] it is not like Richard Brinsley Sheridan's original Mrs. Malaprop, or Shakespeare's pedant Holofernes, whose solecisms are the result of intellectual pretensions. Sade is ignorant, not shallow or pompous. Her unusual speech does not stand out from the stylized, equally unusual diction of the men of her family. The language style of *Vic and Sade* is marked by exaggerated diction applied to realistic dialect, or in linguistic terms, the phonemic and morphemic bases are natural, while the semantic transformations are contrived.

This brings me once more to the paradox of ordinary people and surrealistic exotics existing harmoniously side by side. The difference between Vic, Sade, Rush, Uncle Fletcher and their listening audience is not as it is in escapist romantic melodrama; the uniqueness does not derive from caste, class, money or position; rather, the fantasy of Mr. Gumpox, Chuck

and Dotty Brainfeeble, Smelly Clark and Virgil Dejectedly of Winona, Minnesota, derives from idiosyncratic exaggerations of ordinary people. In short, Paul Rhymer was not so much a satirist as a celebrant. Like Henry David Thoreau, who showed to us the universe in our back yards, Rhymer showed to us humanity in all its variety in our neighborhoods. *Vic and Sade* celebrates the infinite variety of ordinary people. Mrs. Rhymer recalls that her husband's only reference to the burden of his work was a remark that he had written more words than Charles Dickens. Surely his statement was more than quantitative; Dickens' characters, even the fictional Sairy Gamp's fictional friend Mrs. Harris, have more life than all the glamorous heroes and heroines of two millenia of romantic novels.

In all the comedy of *Vic and Sade* there is a core of dignity. Occasionally this is allowed to rise into prominence, as in two of the scripts that have been published. In one Vic and Rush are playing cards—"Rummies," as Sade would term it—and Vic seizes the opportunity to talk to Rush about his mother.

VIC: Seems to me, Sam, I've noticed you're beginning to take your mother kinda *cool.* By that I mean...well, you're apt to be a little careless in what you say to her...in the way you treat her.... Bullfrog, little kids stick pretty close to their mother's apron strings till they're your age. When they get around thirteen or fourteen they're liable to let *go* some. That's *natural.* A lad gets to be a dozen years old or so an' he finds new interests away from home an' gets to be a pretty busy guy. That keeps up the older he grows. After he's twenty he's apt to get married any time an' then he's almost *completely* cut off from his parents. That's good, that's fine, that's the way things *are.*
RUSH: I don't see what...
VIC: Let me say some more here. The upshot of what I'm tryin' to say is, as a boy grows older his mother is gradually going out of business. A woman's business is her family an' she works at it an' enjoys it an' sometimes makes it pay an' sometimes doesn't....

You don't do it *purposely.* You're not *mean* about it. But she'll say a thing that sounds a little...*foolish* maybe...an' you'll *rib* her about it.
RUSH: When'd I do that?

....
VIC: Well...the other day Mom said something about New York City being on the shore of the Pacific Ocean. You rode over her pretty rough-shod. *Laughed* kinda nasty.

Other examples are provided, gently, with a few comic asides, and the brief interlude ends, with profounder understanding of the "empty nest" syndrome among millions of listening women.

The other script that probes deeply into the lives of women whose business is that of housewife is different and requires some introduction. Victor Gook is not by any means an oasis of wisdom and sanity in the mad world of *Vic and Sade.* Like Dagwood, he has absurd enthusiasms. His "lodge" is the most obvious, but he also is subject to silly social-climbing (for example, purchasing business cards naming him to all sorts of undeserved titles), he is an overage jock (quarreling with a neighbor about who gets to wear the catcher's mitt in an alley game of catch), and he gets inordinately irritated with Fred Stembottom's idiosyncracies. One night, in bed, Sade wakes Vic to discuss this last foible:

SADE: When you an' Fred have these flare-ups, *naturally* the wife sticks with the husband. I

noticed it tonight. I was peeved when Fred was laughin' at your work, and Ruthie was peeved when you were makin' fun of Fred's baseball players an' his auto. We just couldn't *help* it. We *tried* to, but it was *bound* to show a little. Like I said, Ruthie is my best friend. My *very* best friend. I'm with other ladies a lot, *yes*—Mis' Donahue an' Mis' Harris an' Mis' Brighton an' Mis' Applerot—but it's not the same. Maybe it's because they're a little *older* than I am. Maybe it's because they're a little brighter in the head an' got more education. *I* don't know what it is. But I'm not the *same* with them as I am with Ruthie. With Ruthie I can laugh an' cry an' fight an' gossip an' get along just marvelous. With other ladies I sort of feel like here I am a woman that ain't a girl any longer an' got a fourteen year old boy to boot. See?
VIC: Um.
SADE: Ruthie an' I get along a lot like *kids* get along. It's hard for married ladies with families to have close friends where you can just take your *hair* down. An' Ruthie's the only close friend like that I *got*. The only one I ever *will* have probably... because I'm getting along to an age where women don't make *close* friends.

Sensitive people, and feminists in particular, will recognize the poignant commentary on traditional injustices in the institutions of marriage and womanhood, but these passages transcend mere social commentary. They are applicable to far more fragile and precious relationships that we must all tend, and guard, and balance and adjust. It is about friendship, the marriage of true minds of which Shakespeare writes in Sonnet #116. Love, dignity, forgiveness and restraint are the wages that we must pay to earn joyful friendship. Joy is the end of *Vic and Sade*; comedy, the instrument.

And that is the climax of this essay. But if I am to remain true to Olrik's laws of narration a denouement is called for. To summarize, *Vic and Sade* is closely related to both domestic comedy and serial drama, but its serious purpose is to aid people in coping with life's realities rather than escaping them. It is regional literature of a particular era in America's history but it transcends both place and time, partly because of oral technical artifice that provides delight irrespective of content or meaning, partly because it partakes of the characteristics of the category of folk narration that is designated as myth. As myth, its apparent absurdities mediate between opposites in human affairs; the ordinary and the extraordinary, the local and the universal, the passing of time and the permanence of the structure of family relationships whose transformations admit an infinity of individuals in an endless succession of small houses, half-way up on the next block.

Notes

[1]William R. Bascom, "Four Functions of Folklore," in Alan Dundes, *The Study of Folklore* (Englewood Cliff: Prentice-Hall, 1965), pp. 279-298. The article first appeared in the *Journal of American Folklore* in 1954 (67:266, pp. 333-349.

[2]Mrs. Rhymer has deposited the *Vic and Sade* papers at the State Historical Society of Wisconsin in Madison where they are available for study on a restricted basis.

[3]*The Small House Half-Way Up in the Next Block* (New York: Mcgraw-Hill, 1972).

[4]*Vic and Sade* (New York: Seabury, 1976).

[5]Recordings are available at many libraries having audio collections and may be purchased from dealers in "old time" or "nostalgic" radio.

[6]A fuller treatment of serial techniques can be found in my "Video Aesthetics and Serial Art," published originally in *Western Humanities Review* 24:4 (Autumn, 1973), reprinted in *Television: the Critical View*, ed. Horace Newcomb (New York: Oxford University Press, 1976), and in revised form in my *Outlaw Aesthetics. Arts and the Public Mind* (Bowling Green: Popular Press, 1977.

[7]Axel Olrik "Epic Laws of Folk Literature," in Dundes *op. cit.*, pp. 129-141. For a contrasting view of "fine art" dramatic literature, cf. Gilbert Highet, *The Classical Tradition* (New York: Oxford University Press Galaxy edition, 1957), pp. 127-131.

[8]Claude Levi-Strauss, *Structural Anthropology* (New York: Basic Books, 1963) pp. 229-230.

[9]Alfred F. Rosa and Paul A. Escholz, "Bunkerisms: Archie's Suppository Remarks in *All in the Family*," *Journal of Popular Culture*, 6:2 (Fall, 1972), pp. 270-278.

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The Home That Radio Built

By Jay K. Springman
and Carol Pratt

The Hollywood community first felt the need for a philanthropic organization during World War I when many film workers either enlisted or were drafted into the armed forces leaving families in need of financial assistance. To help those families, "In 1918, two thousand movie workers, ranging from the most famous stars and directors to prop men and extras, gathered in William Clune's Auditorium in downtown Los Angeles. Mary Pickford, D.W. Griffith and others cited the need to care for wives and dependents of film workers who had gone to war."[1] This meeting raised $50,000 in pledges, and the Motion Picture War Service Association was founded to administer the fund.[2]

The end of the war concluded the existence of the Motion Picture War Service Association, but it did not end the problems nor the needs for Hollywood to assist the unfortunate of the motion picture community. Many Hollywood studios found themselves with numerous war pictures ready to be released but with a public which was tired of war and tired of pictures about war. The problem was additionally complicated by the influenza epidemic which raged during the twenties while doctors advised people to avoid public places. Attendance at the movies fell sharply, and some studios were forced to close. This situation automatically left many of the film industry workers jobless and destitute. The focus of the philanthropic attention shifted toward assistance given to the unemployed film personnel and their families.

Film actors of this period were already members of the Actors Fund which had been organized in 1864 by Edwin Booth, Lester Wallach, Frank Mayo, Edwin Harrigan, Louis Aldrich and other well known actors of the stage.[3] Daniel Frohman, president of the Actors Fund in 1921, came to Hollywood to supervise the presentation of a large benefit pageant at the Hollywood Speedway. The benefit netted around $20,000, but it was then realized that there was no organization for dispensing relief funds among the film people.

A new committee known as the Motion Picture Committee of the Actors Fund of America was established to handle relief work in Hollywood. This committee consisted of Frank E. Woods, chairman; Marion Fairfax, writer; Winifred Kingstor, actor; Mark Larkin, secretary; W.J. Reynolds, treasurer; Reverend Neal Dodd, pastor of Hollywood's Little Church Around the Corner, as relief investigator; Will Wyatt, manager of the Mason Opera

House; Mitchell Lewis, noted screen star; and Mary O'Connor, well known cinema writer.[4] Mary Pickford and William S. Hart, both notable stars of the era, were also very active in the Hollywood branch of the Actors Fund.[5]

During its first year of operation in Hollywood in 1921, $100 was dispensed to eighteen needy individuals. By 1924 the load had increased to the point where $22,000 was being contributed to 125 cases.[6] It was at this point in 1924 that it was felt advisable to break away completely from the New York based Actors Fund, since so much of the Hollywood-collected money was being distributed nationwide rather than locally.

The break with the Actors Fund came on December 24, 1924, when the Motion Picture Relief Fund of America, Incorporated, was organized "with practically every name of importance in the picture industry on its membership roll."[7] This new organization had Joseph M. Schenck as president, Mary Pickford as vice-president, and the Reverend Neal Dodd continuing on from the previous organization as case administrator and investigator. The first board of trustees included: Harold Lloyd, Douglas Fairbanks, Sr., Mae Murray, William S. Hart, Cecil B. De Mille, Jesse L. Lasky, Charles H. Christie, Robert Fairbanks, Donald Crisp, Frank E. Woods, Fred W. Beetson, Hal E. Roach, Ruppert Hughes, Robert Wagner, Ewell D. Moore, Irving Thalberg, Wedgewood Nowell and Alfred A. Cohn.

The chief purpose of this organization was to offer as much assistance as finances would allow to those who had a legitimate claim on the Fund. The Fund organization also attempted to eliminate as many forms and as much paper work as possible in order to allow for prompt help to those who were in need. Those individuals who were considered eligible for aid from the Fund included anyone who had made his or her living continuously in any branch of the motion picture industry for the immediate past three years. Stage actors who had gone into motion picture work were also eligible even though they might also qualify for the earlier Actors Fund too.[8]

The need for assistance increased and so did the need for finding ways to raise revenues to support the Fund's charitable work. Several large special performances were planned in 1927 as fund raisers and for the first time a wish was expressed publicly for some sort of facility. The *Hollywood Daily Citizen* reported, "The decision to stage the largest and most startling entertainment of its kind ever seen in Los Angeles was made last night at the third annual meeting of the Motion Picture Relief Fund of America. The organization also discussed plans for a big benefit motion picture, proceeds from both sources to go toward construction of a home for the aged and indigent of the screen profession."[9]

Plans to build a home certainly had to be nothing more than a dream in 1927 since the Fund had expended over $52,000 and was $9,000 in debt, with members of the board of directors paying the deficit from their own pockets.[10]

The year 1927 also created mixed problems for the Fund. "Talkies" were born this year with the production of *The Jazz Singer* by Warner Brothers. This new dimension of sound, while proving to be a boon to Hollywood through the increase in business, as audiences flocked to the theatres, and

through the many new jobs that were opened to new talent, was also creating a far greater demand on the Fund.

By 1929 over 110 million tickets to the motion pictures were being sold each week, nearly double the number sold to silent films only two years earlier.[11] Hollywood was in the middle of a vast period of growth and change. Many New York stage stars were imported to Hollywood because of their training in voice, which was deemed necessary for the new motion pictures. At the same time, the Fund was contacted with numerous requests for aid from those silent film stars who were left destitute because there was no more demand for their talent since they were unable to develop the new skills demanded by the sound medium.

The Fund also had problems being affiliated with the Community Chest in 1929. The withdrawal was not because of any major disagreement with the personnel but because "the regulations governing participating members of the Chest restricted the Fund from giving benefits and seeking private subscriptions in the profession, which is necessary to meet increasing relief demands."[12] One area of disagreement was that the Community Chest did not approve of some of the forms of assistance given by the Fund. It could not approve making funds available for such items as toupees, caps for teeth, and other cosmetic items for which the Fund would give assistance out of the knowledge that it was often impossible for an actor or actress to find a job without some of these unique necessities.

Mary Pickford was probably the strongest supporter of the Fund during these early years. She broke a long-standing rule against personal appearances in order to participate in the 17th Annual Automobile Show in Los Angeles after making arrangements for her fee to be turned over to the Fund. She then also arranged for others in the industry to appear at the same event with the same financial arrangements she was making. Among the many stars who willingly donated their fees to the Fund were John Barrymore, Al Jolson, Norma Shearer, Bebe Daniels, and Delores Del Rio.[13] Mary Pickford delivered a brief talk to formally inaugurate the automobile show.[14] Barrymore delivered his soliloquy from *Henry VIII,* and Jolson sang.[15]

In the September, 1930, issue of *Motion Pictures* magazine, Pickford took her fellow industry members to task for their lack of assistance to the film workers who were unemployed:

> By every device we knew, we got promises for our relief work for 1930 to the amount of just $75,000! That from the most prosperous, glamorous industry in the world! That trifling sum from the richest individual group of people on earth! And there are men and women and children here in Hollywood—fellow players and their families—suffering from privation, hunger and disease!... One of the prominent stars of the screen—a man who earned $230,000 last year—parted with a five-dollar bill after a struggle. He offered a dollar! A little "cutie," who earns more thousands in a week than most business executives earn hundreds, refused to give—because she "doesn't believe in charity!" Three years ago, a dollar looked as big as the *Leviathan* to her.
>
> Also we have in Hollywood a group of the wealthiest business men in the world—men whose annual stipend make the Presidential salary look like the price of a new limousine. I've made a list of thirteen of these men. Their combined salaries for 1939 reached $3,550,750, and that's an average of $257,750 each!

Pickford also expressed her opinion in this article that President Hoover and the federal government should be doing much more for unemployed actors.

One of the problems in the employment of actors was that they were virtually unemployable outside their field. The majority,especially in the late 1920s and early 1930s, were uneducated and unskilled in any salable skill outside the industry. Even shopkeepers, cafe owners and others who could employ semi-skilled laborers were opposed to hiring unemployed actors. Experience had taught employers that as soon as a day's work as an extra, or in a bit part, came along, the actor would be off to pursue his or her first love, acting, leaving the employer without an employee, and usually without any notice whatsoever.[16]

Under the leadership of Mary Pickford and Jack L. Warner, plans were laid in 1930 to have the studios deduct one-half of one percent of the wages of the stars and featured players for the Fund. Many of the actors were opposed to this form of taxation.[17] The plan did not gain much support until 1932, and even then it was strictly on a voluntary basis whereby anyone who earned more than $50 a week could assess himself this amount and have the employer turn the money over to the Fund. Income from this source had risen to approximately $13,000 a month by 1932.[18] Many actors chose not to contribute at all. These included not only the lower salaried group but also many of the largest stars and studio heads. The $13,000 actually represented about one-sixteenth of one percent of the Hollywood payroll.[19] The regular operating budget for the Fund was $10,000 a month, so there was little left over for any large emergencies and certainly very little for a building fund.[20]

The major portion of the Motion Picture Relief Fund has always been to care for the sick, feed the hungry, shelter the homeless and provide burials. This policy was stated in an order of priority in 1936 in the following manner:

> 1. Care for illness—preservation of life and health; 2. to lend financial aid for food, shelter and clothing to those persons whose work in pictures has been such as to definitely entitle them to such aid and who are now, through no fault of their own unemployed, such aid to be distributed: a. to married couples with small children; b. to a woman with dependents; c. to married couples without families; d. to single men and single women. 3. To lend such aid in unusual and extraordinary cases as may be deemed advisable when voted upon by the Executive Committee.

The minimum requirement for aid was that the individual was to have made his living in the motion picture industry for the past three years.[21]

The treasurer's report in 1937 showed that $148,500 was taken in by the Fund while $160,522 was expended. The deficit indicated to the officers that the Fund had some serious financial trouble.[22]

Largely because of the problems of financing, a major reorganization of the Fund occurred in March 1938. In the upheaval, the decision was reached that in the future the Screen Actors Guild, Screen Writers Guild and Screen Directors Guild would take care of the Motion Picture Relief Fund.[23] Jean Hersholt was elected president, and he accepted the position after the

motion picture producers agreed to wipe out the deficit which the fund had accumulated. The new board of directors of the Fund consisted of six actors, six directors, six writers, two producers and one each from the guilds of art directors, cameramen, publicists, make-up artists and sound technicians. In this reorganization Mary Pickford was elected president emeritus, an office she still holds in 1979.[24]

The idea to establish a home where film workers who no longer could care for themselves could live had gone through the years with little chance to succeed. With expenditures generally exceeding income, little could be reserved for the development of such a project. Throughout the years various fund raising projects, ranging from polo games to benefit performances, were employed in an effort to maintain the charitable activities of the Motion Picture Relief Fund. Officers, trustees and members, as well as others who were interested in the work of the organization, constantly attempted to develop new ideas and methods for raising the necessary money to broaden its philanthropic base.

In 1938, Jules Stein, founder of the Music Corporation of America, presented a new fund raising opportunity to Jean Hersholt, Fund president, and Ralph Morgan, president of the Screen Actors Guild.[25]

Stein had long been interested in, and supportive of the Motion Picture Relief Fund, and its desire to build a retirement home. Stein's interest also included expanding his own sphere of influence in the entertainment world. His idea would have well-known stars appear on a weekly radio broadcast and donate their normal salaries to the Motion Picture Relief Fund. Writers and directors would also contribute their services, and producers would allow the use of material without charge. Stein saw in the development of such a show the opportunity to accomplish both objectives. The program would contribute money to the Fund and, by coming into contact with the stars while making arrangements for their appearance on the program, the Music Corporation of America could possibly get some of the actors to accept contracts with MCA.[26]

The details of the radio program were initially worked out between the officers and trustees for the Fund and the Music Corporation of America. The plan was then presented to the general membership of the Fund, the Actors, Writers, Directors, and Producers Guilds for their approval.

According to the arrangements, actors would donate one performance each year to the program, the writers and producers would allow the use of their material without charge, and the directors would donate their services. In connection with this agreement, the sponsor of the program would contribute a predetermined weekly fee to the Fund.

The various agency representatives for a number of company accounts were then contacted to determine which company might offer the highest weekly fee for the sponsorship of this type of production.[27]

The first agency representative to become seriously interested in the prospective show was Ward Wheelock who represented Campbell Soup. Campbell was in need of top name stars for a series of *Hollywood Hotel* broadcasts to replace the Louella Parsons program.

Helen Hayes was one of hundreds of actors and actresses who eventually appeared on the *Screen Guild Theater* to help raise funds for the Motion Picture Relief Fund.

Wheelock proposed that Campbell Soup would contribute a minimum of $5000 each week to the Fund as payment for the guest artists. This arrangement was acceptable to the officers and trustees of the Fund, but the film exhibitors across the nation were fearful that the participation by Hollywood talent in a radio program would work to reduce the box office receipts in their theatres. Consequently, they opposed any participation by cinema stars in radio broadcasts and began flooding Hollywood with wires demanding that studios not permit any of their contract stars to participate in such a program.[28] The protests achieved their purpose and the arrangements with Campbell Soup did not materialize.

Further negotiations for the Screen Guild show lay dormant until mid-October when the Gulf Oil Corporation began to consider sponsoring the proposed program as a replacement for John Nesbitt's *Passing Parade* on the Columbia Broadcasting System network. Young and Rubicam was the advertising agency representing Gulf Oil, and they met with representatives of the Music Corporation of America and Jean Hersholt, Ralph Morgan and Dudley Nichols who represented the Fund, the Screen Actors Guild and the Screen Writers Guild respectively.

Under the terms of the agreement worked out with Gulf Oil, the Screen Writers Guild would furnish the talent, with each actor pledged to donate a minimum of one performance each year, and Gulf Oil weekly would pay

$10,000 to the Fund for the services of the talent. The Writers and the Directors Guilds would contribute their properties and services, and the Producers Guild would allow the use of their holdings without charge. The Music Corporation of America would furnish the orchestra and would collect a commission fee on the paid permanent staff of the show such as the master of ceremonies, the orchestra and the writers, but would not collect a fee for the talent furnished by the Screen Actors Guild.[29]

The production arrangements were approved on October 18, 1938, by Gulf Oil Corporation executives in Pittsburgh. The original contract was for a 25 week span as the replacement for *Passing Parade.* The show was to originate in Hollywood on CBS, and Young and Rubicam was to be the agency in charge of production.

Although the stars donated their time and talent, other personnel on the program were paid their normal wages. The salaried people included those on the Young and Rubicam staff,[30] all regular CBS employees such as sound effects men and engineers.[31] Fees for conductor and members of the orchestra were controlled by the Musicians Union.[32]

The premiere performance of the *Screen Guild Show,* as it was originally called, took place at the El Capitan Theatre on Sunday, January 8, 1939, at 4:30 Pacific time, and was carried over 61 CBS stations.[33] The opening production was a revue which included Jack Benny, Joan Crawford, Reginald Gardiner, Judy Garland and Ralph Morgan, with George Murphy as the master of ceremonies. Oscar Bradley and his orchestra provided the music, and John Conte served as the program announcer.

The opening show was a glamorous affair with starlets of the motion picture industry acting as ushers. Actors and other notables attending the premiere included George Burns and Gracie Allen, Joan Blondell, Dick Powell, Walter Wanger, Pat Patterson, Charles Boyer, Joan Bennett, Frances Langford, Jon Hall, Mickey Rooney, James Gleason, Anita Louise, Fay Wray, Robert Young, Melvyn Douglas, Glenda Farrell, Rosalind Russell, George Montgomery, and the Jack Haleys, Bob Hopes, Edward Arnolds, Raymond Griffiths and George Bagnalls.[34] Specially invited guests included the president of Gulf Oil Corporation, Colonel J. Frank Drake, and Mrs. Drake, who came specifically for the opening.[35]

The first Gulf *Screen Guild Show* was a triumph. The studio guests, moreover, enjoyed many things to which the radio audiences were not privy, such as, "Jack Benny's breathless arrival (sirens blowing) from his own show; his Don Juaning with Joan Crawford, who swooned into a chair; and Reginald Gardiner whose gifted mimicry of such abstract things as wall paper, as well as trains—both foreign and domestic—was more amazing when one could watch how effortlessly he did it, even with a broken arm."[36] According to one account, "The entire audience as well as the performers seemed to want to enjoy every minute of the opening, before, during and after the broadcast, as they did."[37]

The original concept of the program was to rotate types of program, and to tailor each script to the talents of the name players, thus allowing for

dramatic programs, musical comedies and revues.[38] However, by the second season on the air the majority of programming consisted of adaptations of screen plays and original dramatizations and only five variety shows. The production location was also moved at the beginning of the 1939-1940 season from the El Capitan Theatre to Earl Carroll's Columbia Square. This change was made because the Earl Carroll facility was larger and would better accommodate the large audiences wishing to view the broadcasts. The title was also changed to the *Screen Guild Theatre,* a better title to describe the change toward using more motion picture scripts.[39]

During the first season on the air many stars were skeptical about the program, but by the second year many were asking to be used more than once.[40] Two items were primarily responsible for this change in attitude. When Gulf Oil started its sponsorship, the big stars of the motion picture industry were merely infrequent visitors on radio broadcasts. But radio became more respectable with the appearance of such well known personalities as Bing Crosby, George Murphy, Bob Hope and Loretta Young on the *Screen Guild Show.* The purpose set forth for the show was one that could be fully supported by the film stars, and they became more convinced than ever when they saw the amount of money that had been contributed to the Fund during the first season of the program.[41]

By the end of the 1940-41 season Gulf Oil had donated $800,000 to the Fund. Land for the projected Country House had been purchased in Woodland Hills at a cost of $34,850, and construction plans for the

Barbara Stanwyck volunteered her acting talents on the *Screen Guild Theater.*

retirement home were under way.

A change of sponsorship came following the April 19, 1942 broadcast. Gulf Oil had a great deal of uncertainty concerning how much of their product would be available for sale on the domestic market since World War II was forcing rationing on gasoline products. And because Gulf was paying approximately $25,000 a week for the program, they felt it was necessary to find a program with a lower budget. But during the Gulf sponsorship a total of $1,130,000 had been contributed to the Motion Picture Relief Fund and the Motion Picture Country House was dedicated on September 27, 1942.[42]

The *Screen Guild Theatre* was to continue for fourteen years on the air under three sponsorships (Gulf Oil, Lady Esther Cosmetics and Camel Cigarettes) and under sustaining status on two networks. The final show was broadcast on June 30, 1952, starring Ward Bond and William Frawley in the *Babe Ruth Story*. During these fourteen years this program had contributed a total of $5,235,607.00 to the Fund.[43]

The money from these receipts was used to purchase the land in Woodland Hills, build and maintain the Motion Picture Country House, and assist in the construction of the Motion Picture Country Hospital. Other buildings in the Motion Picture Country House Complex have been donated by various individuals and organizations in the motion picture industry. The Country House Complex is in operation today for use by members of the industry who can no longer care for themselves, or who need professional assistance. All members of the film industry are eligible for permanent care if they meet a basic requirement of twenty-years service in motion pictures. Every film worker meeting the longevity requirements—from the lowest paid floor sweeper to the highest paid star—can find residence.[44]

Thanks, then, to this unique concept of mixing motion pictures and radio in a popular format, the Motion Picture Relief Fund of America can point to the Motion Picture Country House Complex as a demonstration of the industry's motto, "Hollywood takes care of its own."[45]

Notes

[1]Bob Thomas, *The Heart of Hollywood* (Los Angeles, 1971), p. 14.
[2]Ibid., p. 15.
[3]*Hollywood Citizen-News, June 28, 1939.*
[4]*Hollywood Magazine,* March 30, 1928, p. 9.
[5]Ibid., pp. 23-24.
[6]Thomas, *Heart of Hollywood,* p. 29.
[7]*Hollywood Magazine,* March 30, 1928, p. 24.
[8]Ibid.
[9]*Hollywood Daily Citizen,* June 29, 1926.
[10]*Filmgraph,* July 29, 1927, p. 8.
[11]Thomas, *Heart of Hollywood,* p. 30.
[12]*Hollywood News,* June 13, 1929.
[13]*Los Angeles Examiner,* Feb. 18, 1930.
[14]*Hollywood News,* Feb. 19, 1930.
[15]*Variety,* Feb. 22, 1930, p. 3.
[16]*Motion Picture Magazine,* Sept. 1930, pp. 30-31.

[17]*Filmgraph,* July 5, 1930, p. 12.
[18]*Los Angeles Times,* Aug. 31, 1932.
[19]*Variety,* May 23,1931, p. 7.
[20]*Los Angeles Times,* Aug. 31, 1932.
[21]*International Photographer,* April, 1936, p. 14.
[22]*Daily Variety,* June 30, 1937.
[23]Ibid., March 10, 1938.
[24]Ibid., June 29, 1938.
[25]Letter from Jules Stein dated Feb. 27, 1976, stating, "I can tell you without qualification that I was responsible for the original radio program, *Screen Guild Players,* which ran from 1939 to 1952....The idea was not created by Jean Hersholt or Ralph Morgan, but was solely a creation of my own, in which my company associates joined me."
[26]Personal interview with Tom Lewis, first producer of the *Screen Guild Players* program, July 7, 1975.
[27]Personal interview with Taft Schreiber, vice-president of MCA-Universal, July 3, 1975.
[28]*Hollywood Reporter,* July 15, 1938.
[29]*Daily Variety,* Oct. 17, 1938.
[30]Tom Lewis interview, July 7, 1975; and Taft Schreiber, interview, July 3, 1975.
[31]Interview with Ray Erlenborn, sound effects man for the Columbia Broadcasting System, presently with the television division of CBS, Hollywood, California, July 12, 1975.
[32]Interview with Max Herman, president of Musicians Local 47, Hollywood, California, July 12, 1975.
[33]*Variety,* Jan. 3, 1939.
[34]*Daily Variety,* Jan. 6, 1939.
[35]Tom Lewis, correspondence, June 16, 1976.
[36]*Daily Variety,* Jan. 14, 1939.
[37]Tom Lewis, interview, July 7, 1975.
[38]*Daily Variety,* Dec. 10, 1938.
[39]Ibid., July 18, 1939.
[40]*Variety,* Sept. 3, 1939.
[41]Personal interview with Harry Kronman, writer-director of the *Screen Guild Theatre,* May 27, 1976.
[42]*Variety,* July 2, 1941.
[43]Letter from George Bagnall, Jan. 20, 1976.
[44]*Motion Picture and Television Relief Fund Fact Sheet,* p. 3.
[45]Thomas, *Heart of Hollywood,* p. 115.

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Education Unit in World War II: An Interview with Erik Barnouw

By David Culbert

To what degree have audiovisual techniques permanently transformed modern military practice? What was the impact of wartime educational programming in a medium where civilian experience dictated that radio should entertain, not instruct? Can the media help change ingrained prejudices about social issues? Erik Barnouw, author of the standard three-volume *History of Broadcasting in the United States* (New York, 1966-70) is particularly knowledgeable in such matters of direct concern to all who are interested in the impact of mass media on contemporary society.

On May 1, 1978, in New York City, I interviewed Barnouw for several hours about his work as head of educational programming for the military's own radio network, which began in 1942, and remains a part of contemporary military experience. The entire interview, transcribed, can be found with an extensive earlier Barnouw interview (No. 1181) in Columbia University's Oral History Collection in the Butler Library. The earlier interview, pages 56-79, touches on the AFRS. Barnouw's Papers, also at Columbia, contain AFRS files, too. Readers should consult carefully pages 159-68 and 190-97 of Barnouw's *The Golden Web,* where the AFRS is placed within the context of wartime commercial radio in America. Readers will discover that in his book Barnouw politely fails to mention that he wrote several significant programs discussed in the following interview.

Those people interested in the AFRS should consult F. Theodore De Lay, "An Historic Study of the Armed Forces Radio Service (doctoral dissertation, University of Southern California, 1950) and Larry Miller, "An Historical Profile of the Armed Forces Radio and Television Service" (master's thesis, Iowa State University, 1974). Wartime radio is also discussed in Edward M. Kirby and Jack W. Harris, *Star-Spangled Radio* (Chicago, 1948) and a selection of excellent radio plays, by Erik Barnouw, is printed in Joseph Liss, ed., *Radio's Best Plays* (New York, 1947). For current programming write the Department of Defense, Office of Information for the Armed Forces, American Forces Radio and Television Service, Washington, D.C. 20305.

Erik Barnouw

E.B. I was appointed supervisor of the Educational Unit of the Armed Forces Radio Service in January 1944. I moved to Washington, and went to work in the Pentagon. Gee, I was old. In 1944 I must have been 35, going on 36. The AFRS was a terribly interesting organization. When I became part of it, as I remember, there were 300 outlets. And every week, a container of discs on vinylite went to all its major stations and then some sets were bicycled around a group of smaller stations and they ended up on ships that had audio systems for entertaining troops. And every airport, every airbase, even including Iceland and Greenland, they all got these batches.

D.C. There was much Congressional worry about the Army's promoting Roosevelt reelection strategies. For discussion programs about current problems, such as the AFRS *Heard at Home* series, what specific devices did you use to make sure that you were not broadcasting a program that sounded patently pro-Roosevelt?

E.B. Well, that was the hardest one on which to work out a clearance procedure. I remember that the first step was for somebody to decide whether it was suitable for the Armed Forces Radio. They didn't want to deal with some home-front issue that would make soldiers feel the people back home were just squabbling over nothing. So, it had to be something that would interest them and that they would feel a stake in, such as postwar education, housing, or anything of a broad nature. There were about five steps those programs had to go through. First, somebody had to decide whether it was non-partisan. Now, each week I would record off the air the *University of Chicago Round Table, Northwestern Reviewing Stand, America's Town Meeting of the Air,* and one or two others of that sort. Some of them I would throw out as being dull (laughs). Some of them I felt were pertinent and would put them through the clearance procedure.

The first one that got through was a program called, *Can The Wallace Program Lead to Prosperity?* Henry Wallace had made some proposals for the postwar period, and had predicted that there would be sixty million jobholders after the war. This was attacked as being ridiculous and visionary, but actually it was not visionary at all. The two speakers on that program were Robert Taft and Wallace. This was marvelous opposition, I'm sure you know, the really polar forces of that time together on one program. It went through all the clearance procedures. We were ready to go with it when Colonel Livingston Watrous, the deputy to General Frederick Osborn [head of the Army's Information and Education Division], intervened. He said, "I know it's gone through all the clearance procedures but I don't think we ought to let this out until the General comes back." We waited for two weeks for the General to come back from abroad and then we took it up to the General and the General said, "Well, we've got to take a chance on something sometime." So, we did. That was the first program that went out on *Heard at Home.* That was very much the way Osborn was.

We also did a short series which NBC financed which they allowed me to edit and produce and that was called *They Call Me Joe.* I suggested that it would be a very nice idea if there were a series which would deal with the multi-ethnic nature of the Army. Each one was a family history and had a

first person singular narration. It always began, "They Call Me Joe, Guiseppe, Joe for short."One week it was Joe who was Guiseppe, an Italian; and another one was Joe who was Joseph or Jose. In fact, in almost any language you could have a Joe. That was the point.

D.C. Did you write the scripts?

E.B. No, I did not write them. They were written by a number of people such as Morton Wishengrad, Harry Kleiner, the screen writer, and Norman Rosten. The Irish one would say, "My family came to the United States in the 1840s during the potato famine." We had a dramatization of all that; we went through a kind of *Roots* each week. One week it was a story of Scandinavians in the northwest and another time it was a Dutch family somewhere in Holland, Michigan; another time it was Japanese or Chinese. There was a Japanese-American one.

D.C. Did you have one on someone from Appalachia or a black person?

E.B. Yes, we did, we had one who came over as a slave.

D.C. Did you have him say my name is Joe?

E.B. Well, his name was Joe, that's all.

D.C. You didn't call him Old Black Joe did you?

E.B. (Laughter) As a matter of fact somehow we arranged to use passages from *John Brown's Body* on the slave trade. I think that's probably the only verse thing we did on the AFRS.

The theme song for *They Call Me Joe* was taken from *The Ballad for Americans*. There's a place where Paul Robeson sings, "What am I? I am a...." Then he rattles off a tremendous montage: "English-French-Dutch-Portuguese-Irish," etc. I don't know whether you remember that song. Horgan told me that this aroused the suspicion of a Congressman who said that this theme song was written by a Communist. The words were by John Latouche and the music was by Earl Robinson, who was later blacklisted and mentioned as being leftist. I don't know what he was. John Latouche was dead a long time ago. I think they were very brilliant people. This Congressman was suspicious of the series because of this theme song, although the theme song, having been sung twice on CBS by Paul Robeson, was then used as the theme song for the Republican National Convention of 1940. Its content was simply apple pie American. But the fact that Paul Robeson was connected with it, and somebody also suspicious called Earl Robinson, suddenly made this congressman suspect that something was wrong with this program. He asked, "And what is the significance of the title, *They Call Me Joe?"* Horgan said, "Well, it means various people are called Joe. Joe stands for Guiseppe, or Jose, or whatever." And the Congressman said, "It has nothing to do with Joe? Joseph Stalin?"

D.C. Why did you choose to use that *Ballad for Americans?*

E.B. It was absolutely a most brilliant evocation of the multi-ethnic nature of the country. It was very popular at the time.

D.C. You said in 1939 you had Robeson on a CBS series and that he had sung the *Ballad for Americans*. I assume that that was the first time you became particularly aware of the song?

E.B. I had never heard it before. It had been written for the W.P.A. Federal

Theater, a musical show called *Sing for Your Supper,* which opened a very brief time before Congress suddenly abolished the Federal Theater by not funding it in 1938 or '39. Earl Robinson brought the song over to CBS and sort of sang it and played it for Corwin and the CBS vice-president, Wilbur Lewis, who was in charge of programming at CBS. They thought it marvelous and said let's put it on *Pursuit of Happiness.* It was just a fantastic success, it had gotten a tremendous amount of mail so CBS repeated it, immediately. At that moment there was nothing wrong with using Robeson and using something from the Federal Theater. But this [anti-Communist] Dies Committee undercurrent was certainly beginning to have a momentum at this time. It became more successful after the war, but at that time inquiries of this sort were more or less laughed off by the War Department.

Years later I learned what had happened to a program that I had written before I went to Armed Forces Radio Service, and which went through all clearance procedures, but went down the drain. Samuel Newman had been in the Armed Forces Radio Service, and I went to do a kind of oral history interview with him. He began talking about the AFRS and said that this program, titled *The Story They'll Never Print,* had been cleared and had arrived on his desk. He played it and liked it very much; it went through all the technical procedures. A master was made. Then suddenly he was called in by a superior. I had written it at the request of the National Urban League. Somebody from the National Urban League had come to me one day and explained about what they called their pilot program. They were engaged in a very gradual infiltration of business. They went, for instance, to the American Telephone and Telegraph Company and said, "Sooner or later you'll have to hire blacks. So why don't we together very carefully pick a black that's sure to be acceptable. And we'll have a schedule where you'll hire one in September and another one in October and two more in November. We'll work out a schedule and we'll hand-pick the first few very carefully." This had been tried in several businesses and had been very successful. By that time they had something called, The Pilot Club—people in the New York area who had been the first in this or that business. This to me was terribly interesting, ancient history by now—it almost seems inconceivable. They wanted to do something for this Pilot Club for some kind of an anniversary. The program would be on WNEW, for a series of programs produced by the American Negro Theater, a stock company in Harlem, but I'm not sure where. They wondered if I would write something for them. I wrote this thing, the story of which simply was that a newspaper reporter was sent out to a plant where they were going to hire a Negro, and where there was expected to be an incident of some kind. You meet the reporter, you meet the guy who is going to be the first black, you see him leaving home to go to the plant, and there almost is an incident in the locker room, but it is averted in some way; somebody handles it skillfully. There is no incident and the reporter goes back to the newspaper and says there's no story. So, it begins, "The newspapers will never print the story of what happened at the Smith and Harris plant not

long ago." The point is that they didn't tell the story because nothing happened but it should have been told and it should be told widely all over the world. That was the theme of the story. This pleased Donald Young, and it pleased the Education Branch of I & E. So it went through all the clearances and it finally reached this point of a glass master from which the wax was going to be made. And Newman was called in to his superior who had the disc on his desk and said, "Now listen, Sam, I'm not going to have any of this nigger-loving shit on this network." And he took the glass and shattered it all over the desk. So it went down the drain "for technical reasons." It never got on any network. By the way, it was narrated by Eugene O'Neill Jr. He was a Greek scholar; he had been shown it, took a fancy to it and did it.

D.C. Can you remember other instances where your work in the AFRS did promote, let's say, a liberal racial message through specific programs?

E.B. Well, I guess liberal messages came in quite often. I was kind of shocked for there was a major (who later became an editor of *The Untouchables*) in the program department of AFRS who took a rapid trip around the world. He came back and said, "The guys don't want educational programs, they don't want that stuff." He said so, and True Boardman sent me copies of the letters that the major had written from around the world saying, "The guys don't want that stuff." That worried me quite a lot. But there wouldn't have been any chance of them ending that material because Osborn was thoroughly behind it. Later on there was an actual survey. After the war I saw a survey that had been done in which people were shown a roster of programs from the Armed Forces Radio Service, people that were out in the field, troops, and were asked to mention programs that they particularly liked, and *This is the Story* was somewhere up among the first six. And *Science Magazine* was quite high on the list. It was a complete reversal, they were much higher than I'd expected them to be. Both those programs and *Heard at Home* survived for years after the war.

D.C. Looking back now, what if any contribution do you think that educational programming made? Was it a way of fending off congressional opponents?

E.B. You mean what was achieved by adding this material to the AFRS network? I just have no idea, I have no idea. I think the network was a very important thing, the feeling of keeping in touch with home. It was enormously important. I'm sure that in many of the situations where people were listening to the radio they were probably just listening to a baseball game or listening to Bob Hope. But apparently there were situations—of course this whole thing got started in the last year of the war and I just have no way of knowing how much was contributed. I think the existence of the network is very important.

D.C. The film program kind of went down the drain and other experiments in the war years—social science testing—kind of went down the drain after the war, but the Armed Forces Radio stayed. It seems that maybe because of its cheapness and its ability to get into so many different areas it's one of the

most significant parts of an audio-visual transformation of military practice.

E.B. Well, of course it has other connotations. In many of the areas, for instance in Africa, the Armed Forces Radio Service would move in right on the heels of the troops because it didn't take any time at all to set up a station in a tent and later in a quonset hut. In some areas, for instance in England, there were a lot of civilians who had heard these things and the influence of the programming had quite a lot of impact in Britain. It probably helped to undermine the BBC monopoly. During the war those stations were almost all very low power, with the idea that they should be as much as possible confined to the army units and navy units. After the war, when headquarters was moved to Frankfurt, they acquired stations in Germany that were more powerful than any radio station in the United States. But, I think, the AFRS had a couple of stations with 100,000 watts, which could be heard all over Germany, and I think much further away. They became stations—public relations is the wrong word—with an international relations aspect to them.

Even during the war, obviously, this was a perfect thing for enemy intelligence to listen to, to see if they could learn something. I was told by somebody that occasionally the system had been used by our intelligence for planting misinformation. It began to have other values than morale of the troops. After the war, when we had people in scattered locations with very little to do, it became much more important than it had been originally.

D.C. All during the war, in isolated regions such as the Caribbean Islands there were terrible morale problems.

E.B. Yes, feeling your best years were slipping away, that you weren't achieving anything. For them programming with some content was very important.

D.C. In an article that you published in *Educational Broadcasting* in 1945 about educational programming you talked quite a bit about the neessity of psychologically gauging the audience. It fascinated me because there is a heavy predictive confidence in the article that I've never seen in anything else you've written or anything you've said, about social science, and how social science research techniques would indeed allow someone to speak confidently about how to make sure that your intended audience really is receptive to the message that you have.

E.B. (Laughs)

D.C. You said at the end of the article—this is known as were you lying then or are you lying now?—"Unless the program correctly anticipates these problems it will not be listened to and there will be no communication. This type of approach, making the findings of audience research one of the writer's essential tools, may well make its mark on postwar educational broadcasting."

E.B. Now, obviously I had to believe that to do all these things. Of course as soon as I got to the Pentagon I got in touch with the Research Branch. I received lots of analyses that were given to everybody preparing material of this sort. And some of it was quite impressive—*What the Soldier Thinks?*

and what he resents, how you can reach him, and so on, the result of various studies of what had failed and what had boomeranged. I began to feel some confidence in them. Everybody in the Army Information Branch had a certain amount of confidence in the findings of research at that time. Actually it was a fairly new thing, of course. Paul Lazarsfeld had been doing his work at Columbia University only a few years at this point, in the Bureau of Applied Social Research. I had seen quite a lot of him and I'd admired his *Radio and the Printed Page.* I probably feel a little less enthusiastic now about the possibilities of relying on such research, because there's so much audience research that's baloney now. But you had to admit at that time that the soldier was in a special psychological situation and that you ought to try to understand that as much as possible, because you could easily do things that would be deeply resented by him. I would say that I believed that and this special problem, communicating with someone who's so far away in such a difficult situation certainly required that kind of study. Dealing with a home audience at some other time is not quite the same thing.

D.C. Let me make explicit what I am driving at, because I am not trying to make trouble for you. The Army had a specific rule that it was official policy that there would be no tampering with existing patterns of segregation. Quite obviously you and a number of other people in the Information and Education Division were every once and a while producing programs which very explicitly did tamper with what you quite rightly saw was a very difficult and really impossible situation. Now, were you aware of, in a sense, the provocative side of what you were doing?

E.B. No, I don't think I was. I don't think I was particularly.

D.C. Donald Young agreed with you. It's just that this is why people would say, "bunch of Communists" and things like that about I & E later on.

E.B. I suppose. I, along with a lot of other people, felt that existing patterns of segregation were doomed but we didn't think we were tampering with them actually. We were influencing attitudes because we felt that in the Army people had to get along with a lot of different other people who came from different ethnic backgrounds, and this was what we were getting at. It was a kind of togetherness that motivated us and it seemed a little outrageous that people would think that that was provocative. To get everybody stirred up was almost always considered a bad thing to do, because if something we did precipitated a fight and somebody got hurt it would be our fault. And that seemed a reasonable thing to many people at that time. I remember beginning to wonder whether that wasn't wrong, and that maybe people change their minds and abandon bad ideas only when they get angry and defensive because they realize that there is something wrong with their position. So, if you want to say that I myself have an ingrown missionary spirit about things I'm sure that that's true. I might be occasionally provocative and I'm sure that that was behind some of these programs.

D.C. Well, it's what I perceive in your personality. There's a delicate balance in which things you believe in firmly or will write about, while very

explicit, are presented in a way so that the insensitive reader may just somehow pass by. Your beliefs are very strongly held but presented with a certain delicacy and I think, usually with a lively sense that such things are only said once in a while, or gently, and not too often.

E.B. Yes, well that's probably a heritage of being in this broadcasting atmosphere, and during a very cautious period when people felt that you should not get people all excited.

D.C. One thing I remember your telling me about was Alan Lomax and the way that you arranged to get him to work for you. I wonder if you could say something about that?

E.B. Well, one of the things that I suggested doing was a series on American folk music. While I was in the Pentagon I had a discussion with Harold Spivack who was the head of the music division in the Library of Congress. Alan Lomax and his father had made the original folk song collection in the Library of Congress. I knew Alan Lomax, who had written for the CBS *American School of the Air.* That was a series of programs in the morning that was used in schools, and he had done for that a folk music series which was very successful. On the *Pursuit of Happiness,* an Americana series that I was involved in, where I was the editor and the writer of the connecting material, and which was directed by Norman Corwin in 1938-39 (the series on which Paul Robeson appeared), Alan Lomax had also done several programs dealing with American folk music. He was actually the logical person for such material. I don't remember who suggested that he was somewhere in the Pacific but I remember that it was O.K. to ask whether he could be transferred to our jurisdiction so that he could work on this program. I don't remember where he came from but he was transferred and he turned up one day, not in Washington but in New York, in uniform. I guess he was a corporal at that time. He always looked a little slovenly but he worked very hard and was absolutely invaluable, I thought. But Captain Gibson, who was in charge of the office, would come to me regularly and say, "You've got to do something about Lomax, he's got to shape-up." Lomax would always come in and take off his tie, and Gibson would come to me and say "Lomax is out of uniform again." (laughs) I never thought of it myself because I was not in uniform. Osborn decided that I should not be in uniform. When I came to the Armed Forces Radio Service, early in that period, there was some discussion as to whether I should be commissioned. Osborn (it was a surprise that I had gotten into a discussion with him about this), said, "I think it would be better if you stayed a civilian so that you don't have a rank, and then if you have any problems you can always come to me." He was actually encouraging me to come to him. He was very enthusiastic.

D.C. You never got involved in using pitches or commercial techniques to sell your educational programming did you?

E.B. No, that would not have gone down at that time at all. I guess there were a few little spots but even promotional announcements about our programs were not popular at that time.

D.C. You never took a tour to other parts of the world to see how your

programs were doing?

E.B. No, I was asked once if I would like to but Dotty was expecting our second child, and that made me a little reluctant. Besides I wasn't sure I'd accomplish very much. We got pretty superficial reports from people who dashed around the world and I thought it was more important to keep in touch with the networks, to mind the store, so to speak. So I went back and forth to California maybe three or four times, and back and forth to Washington more often.

D.C. Did you think it was fun?

E.B. Oh, I enjoyed every minute of it. It was an organizing challenge; it was fun working out that procedure and quite exciting to find that it worked, that a suitable amount of material was going through the hopper and going out. That was very satisfying.

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Government Propaganda In Commercial Radio— The Case of Treasury Star Parade, 1942-1943

J. Fred MacDonald

The boundary between federal regulation and federal manipulation of broadcasting has been strongly delineated in the United States. Recognizing its function to represent public interest without stifling private initiative, government has generally refrained from manipulating the persuasive potential of broadcasting systems. Such a condition has resulted in part because of the laws of the nation. It has also resulted from that fact that broadcasters, themselves, have traditionally supported the general values, directions, and institutions of American society.

In a certain sense all broadcasting is filled with material supportive of the governmental system. Because of the commercial nature of American mass culture, it is necessary for the competitive media to appeal to customers by reflecting, espousing, and defining attitudes and sensitivities that are popularly shared. In this way the content of American broadcasting propagates interpretations helpful to a bourgeois society with a liberal-democratic political, social, and economic system. Whether it is formulaic sitcom or innovative science fiction, the protection of private property, the rightness of the cause, the individuality of the hero, and the justness of the resolution are anticipated and usually predictable.

Yet, when the federal government oversteps this boundary and becomes actively involved in the production of patently propagandistic media fare, the significance of broadcasting and its persuasive qualities needs deeper consideration. Nowhere was this truer than in the case of the wartime radio series, *Treasury Star Parade,* a flagrantly-propagandistic program that was sponsored by the Department of the Treasury during 1942 and 1943. Ostensibly designed to persuade listeners to purchase government War Bonds, the series also sold World War II to a citizenry which had been isolationist at least until Pearl Harbor.

From its beginnings, *Treasury Star Parade* was a carefully-manufactured, quality series. The Radio Section of the Treasury Department Defense Savings Staff was the government agency which coordinated the series. The first and longest-lasting producer of the program, however, was William A. Bacher, an experienced radio writer-producer whose credits included two successful variety series, Maxwell House *Show Boat* and Campbell's *Hollywood Hotel.*

William A. Bacher was the first producer of *Treasury Star Parade.*

The entertainment industry co-operated, providing the biggest names in show business. From motion pictures (e.g., Bette Davis, Edward G. Robinson, Walter Pidgeon), the legitimate stage (Alfred Lunt, Lynn Fontaine, Judith Anderson, Maurice Evans), Broadway musicals (Alfred Drake, Todd Duncan), radio (Fibber McGee and Molly, Gertrude Berg, Eddie "Rochester" Anderson, Amos and Andy), popular music (Paul Whiteman, Dinah Shore, Perry Como, Tommy Dorsey), and classical music and opera (Igor Gorin, Kenneth Spenser) came the outstanding talents who appeared in over 300 fifteen-minute shows during the life of the series.

Treasury Star Parade featured stirring original plays by writers such as Norman Rosten, Violet Atkins, and Joseph Ruscoll, as well as adaptations from the works of Stephen Vincent Benet, John Steinbeck, Alice Duer Miller, and Thomas Mann. It drew from newspaper and magazine articles, as well as poetry, classical music, motion pictures, and the popular and patriotic music of the day. According to Henry

Morgenthau, Jr., the Secretary of the Treasury, such artistic quality was intentional. His goal was to make the entertainment and the entire program so good, people would become "as fond of War Bonds as they are of Coca-Cola or Lucky Strikes."[1]

Although no direct relationship between the broadcasts and the successful sale of War Bonds can be substantiated, *Treasury Star Parade* was well received. In May, 1942, it was cited by the Women's Press Club of New York City as one of the "outstanding radio programs" on wartime radio. That same year Farrar & Rinehart published an anthology of twenty-seven plays from the series. Perhaps the most fitting appraisal came from John K. Hutchens, radio critic for *The New York Times,* who lauded "the intelligence, skill and fervor that have gone into" the series. Terming the program "one of the brighter chapters in American radio history," Hutchens commended *Treasury Star Parade* for being "just about the best of all those domestic wartime programs whose task it is to awaken, convince, entertain, and not incidentally, to sell war bonds and stamps."[2]

This was not the only radio program produced for the Treasury Department in order to sell War Bonds.[3] Since May 1, 1941, when the first United States Defense Bonds and Stamps were placed on sale, the federal government utilized commercial radio to spur sales. In the months before Pearl Harbor, programs like *Millions for Defense* (an NBC network series), *America Preferred,* and *For America We Sing,* as well as innumerable spot announcements, raised public consciousness about bonds. During the war, War Bonds, (nee Defense Bonds) were peddled on features such as *Treasury Song for Today, Over Here, Music for Millions, Treasury Salute, Treasury Bondwagon,* and the limited dramatic series produced in conjunction with the fifth war loan drive, *Four for the Fifth.* In all cases, the performers donated their energies and talents; electrical transcriptions of the programs were distributed without charge to any American radio station requesting them; playtime was donated by those stations airing the shows; and the undated shows were broadcast whenever, and as often as, the participating outlets desired. And these programs reached a wide audience. At its height, for example, over 830 stations carried *Treasury Star Parade,* making it one of the most widely-heard programs in wartime radio.

Above all, the program was a propagandistic triumph which blended partriotism, dire warning, entertainment, and technical artistry in an emotional melange reflective of the urgency of the time. The principal goal of the series was clear: to compel or persuade Americans to sacrifice spare cash by loaning it to the war effort through the purchase of bonds. To accomplish this, the series utilized several methods of approach. In analyzing these methods, it becomes clear that in *Treasury Star Parade* the federal government more blatantly than ever in its history manipulated a supposedly-free and responsible mass medium, commercial radio, in order to disseminate the message it wanted. Specifically, in six distinct approaches *Treasury Star Parade* demonstrated itself as a powerful instrument of domestic mass propaganda.

I. Appeal To Basic American Values.

The overriding theme of the programs was that this was a democratic nation waging a just war through its unified army of free and equal commoners. It was a battle being fought at home and abroad by legions of average people, little people, of the plain folk who constituted the United States. Edward G. Robinson, portraying cab driver Joe Doakes in "Joe Doakes and the White Star" (#60), suggested this mentality when he audaciously picked up the telephone and demanded to talk to the Japanese leader.

Edward G. Robinson appeared as "Joe Doakes" in two *Treasury Star Parade* broadcasts in 1942.

Hello, Tokyo, ah, let me talk to Hirohito. Yeah, the Emperor. What do you mean he don't talk to nobody? How does he order a short beer? OK, OK, comb the rice outta your hair, will ya, and let me talk to premier Tojo. Well, then, oh nuts! Just let me talk to Japan. Hmmm? This is Joe Doakes over in the USA talkin'.... You know, Joe the butcher, the baker, the barkeep, the bricklayer. Joe the busboy, Joe on the subway, Joe on the prairies, on the merry-go-round, Joe on a half-a-pound of sugar week. Joe in Kansas, ah, Joe in the bleachers, Joe in Macy's basement, Joe in a jeep. Can ya hear me?

This sense of nobility-among-the-commoners was painted most romantically in "The Second Battle of Brooklyn" (#94) when one character declared,

And, like I said, all the little people of the world was in that battle. The Collinses and the Kellys, and the Smiths and the Joneses—Joe Doakes and George Feldon—all the gentle, beautiful, little people—This is a "little guys" war, Eddie. Hitler ain't fightin' kings and queens no more... We're the only ones that can win it, Eddie. Only us—the little people, all dressed up in our haloes and gas masks.

This army of "little guys," in the interpretation of the series, reflected a nation that was homogenous despite its multi-ethnic background. Some shows dealt with specific racial or religious groups—such as the Broadway cast of *Porgy and Bess* (#33) and the skit enacted by the radio cast of *The Goldbergs* (#86). Usually, however, the appeal was made to as wide an audience as possible. In the musical production, "Hands" (#26), baritone Blair McKlusky and a chorus touched several groups.

MCKLUSKEY: Native born, alien, Negro and White...
Shoulder to shoulder in an all-out fight.
CHORUS: Protestants, Catholics, Quakers, and Jews...
With everything to gain and everything to lose...
It's all for one, and one for all...
United we stand, and divided we fall...
Men working together...

Even more dramatically, inter-ethnic unity was the message delivered by Fredric March in his fictional conversation with the Nazi propagandist, Dr. Joseph Goebbels, and a chorus of average Americans, in "A Report on the State of the Nation" (#16).

CHORUS: We're the Swedes from Minnesota, the Irish from Manhattan, the French from Louisiana, the Germans from Wisconsin. We are the Spaniards from California, the Armenians down in Fresno, the Indians in Nevada, the Poles in old Chicago! Czechs and Syrians, Greeks and Russians...
MARCH: This is a nation of many nations, a race of many races, singing the full, the goodly song.
GOEBBELS: (in Germanic accent) Wait!
CHORUS: What was that?
MARCH: That was the voice of Joseph Goebbels, Hitler's Minister of Propaganda!
CHORUS: What's he saying?
MARCH: He says nothing will be easier than to produce bloody revolution in North America. No other country has so many social and racial tensions. We shall be able to play on many strings there.
CHORUS: (whispering) Can they do it?

MARCH: I don't know—you are the people. What's the answer?
CHORUS: (shouting) No!
MARCH: They think that because we're the conglomerate nation, enriched with the bloods of all the races, that we are easy to trap and snare. But they forgot that out of this fusion of many races has come this one united nation of men, not slaves—American!

This unity even infected American street gangs, according to the rousing broadcast, "Education for Life" (#36). Here a street punk patriotically announced,

I'm no Boy Scout, but I've got a job, too! I rounded up all the gangs in my neighborhood—Italians, Negroes, Jews, Swedes—everybody! And they're plenty tough. But I told 'em we got no time for private fights now! No use kiddin' ourselves—we gotta win this war!

Another social value openly exploited by *Treasury Star Parade* was the Judeo-Christian religious foundation of the American nation. As Fredric March termed it when speaking Thomas Mann's words in "A Christmas Letter to the German People" (#19), the war was "a struggle of the great Christian peoples of the world." In "Education for Death" (#29), narrator Henry Hull concisely contrasted American children with those educated in the enemy Nazi state.

HULL: Our children believe in prayer—in the *Bible,* in God!
GERMAN: God is an outworn myth. Our Bible is *Mein Kampf.* Our God is Hitler!

The quest for religious freedom present in the earliest settlers of the New World was worked into the script of "A Report on the State of the Nation" (#16): "They came to the waiting land, bringing with them faith, and industry, and belief." This was also the essence of the prayer of the first Pilgrim kneeling on American soil in "American Design" (#289).

We thank Thee, O Lord God of Hosts. We thank Thee for that Thou art brought us safely across the watery kingdom of Leviathian. And beached us on this New World, with a new life and a new freedom to be ours to make (CHORUS: Amen, Amen).

Given the state of the world in 1942, the appeal to the religious faith was poignant when a Russian slave laborer in Nazi Germany begged God to smash the dams and flood the Ruhr valley in "The Earth Shall Be Sweet Again" (#290).

Dear God, punish these transgressors. I don't ask you to save Andrusia or myself. Perhaps it is too late for us. But for the sake of all our mothers and sons, for the sake of all those whom the Nazis would enslave, place Your Almighty Hand heavily upon them. Open up the flood gates of Your Wrath. Give us the earth clean again, Dear God, Dear God.

It was also effective in the Dutch mother's prayerful grace uttered over her last family dinner before Nazi invaders took power (#94).

Our Dear Father in Heaven, bless this food that is before us. We thank Thee for it. And bless this our house. Give us wisdom and hope through this long night. Bless our soldiers at the front. Bless our flag. Bless our freedom. Amen.

The most compelling merger of religious values and the war was "The Price of Free World Victory" (#79), a dramatization of a speech by Vice-President Henry A. Wallace. As narrated by Vincent Price, the program boldly asserted such messages as 1) "the idea of freedom is based upon the *Bible,* with its extraordinary emphasis upon the dignity of the individual," 2) "Democracy is the only true political expression of Christianity, but that which was sensed by the prophets many centuries before Christ was not given complete and powerful political expression until our nation was formed as a federal union a century and a half ago," and 3) "The people's revolution is on the march! And the Devil and all his angels cannot prevail against it. They cannot prevail for on the side of the people is the Lord." The playlet ended with a chorus and full orchestra playing "Onward Christian, Soldiers," while Price declared,

He giveth power to the faint. To them that have no might, He increaseth strength. They that wait upon the Lord shall mount up with wings as eagles. They shall run and not be weary. They shall walk and not be faint.
Strong in the strength of the Lord. We who fight in the people's cause will not stop until that cause is won.

The successful propagandist knows that rather than create new concepts, the most potent avenue of communication lies in the manipulation of pre-existing principles and beliefs. Thus, the writers, actors, and musicians of *Treasury Star Parade* exploited the values and dispositions that were accepted by most Americans. The death of the member of a loving family—be it by enemy bombardment or by an emotionless Nazi's pistol—was a powerful disruption of idealized family feelings. Portraying the Japanese invaders of China as rapists as well as murderers of innocent school girls in "A Lesson in Japanese" (#53) was antithetical to the concept of the sanctity of human life and dignity, as well as being repugnant to the sense of chivalrous concern for the protection of women and children. Political concepts like freedom, liberty, democracy, and equality were consistently used to paint the enemy in black and the American in white terms. This was most obvious when actress Florence Eldridge read "Freedom" (#8), a poem by a twelve-year old girl from Kentucky. With the orchestra playing "America" softly in the background, Eldridge confidently concluded, "Freedom—it's you!"

The writers of *Treasury Star Parade* often utilized social activities as metaphors in making their emotional points. Sports was handled occasionally in this manner. In "The Second Battle of Brooklyn" (#94) the heroine scolded her boyfriend by likening the world war to the World Series:

Eddie, it's goin' to be the biggest World Series we ever seen. And we gotta win this second battle of Brooklyn, even if we gotta drag old Daffy Vance outta the bullpen.... This ain't for peanuts and a hot frank out in the bleachers, Eddie. This is for all or nothin'. This is for our life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. This is for democracy. This is so the meek, the little people, can inherit the earth.

In a group of programs dedicated to college football fight songs (#284-286), narrator Jimmy Wallington spoke about the war exploits of former college football stars in terms of the gridiron. In this manner, he admonished the Japanese that getting Lt. Woody Adams of Texas Christian University "shoved into the lineup against them is just one of the penalties on the Japs for clipping at Pearl Harbor—not only an all-conference tackle, but a Marine: double trouble!" And of Capt. Clint Frank, an all-American halfback at Yale in 1938, he noted that in "the African arena" Frank "played a good game in taking the ball away from the enemy on downs, and now the home team is out to do some fancy rushing and razzle-dazzle." The tragedy of wartime death was also a part of the sports metaphors used in the *Treasury Star Parade.* Wallington morosely saluted a former University of Washington halfback who had been killed in action in the Pacific: "Well done, Fritz Waskowitz, well done. We'll all talk it over in the Great Locker Room one of these days." More believable, however, was his lament for the loss of Nile Kinnick who had crashed at sea in mid-1943: With "Auld Lang Syne" in the background, he said of the former All-American at the University of Iowa:

> Student, athelete, leader, Phi Beta Kappa—the perfect American, the ideal of Americans.... They won't be seeing Nile around old Iowa anymore. Sing, sons of Iowa, for a college comrade, and for an ideal that did not die in the deep waters with him. Bury your heads and bury your hearts. And stand while old number 24 trots off the field, because you won't be seeing him anymore.

In appealing to basic national values, this governmental series often directed its pitch at specific social and economic groups with their own particular attitudes. Women were the target of those shows which lauded historical and contemporary contributions by women to America. Heroines from the past such as Molly Pitcher (#97), and Mary Dwyer (#15) appeared with present-day women called upon to make heroic sacrifices, whether it be a mother saying "Good-bye" to her son entering the military (#61), a women donating her time to help raise money for bonds (#270), or a generalized salute to the women of America "who march shoulder-to-shoulder with their men" (#23). Other shows spoke to children who, despite their lack of financial independence, were still urged to play a role in the war by buying less-expensive savings stamps or by collecting scrap metal, rubber, and fats. Youthful radio characters such as Henry Aldrich and Maudie Mason, the heroine of *Maudie's Diary,* also appeared in dramas illustrating the ways in which youngsters could aid the war effort.

Among the various economic groups that were targets of the series, farmers were strategic. They were shown their importance, as "America's first duty is to produce food" was the theme of Fredric March's dramatization of "The Average American" (#11). Laborers and factory workers were also urged to greater output—a "guerrilla production program"—in a broadcast where the announcer concluded, "Let's get to peak production; we've got to keep our factories running twenty-four hours a day if we're going to win this war!" (#10). *Treasury Star Parade* also offered

special salutes to taxi drivers (#67), RFD mailmen (#63), and the merchant marines (#257).

II. Appeal For Domestic Unity.

While the overwhelming majority of Americans sympathized with the anti-Fascist side of the war, until December 7, 1941, most citizens were strongly opposed to intervention. Despite momentary emotionalism, after the American entry there was no guarantee that internal dissension would not reappear and threaten the co-ordination of military efforts overseas and supportive activities at home. It was therefore important to the war that domestic unity be forged and maintained. *Treasury Star Parade* helped to meet that need.

Apathetics, slackers, and grumblers were regularly assailed. To the man, woman or child who felt there was little to contribute, there were many shows offering constructive information. It might be a 12-year-old son nagging his indifferent parents about their wartime responsibilities in "Tommy Tucker, Patriot" (#39); in another skit it might be Robert Montgomery portraying a truck driver whose inconsiderate speeding wasted that one gallon of gasoline which might have saved the two American flyers whose plane ran out of fuel and crashed seven miles short of their base. Singers as disparate as Carmen Miranda, the Almanac Singers, and Gladys Swarthout performed songs treating all aspects of the war. And in case a listener became too engrossed with artistry and forgot the intention of the broadcast, statements made throughout the shows—"It's your country, keep it yours;" "Find your job! Do it! And then do a little bit more;" "Buy United States Savings Bonds and Stamps, that is one of the true patriot's jobs today"—were brusque reminders of the serious purpose of the series.

Of particular interest to the program was the problem of dealing with dissenters. National leaders were lionized. As well as portraying Franklin D. Roosevelt as "that strong, gentle, humane man in the White House who watches over us" (#36), *Treasury Star Parade* suggested that governmental and military leaders were carrying "the greatest load on their shoulders since Christ started up the slope of Calvary" (#10). But people who scoffed at the war were not tolerated. In "It Isn't Peanuts," Edward G. Robinson returned as Joe Doakes to chide two pretentious women critical of federal policies and leaders.

> I don't say you shouldn't criticize. You should—we all should, we're Americans. Only, ladies, be sure you're not repeatin' things and sayin' things that the enemy wants you to say and is spreadin' around—things to make us distrust each other and the men who're workin' for us. Gee, because if that thing starts happenin', why—look, did you ever hear that expression they use, "divide and conquer?"

Closer to the expressed purpose of the *Treasury Star Parade*, cynicism about the sale of War Bonds was directly confronted by Lionel Barrymore playing a stingy, self-interested character, in "A Modern Scrooge" (#52). After a night of apparitions, including one in which his soldier-nephew

urgently pleaded for more bullets—"Hurry, for God's sake, hurry!"—he had a change of heart, bought $500 worth of Bonds, sent his nephew a package of gloves and socks, and then became an air raid warden.

The goal of such rhetoric was at once persuasive and confirmative. Those who doubted or were uninformed found in these programs enough information, emotional and rational, with which to decide. Those already committed to the war effort on the homefront, found in the broadcasts enough justification to rededicate their time, energy, and money.

More than a sales vehicle for War Bonds, however, *Treasury Star Parade* was selling the American military commitment. This was strikingly clear in "The Awakening of Johnny Castle" (#57), the story of a conscientious objector. As narrated by Charles Coburn, listeners heard Johnny's naive sincerity in maintaining "I haven't got anything against anybody—even Hitler." He was fired from his job, ridiculed by his soldier-brother—called by the latter a "crackpot," "slacker," "wise guy," and "screwball"—and rebuked by his wife—now called "jellyfish," and "worm." Johnny's father rejected him with the statement, "son, I'm ashamed of you." And a colonel at the draft board blasted him, saying "Thank goodness there's not many like you, or Lord help the U.S.A.!" Amazingly, Johnny was converted only after a bad dream showed him the perfidity of the enemy. After a quick morning trip to the draft board, Johnny insisted that he be assigned to the front lines where he could "shoot those black-hearted cut-throats."

III. Intimidation By Direct Threat

While *Treasury Star Parade* relied principally upon implorations to sacrifice and projections of positive role models, the series often resorted to threatening statements and overtly intimidating images. Horrendous views of the United States after a Nazi victory, statements about the global consequences of defeat, discriptions of the "Nazi Revolution" in action—all proferred overwhelming examples of the enemies' hideous direct threat to American freedom.

Radio dramatist Arch Oboler, whose *Lights Out!* series had raised the level of radio drama since the mid-1930s, heightened the intensity of *Treasury Star Parade* when his "Chicago, Germany" (#59) was produced in the Spring of 1942. Oboler was an advocate of a more strident style of radio propaganda for, as he told a radio conference that same season, American broadcasting needed "an injection of hatred and passionate feeling."[4] His play for the Treasury Department envisioned Chicago after its occupation by German conquerors in 1944. Starring Joan Blondell, the program watched the disintegration of a family—one sister turned to prostitution to support the family, a boyfriend never heard from again, a second sister relegated to slave-labor at a local office—and it predicted mass murder, starvation, the forced Germanization of the city, the institution of racial laws, and the creation of slave-labor camps. The threat was enunciated in poignant fashion when Blondell, with a German officer's voice off-mike, categorized the annihilation of the American way of life.

BLONDELL: What is there in life for somebody "just plain ordinary" like me? To marry someone you love.
OFFICER: Verboten!
BLONDELL: To have children.
OFFICER: Verboten!
BLONDELL: To have a home.
OFFICER: Verboten!
BLONDELL: To walk in the park with your kids.
OFFICER: Verboten!
BLONDELL: To go shoppin' on pay day.
OFFICER: Verboten!
BLONDELL: If you haven't got the money, window shop.
OFFICER: Verboten!
BLONDELL: And see the children growin' up and goin' to school.
OFFICER: Verboten!
BLONDELL: And gettin' smarter than you, and they grow older, and you grow older with the man you love—and just livin' like human beings. But now I'm not a human being anymore. They said so. "Verboten"—everything "Verboten" for me, for people like me who are just plain Americans!... This was their world—they'd won—they'd won...there wasn't any place left in the world for us.

Joan Blondell gave a remarkable performance in Arch Oboler's emotional piece, "Chicago, Germany."

The threat in Oboler's story was underscored by the announcer's final statement: "This has been a play about an America that must never happen—that will never happen—NEVER!!"

At the conclusion of each program, the various announcers usually made pointed appeals to urge listeners to purchase bonds. In these statements are found some of the most threatening language of the series. In one broadcast (#22), the narrator spoke bluntly: "Today, now, we are meeting the supreme test of whether democracy and the American way of life can survive, or deserve to survive. It's up to us." Listeners were warned in one show (#58) that wastage of vital materials was a threat to the entire war effort. "Blood in your tank!," remarked the announcer, "Remember that whenever you think about going out joyriding. Don't use anymore gas than you have to." And another announcement (#62) summarized the issues at stake in the war.

> What we're fighting is for our right to live. Our right to have children and homes—our right to work and to laugh and play. What we're really fighting for is our inalienable right to be normal, happy human beings.... We must work, fight, and save—this is your country, keep it yours!

Conjuring up images of jackbooted conquerors and inhumane deprivation, one speaker concluded (#29),

> How would you feel if you had to step into the gutter to let the Nazis pass? How would you feel working sixty hours a week for thirty-hours pay? How would you feel watching your wife go hungry and your children faced with the prospect of a lifetime of slavery? NEVER—I can almost hear you say that—we must never let that happen in America!

In its portrayal of the Nazi system, *Treasury Star Parade was relentlessly hostile. Many shows depicted life in occupied countries where brutality had replaced reason, where slavery had been substituted for human dignity. In "Education for Death"* (#29), however, the program projected the threat that the German educational system was to the civilized world. Based on a book by an American educator who had taught in Berlin, the broadcast was a shattering indictment of a system educating its children in hatred, death, intolerance, and militarism. Here listeners encountered forceful sterilization of women, eugenics used to create a master race, state-raised children, the eradication of love, forced pregnancy for the betterment of State and Fuhrer, and chanting robot-like young Germans. As Henry Hull emotionally concluded, the threat to America was obvious. Hitler "is making fanatical monsters," said Hull, "we must make reasonable human beings." That this particular broadcast struck a responsive chord in the American audience was evidenced several weeks later when the series presented "Education for Life" (#36) as an American children's answer to the Hitlerian challenge.

The intimidating warnings in the propagandistic rhetoric of *Treasury Star Parade* were not always negative suggestions of the brutal reality of the Axis systems. Positive threats, challenges hurled at the enemy, could also be emotional persuaders. Thus, Paul Henreid, as a German-American

patriot, warned the would-be conquerors in "Two Way Passage" (#56) that he was carrying back to the exploding Old World the tolerant, democratic principles of the New World. With "God Bless America" in the background, he rallied: "And we are coming back. Do you hear that over there, you liars, you gangsters, you traitors and murderers? WE ARE COMING BACK!!" In concluding remarks, the announcer augmented this threat.

That is America's message to the world. The two-way passage—to take liberty and freedom again to all the oppressed, the downtrodden peoples of the earth. We have pledged ourselves to that task and we shall *not* fail.

In a more poetic fashion, the challenge to the world conquerors was levelled in "The Earth Shall Be Sweet Again" (#290).

Beware, beware, oh enemy of mankind, for the time is coming when the whelming wrath of mankind shall break upon you in all its awful rage. We will have the earth sweet, the earth shall be sweet again.

And in religious tones, the positive threat was implicit when Conrad Veidt in "Return to Berchtesgaden" (#64)—with a choir and orchestra slowly rising in crescendo behind him—supplicated the Heavens,

Suffer not, oh my Lord, that injustice triumph on earth. Permit not the unleashed hordes of the anti-Christ to corrupt nations, lay waste countries, dishonor women, destroy children. Suffer not violence to conquer so that men will be forced to put their faith in violence instead of love. Suffer not, oh Lord, that the Lie be stonger than the Truth! Though earth is not Heaven, it cannot be Thy Will that it be Hell. It cannot be Thy Will that all those who bear Thy Name shall be destroyed. For Thou art not only the Kingdom and the Glory, but the Power! Amen.

IV. The Enemy As Demonic.

The image of the enemy contained in the *Treasury Star Parade* was bellicose. Although it seldom treated Mussolini or the Italian enemy, the series uncompromisingly attacked the Nazis and the Japanese for, as one character remarked (#276), "it ain't men we're fightin' with in this war, it's monsters." It is interesting, however, that in approaching these two enemies, the program differed significantly in its approach.

In viewing Germany, the *Treasury Star Parade* singled out the Nazi Party and its leaders for the brunt of its criticism. It showed the citizens of captured nations unmercifully handled by the victors, and it suggested that the average German citizen, himself, was a Nazi Captive. Although the series directly attacked Nazi officials like Joseph Goebbels and Gestapo leader, Heinrich Himmler, the preferred target for rebuke was Adolf Hitler. In one program (#64) he was seen as the repulsive blasphemer, screaming out that "There is no God! I am God. I will hound this God-lie to the ends of the earth and destroy it!" Later, Hitler was heard screaming maniacally of religion, "I will erase it from the earth! I will burn every *Bible* and put away all preachers...until I wipe out religion and all its evils." In another broadcast (#51), his fiendish voice was heard describing his favorite type of "music."

The sweet hum of Heinkels. A roar of Messerschmitts. The Blasting of Stukas. The bombs screaming to earth. The pounding of great guns across the Channel. The bursting of shells. A moan of the stricken. The unbearable agony of the bereaved. And the silence of great cities when the flames have died and life is gone.

In those propagandistic broadcasts dramatizing life under the Nazi victors, life was always shown as torment. The din of machine guns offered projections of the mass slaughter of innocent citizens. Wives, daughters, and sweethearts were often lustfully regarded by German soldiers. Slave-labor conditions were brutally envisioned, and a generalized bestiality marked the German invaders. In a conscientious objector's nightmare in "The Wakening of Johnny Castle," (#57), the hero encountered slavery for himself and sexual abuse for his wife in occupied Poland. In Nazi France he was among one hundred innocent people taken off the street to be shot in revenge for the killing of a German officer. And in China, he endured bombardment from the skies and the death of his wife.

The ultimate enemy was Nazism and the so-called "revolution" it proclaimed. Most movingly the Hitlerian movement was painted in terms of evilness and the diabolical in "The Price of Free World Victory" (#79). Stressing the theme that "Satan has turned loose upon us the insane," this program sketched Nazism as the anti-Christ.

Through the leaders of the Nazi Revolution, Satan is now trying to lead the common men of the whole world back into slavery and darkness. For the stark truth is that the violence preached by the Nazis is the Devil's own religion of darkness.

Concurrent with this attack on Fascism, the German people were often depicted as being duped, coerced, even captured by the Nazis. In "The Bishop of Munster" (#34), a condemned cleric declared that "we are the people—we are Germany and Austria...and they, our rulers, are the enemy.... Pray not for my liberation, but for the liberation of a great people." In "The Silent Women" (#47) it was alleged that "Hitler has silenced the women of Germany, too—has even ordered them not to weep for their own dead." In "I Can't Sleep" (#49) listeners encountered a pitiful, misguided middle-aged German who reported to the Gestapo two of his friends who listened illegally to British radio transmissions. He exposed his friends not from any zealous commitment to a cause, but out of his robot-like "duty to the State."

With great eloquence this attitude was summarized in Fredric March's powerful reading of Thomas Mann's "Christmas Letter to the German People" (#19). Written originally in 1940, this epistle urged the citizens of Germany to reject their Nazi masters. Mann attacked "this war which your present leaders have foisted upon you and the world," and condemned "your masters, who in your name, have plundered the continent they have overrun." The broadcast reached a climax when Mann wrote of Justice, Freedom, and Truth—those values "that make not only a Christian a Christian, but quite simply, a human being a human being. "—for, in his words, the misled Germans "believed in a miserable forger of history, a

counterfeit conqueror...who tells you that through him and through you a world shall dawn..."

The devastating effect of the Nazis in Germany was often illustrated in the attitude of German immigrants living abroad. In a scene from the movie *The Invaders* (#22), one character spoke for all Germans living in Canada when he told a band of Nazi agents: "You and your Hitlerism are like the microbes of some filthy disease, filled with some longing to multiply yourselves until you destroy everything healthy in the world. No! We are not your brothers." A similar hostility to Nazism by German expatriates was notable in an excerpt from Lillian Hellman's successful play and motion picture, *Watch on the Rhine* (#12). In this drama a German-American who had been active in the underground inside Germany, gave up his new American home and security to return to Germany to help friends escape the Nazis, "the sick of the world." Certainly, the *Treasury Star Parade* showed Germans usually sympathetic and cooperative with Nazism. Yet, the persistence of this image of 'good Germans' but 'bad leaders' suggests that American propaganda held out the hope that historic German sensibilities would inevitably overcome Fascism.

While propagandists in *Treasury Star Parade* differentiated the German people from their governmental leaders and philosophy, no similar distinction was made with the Japanese. Rather than stress the twisted leadership in Tokyo, and applaud the civilized people who produced great poetry, drama, literature, and art, the Japanese were seen as inveterate barbarians. The programs frequently made use of racial epithets ("Nips" and "Japs"), physiological disparagement ("yellow bellies," "little brown men," "yellow midgets," and "flat eyes"), as well as analogies with the animal kingdom ("monkeys," "rats," and "reptiles"). One program (#53) even declared that all Japanese spoke with a natural hiss as it explained that "the hiss...is a basic characteristic of Japanese speech."

The racist overtones in such remarks are obvious. Undoutedly, wartime feelings were intense. The propaganda levelled at the Germans was certainly not tepid. But with the white European enemy there was no criticism of racial characteristics. Anti-Japanese racism was also unchecked by organized criticism within the United States. With most Japanese-Americans confined to so-called "relocation camps," there existed no self-interested constituency to protest the broadcasting of racial slurs. Thus, the civility demonstrated in depicting the Germans was absent when dealing with the Oriental threat.

If the Nazis were pictured as madmen, the Japanese were depicted as both butcherous and subhuman. One of the strongest examples of wartime radio propaganda was the episode entitled "And No Birds Shall Sing" (#288). It was first aired in November, 1943, and was a lurid description of the Japanese bombardment and invasion of Hong Kong two years earlier. The program flambouyantly spoke of "the screams and the blood, and the stench and the crushed skulls of the little children on the streets of Hong Kong." It described the invaders, "massacring as they came," as the "beast that burned and bled Hong Kong...beast that ripped and tore." Listeners

heard the enemy machine-gun a nurse, bayonet doctors, and slaughter 52 helpless, injured men as they invaded a hospital. All the nurses were then carried off by the Japanese. After satisfying their captors physical lusts, the nurses were executed.

This type of animalism was also ascribed to the "Japs" in another broadcast, "A Lesson in Japanese" (#53). Ostensibly a dramatization of the "evil" Japanese code of living, "Bushido," the episode appealed to listeners' emotions by depicting the barbarism of the enemy and his leader, "Hirohito, sometimes Hiro-Hitler." The Japanese were heard murdering an American POW in Java. One vignette portrayed them as rapist-murderers of five hundred women from a Chinese college. The "little Japanese men" were ridiculed and reviled. Narrator Fredric March even questioned the civilized quality of the Japanese.

Have you ever watched a well-trained monkey at a zoo? Have you seen how carefully he imitates his trainer? The monkey goes through so many human movements so well that he actually seems to be human. But under his fur, he's still a savage little beast. Now, consider the imitative, little Japanese, who for seventy-five years has built himself up into something so closely resembling a civilized human being that he actually believes he is just that.

V. The Nobility of the Allies.

Treasury Star Parade was unflaggingly positive in its portrayal of the soldiers and people of the Allied nations. Whether they were fighting or enduring Axis aggression, these descriptions told listeners that the cause for which they fought was a oral one, and that the struggle against Fascism was a noble international endeavor. A French woman shot for her activities in the resistance was compared to Joan of Arc (#55); Chinese peasants helping a wounded American flyer spoke admiringly of Abraham Lincoln (#282); and a Czech mother felt the same pain and pride known to American mothers as she watched her son go off to fight Nazism (#73). Be it the projection of saintly historical images, or the analysis of an emotion common to mothers of soldiers, the Treasury Department series showed the United Nations in crusade.

In portrayals of the miserable conditions faced by those in the captured nations, American listeners found self-sacrificing heroes who stood as role models. Certainly the notion of "it can happen here" was important to spurring the purchase of War Bonds, but such characters also preached sacrifice, struggle, and honor. In "Bonus for Berlin" (#274) it was Englishwoman Betty Matthews never losing her spirit or will-to-work despite her two legs being crushed during a bombardment. For Zoya, the Russian high school girl who had become a guerrilla fighter (#47), it was the power to make a ringing speech from the scaffold—after her Nazi captors had flogged, burned, and otherwise tortured her—as she was about to be hanged.

Comrades, comrades, hear me. Do not grieve, I am happy to die. Do as I have done. Kill Them! Destroy them! Burn them!.... You German soldiers, surrender. Surrender before it is too late. Victory will be ours! VICTORY!! VIC..(agh)...(agh).

The world war was depicted as an effort of united peoples fighting barbarism. Broadcasts spoke praisefully of the Free French forces of General Charles de Gaulle, the bravery of the Australian military, the valor and dedication of the Chinese troops of Chaing Kai-Shek. Radio stars Amos and Andy lauded all resistance movements as they thumbed through a postage stamp album (#71). In "The Silent Women" (#47) a continent on the march was described as a pattern of confident voices proclaimed: "We are the guerrilla fighters, the anti-Quislings, the invisible army marching from the English Channel to the Russian front. From Narvik to Athens, Yugoslavia, Greece." Racial prejudice was totally absent when "Ballad for Bataan" (#43) praised the fighting spirit of the Philippine fighters who stood with American defenders to battle the Japanese. "Brown and white they stood together," spoke the narrator, "under the blazing sun and the hot wind—and the sun burns them all the same color—and their blood is of the same color."

Even the fires of anti-Communism, which had kept the United States and the Soviet Union apart for over two decades, were abated in the reconciliation compelled by Fascism. Russians were depicted as fighting for a return to pre-war freedom. The Red Army was warmly lauded in one broadcast (#66), and the anthem of international communism, the "Internationale," was even blended into the musical arrangement of another (#79). The "bogey men" of slave-labor camps, unloving automatons, and international warmongers—the cliches of anti-Communism—were shelved by American propagandists for the duration of the war.

This spirt of Allied nobility and purpose was most dramatically expressed in "The Songs of the United Nations" (#72). Here, Igor Gorin sang for the first time on the air "The Song of the United Nations," written by Dmitri Shastakovitch "on the Russian battlefields." With lyrics such as, "a new day for mankind is dawning, our children shall live proud and free," the composition was a utopian masterpiece. In this program, too, happy songs of an earlier day became defiant songs of a day to come. From Czechoslovakia, Poland, the Netherlands, and the Soviet Union popular music revealed the common purpose of waging war. With "America" hummed in the background, narrator Vincent Price melded the energies generated by the show into a final note of dedication.

There will be no sacrifice too great, no effort too mighty that we will not make it to achieve that end. In our hands is the future peace and happiness of the earth. And we have sworn to preserve it with our own effort, and with the help of God. Amen.

VI. Uplift Through Entertainment.

The propagandists of *Treasury Star Parade* understood that moral indignity and solemn affirmation could be carried to a point of diminishing returns. Frequently, therefore, they constructed their broadcasts around lighter forms of entertainment. These programs usually featured music from the top bands and pop singers of the day, or situation comedy from well-known radio personalities. While these shows certainly contained an

appeal to patriotic feelings, they avoided serious dramatic skits, and added variety and a sense of balance to the entire series.

From Harry James and Bob Crosby, to Vaughn Monroe and Kay Kyser the infectious sound of "swing" music was performed in the name of Treasury Bonds. In a milder vein, the traditional rhythms of Ted Lewis and Vincent Lopez, the Latin beat of Xavier Cugat, and the sedate quality of Fred Waring and His Pennsylvanians judiciously blended pop and patriotism. Big-name singers like Jane Froman, Frank Parker, and Rudy Vallee also recorded programs. On these occasions *Treasury Star Parade* became a pulsating jukebox offering listeners recognizable hit tunes and freshly written war songs.

This record label appeared on transcriptions of at least 300 different 15-minute programs from the Treasury Department during the first years of World War II.

Radio comedy was a significant change-of-pace for the series. Fibber McGee and Molly (Jim and Marian Jordan) jested, and George Burns and Gracie Allen punned when they made their respective appearances on the series. When the cast of *Blondie*—the popular CBS series starring Arthur Lake as Dagwood Bumstead, and Penny Singleton as his wife, Blondie—performed in late 1943, the skit sounded more like a topical sitcom than a stark drama, the traditional fare of the Treasury series. But such levity was needed. Ultimately, emotional bombardment from *Treasury Star Parade* could become unnerving. Listeners with loved ones in the war could become increasingly apprehensive had the series relied solely upon heavy-handed propagandistic approaches. The musical programs were energetic and uplifting without overlooking the purpose behind the broadcasts. The guest bandleaders and singers made speeches throughout the quarter-hour, reminding listeners of the need to buy bonds. And the radio comedians, in their comic routines and direct appeals, also underscored the true goal of the program.

As aired during World War II, *Treasury Star Parade* was the longest-running and most overtly-propagandistic program in broadcasting history. During the months before the attack on Pearl Harbor, the Nazis and the Japanese were as brutal as they were after that date. But in the pre-war period, commercial broadcasting steered as neutral a course as possible. Even newscasters were warned against showing bias when reporting the details of Axis aggression. Within ten weeks of the American entry into the war, however, *Treasury Star Parade* was broadcasting statements and plays charged with hate, indignation, and patriotism. Nothing like it had even been heard on American radio.

During this fearful period of American history, many voices were raised in support of using commercial radio to communicate propaganda to American listeners. Perhaps the fullest expression of this attitude was found in Sherman H. Dyer's book, *Radio in Wartime*. Writing in 1942, Dyer warned that "public support cannot be mobilized on an exclusive diet of truth, news and information." He called for "a judicious admixture of propaganda, for propaganda endeavors to convert initial decision into mass concurrence and united action." Dyer argued for what he called, "democratic propaganda," the emotional manipulation of democratic ideals by a cadre of trained technicians which understood that it could "respect no single fact, no truth, so much that it will refuse to alter it, if it does not fit into the total emotional pattern it is designing."[5]

One might dismiss the government and its sponsorship of *Treasury Star Parade* as a product of the time, an aberration produced in an atmosphere of tension and apprehension. This argument becomes even more creditable when it is recalled that many responsible citizens felt that commercial radio should be totally controlled by the government in time of war. Nevertheless, the fact remains that *Treasury Star Parade* was a dangerous precedent. Even though the various programs were written, produced, and enacted by non-governmental talents, the series was coordinated from Washington and bore the seal of the federal

administration. And given the fact that later administrations would also utilize broadcasting to further their own crusades—be it anti-Communism, the Korean or Vietnamese wars, or naked political self-preservation—the implications of this radio series are evident. A free system of broadcasting should not tolerate such direct governmental propagandizing as was found in *Treasury Star Parade.* When it does, it becomes an adjunct of the state rather than a conduit for truthful information and genuine entertainment. This was a lesson that was lost on wartime America and, unfortuntely, on much of the post-war era, too.

Notes

[1]Geoffrey T. Hellman, "Profiles: Any Bonds Today?," *The New Yorker,* January 22, 1944, p.29.

[2]It should be remembered that the Department of the Treasury was not the only government agency producing programs for commercial radio. The Office of War Information produced informational shows, and the Department of War produced *This Is the Army* and the long-running variety series, *The Army Hour.* Other direct government incursions into commercial broadcasting came from the Office of Civilian Defense, Department of Labor, Department of Justice, Office of Emergency Management, and the Co-ordinator of Inter-American Affairs. According to the National Association of Broadcasters, American radio stations during the period May through July 1942, carried 1,541,640 spot announcements and 186,075 live and transcribed programs in support of federal war projects. This represented a total of 35,995 hours of free air time. See *Variety,* September 9, 1942, p.47.

[3]Those numbers cited after references to specific broadcasts are the program numbers assigned by the Department of Treasury. The recordings used for this analysis are from a personal collection of more than 140 of the first 300 programs in the *Treasury Star Parade* series.

[4]*Variety,* May 6, 1942, p.29.

[5]Sherman H. Dyer, *Radio in Wartime.* (New York, Greenberg, 1942), pp.84-87.

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Women Radio Pioneers

By Catharine Heinz

Chicago, 1922. "I don't know what a radio station is, Walter," said *Judith Cary Waller* to Walter Strong of the Chicago *Daily News* when he asked her come to run a new station.[1] She accepted his offer, however, and produced station WGU's (later WMAQ) opening program on April 13, 1922, with the help of an engineer.[2] Metropolitan Opera star Sophie Braslau, a performer on that first program, had never heard of radio.[3]

Judith Waller as she appeared in 1933.

Chicago, 1922. *Myrtle Stahl,* when asked to join WDAP (later WGN) by co-owner Thorne Donley, responded "Radio? What is radio?" Her first assignment was to take home a crystal set and listen; her second was to open two barrels of mail that had accumulated. She immediately asked permission to hire help—nearly every letter contained a dollar bill or smaller sum sent to WDAP in appreciation of its broadcasts.[4]

Nashville, early 1920s. *Hester Kyler* was doing office work but "broadcasting on the side" by playing the piano on what was to become WSM. Miss Kyler also traveled with an orchestra and thus had the opportunity to broadcast in many cities in the United States. She remembers once singing "very softly right into the mike" and the radio audience thought she sounded like Morton Downey.[5] Then in 1929 she joined her new husband to operate station WTNT in Nashville.[6]

Boston, early 1920s. *Marjorie Mills'* name was already well known on the women's pages of the Boston *Herald.* "I was merely tolerated on the *Herald,*" she says, "but along came a new medium [radio] and my boss thought it would be a good advertisement." John Shepard [later head of the Yankee Network in New England] "suggested that I go and take a part," so she began to broadcast over station WEEI from a test kitchen the *Herald* had built facing busy Tremont Street. She reminisces that shortly after World War I, the Edison Electric Illuminating Company of Boston began to manufacture electrical appliances and at the same time, frozen foods were being marketed. Miss Mills took full advantage by promoting these products in her new women's program.[7]

New York City, 1923. Concert and stage musician *Dorothy Gordon* made her radio debut with considerable trepidation in a folk song concert on WEAF. Announcer Graham McNamee assured her that she indeed would be heard if she merely stood in front of that "little tiny round thing" and sang. She was heard in Capetown, South Africa.[8] While traveling on concert tours throughout the United States and Canada, Mrs. Gordon would broadcast children's programs on local stations. On one brutally hot day in Richmond, Virginia, she recalls that studio personnel put ice in barrels and directed a fan across them to provide air conditioning. Just as she sang "a soft beautiful phrase" the ice began to crack loudly over the air.[9] She was named music director of CBS' "American School of the Air" (1931-33)[10] which was directed to schools. The mail response to the series indicated that rural adults, as well as children, were hearing music for the first time. This cured her aversion to radio, made her realize its "tremendous significance" and she decided that she wanted to become part of it.[11] When Mrs. Gordon produced and broadcast "Children's Corner," a dramatized story and song program for CBS beginning in 1936,[12] Wheatena was the sponsor, but on her terms: she would not allow commercials to interrupt the dramatic continuity, and she would permit no box top promotions.[13]

Washington, D.C., 1924. *Madge Tucker* (later Mrs. William Burke Miller) relinquished a summer vacation at home in Illinois in order to substitute on a children's radio program on WRC. She remained on that program and also began to produce one-act plays for the station.[14] Miss

Tucker went to New York City in 1926 where she became the first continuity writer for the fledgling NBC network.[15] Children's programs were her forte ("The Children's Hour," "White Rabbit Bus," "The Lady Next Door," and others), but she also announced, gave weather and market reports, and wrote and produced all kinds of programs. "I was the only production lady at NBC," she says of her early network years.[16]

Clay Center, Neraska, mid 1920s. *Evadna Hammersley,* a radio singer at age 12, helped form a high school music group which appeared weekly over KMMJ in 1926 and 1927.[17] At about the same time, she read letters and children's messages to the explorers in the Arctic over KFKX, the Westinghouse experimental station in Hastings, Nebraska.[18] "Of course at that time no one got paid," she explains. "You did these things for fun... and for the experience."[19] Miss Hammersley started to work at KOA, Denver, in the mid 1930s where she first did story research for a dramatic series and continuity writing and editing.[20] She became director of women's programs and produced and starred in "KOA Home Forum," using the NBC-owned name, Lora Price, until she obtained permission to use her own.[21]

New York City, 1926. *Edythe J. Meserand* joined the press department of the new NBC. Assigned to the WEAF-Red Network desk, she learned to ghost write press releases for her frequently absent boss.[22] Soon Miss Meserand was appointed press contact for radio editors who wished to interview NBC talent for feature stories in their publications.[23] She left NBC in 1931, and joined the Hearst Organization as their "Musical Clock Girl" on WGBS. She broadcast news reports from six to nine each morning.[24] She became assistant program director and later became promotion-advertising director for the ten Hearst stations.[25] She joined WOR in the late 1930s.[26]

Boston, 1926. *Mae Horne* (later Mrs. Joe Lopez) was walking through Winter Place, saw a sign, "WNAC Broadcasting Studios," went upstairs to the station and applied for a job. She started as secretary to two men in children's programming, answered the phone, and acted as receptionist.[27]

New York City, 1927. A friend told *Agnes Law* of a position requiring music and business expertise at Columbia Broadcasting. "Why I never herd of it," Miss Law told her. "Nobody else ever has... [it] just started," replied her friend. Miss Law, who had a music degree and considerable business experience, was hired at $35.00 a week as assistant to the program manager of the Judson Radio Program Division of CBS. "CBS was on the air only ten hours a week, broadcasting from rented facilities at WOR," she recalls.[28] Her first assignment was to correlate vocal numbers with the orchestral numbers submitted by Howard Barlow and Donald Voorhees.[29] Later, she was asked to hire, train, and supervise young women in the program department who typed programs going to the press and scripts for broadcast. She also organized program analysis and program information systems.[30] In 1940 she started a formal library for CBS, a move she had recommended to the network in the mid-1930s.[31]

New York City, 1927. *Marion Murray* (Cornell) started to work at the

new NBC music library as cataloger of operas. Mrs.Cornell recalls that musicians who performed on NBC in 1927-28 were not on the payroll and either furnished their own music or played from memory. The music library borrowed sheet music from the New York Public Library and rented opera scores from a music company. There was no attempt to clear copyrighted music. "People were glad to have the music. . . on the air," she reports.[32]

Charlotte, circa 1919. As *Gertrude Hardeman* remembers it, she played "The Littlest Rebel" in a three-part three-day version on a radio station. The play was broadcast in honor of Jefferson Davis' birthday during an old soldiers' reunion in Charlotte. She moved to Louisville in 1928, "the year Barry Bingham [now chairman of the board of the Louisville *Courier-Journal* and of WHAS] came back from Harvard." Upon her arrival, she wrote station WHAS to say she wanted to produce a Sunday School program, and according to her memory of it, WHAS wrote back something equivalent to "Hallelujah!" In those days she also appeared on other WHAS radio shows, primarily "WHAS Players" along with Barry Bingham.[33]

Detroit, 1929. *Ruth Crane* (later Mrs. William H. Schaefer) was looking for a job. She applied for two, one as a fashion writer at the J.L. Hudson department store and the other at radio station WJR. Accepted by both places, she decided to take the WJR position because it was within walking distance of her home. The manager of WJR told her, "There isn't really any job open, but we do need people and if you can make a job for yourself, okay—thirty dollars a week to start." She built her open-ended position to become commercial editor, women's editor, and to produce and star on the six-day-a-week program, "Mrs. Page's Home Economies" (sic).[34] Her top salary after fifteen years was $85.00 a week.[35] In 1944 she moved to WMAL, Washington, D.C. to become its women's activities director and produce, write and star in the daily "Modern Woman" program.[36]

Detroit, 1930. *Fran Harris* began to work for Himelhoch Brothers, a retail store. That year, she recalls, "Mr. Himelhoch did a wild and far out thing. He bought three five-minute segments a week" on WWJ to promote the store's Christmas sales. Mrs. Harris, a junior assistant in the store's advertising department, was elected to produce the radio programs, the first commercially sponsored retail programs in Detroit. After doing the advertising program, she asked WWJ manager, Ty Tyson, if the future of radio held anything for women. He offered her a 30-minute household hint show six days a week for $150 a month on which she played "Julie Hayes" until the program's demise in 1934.[37]

Boston, 1930. *Mildred Carlson,* who was teaching at Miss Farmer's School of Cookery, was invited by WBZ to try out for "The Home Forum" women's program. After her audition she was told she could have the position on trial for ten days or so; she stayed on for 26 years.[38]

Scranton, 1932. *Rose Florey Fiorani* and her husband, a tenor, started the area's first live talent program on WGBI. They operated out of an office in the kitchen of their home. She was the self-appointed business manager of the station and became its first lady announcer.[39] At that time, the station was on the air one hour a week, on Sundays between 9:00 and 10:00

p.m. The Fioranis produced programs over six stations, including the then innovative "Italian Hour," broadcast in that language. [It is still on the air.] In 1953 they bought their own radio station in Pittston, Pa.[40]

Birmingham, 1932. *Evelyn Walker* was a high school speech and drama teacher when a local radio station asked her to produce her students' plays on the air. "They were only too glad to have local talent just to fill the hours of the day," she recalls. She produced radio plays, first on a rotating basis from station to station, and later for WAPI, until 1944 when she became chairman of schools (sic) radio for the City of Birmingham.[41]

Greenville, South Carolina, 1933. Mrs. *Alice Wyman* and her husband were staying at the Imperial Hotel when they heard that a new radio station, WFBC, was about to open with studios on the hotel mezzanine. She went downstairs and offered her services. On her first program she sang to her own piano accompaniment. "It was a disaster," she remembers. She approached the station manager with an idea for a woman's program; it developed into the daily "Housekeepers Chat" on WFBC in September of 1933 and continued until "the week of the World Series in 1956." In addition, she became the station's music librarian and was its program director during World War II. She became WFBC's traffic manager, and when the station began its television programming [December 1953] she not only sang the National Anthem on the opening program, but she also added her own daily woman's show to its schedule.[42]

Nashville, circa 1935. *Hank Fort* (later Mrs. William E. McAuliffe) obtained a two-word part in a play to be broadcast over WSM for which she was to be paid $2.50. In her southern accent she delivered her two words, "Fire Away!" The director stopped the show. "What did you say?" he asked. She repeated her line. She said, "Okay, just pay me a dollar and a quarter and I'll say 'shoot'." In 1935 Dinah Shore had an idea for a "Rhythm and Romance" program for WSM. Miss Fort composed the musical theme and couplets to introduce the songs on that program; she also wrote and announced the show.[43] She became a well-known composer of both music and lyrics of such songs as "Put Your Shoes on, Lucy," "I Didn't Know the Gun Was Loaded," and "Save Your Confederate Money, Boys, the South Will Rise Again." An album of her serious songs, "My Favorite Friend," was released in 1965. She also wrote innumerable jingles, commercials and musical radio programs.[43]

Wichita, 1936. After brief exposure on an amateur hour for pre-teens and becoming a "salaried" radio person during high school, *Ann Shaffer* went to Wichita, Kansas, to enroll in the university. A young newspaperman invited her to look at a "soon-to-open station" (KANS) and her plans changed. Before the afternoon was over, she had auditioned and was hired as a performer.[44]

Western Hemisphere, 1938. Already a renowned foreign correspondent and pilot, *Fay Gillis Wells* with her husband, Linton, broadcast the first live two-way programs between Latin America and the United States on "The Magic Key of RCA." In that year, too, they appeared as guests on the "Lux Radio Theatre," because they had used Lux in their travels through

Africa.[45]

* * *

After such usually inauspicious and often happenstance beginnings in the broadcast industry, how did these women pioneers of the 1920s and 1930s fare in their careers? They did well indeed. *Judith Waller* as manager of WMAQ, and later as an executive of NBC's Central Division in Chicago, became the industry's stateswoman of public affairs and educational broadcasting. Her vision of radio's potential had been realized when she wrote in 1946, "Radio broadcasting is not just a business; it is also an art. It is the newest means of mass communication, and it is one of the most potent of present-day forces. It follows in the footsteps of the press and goes beyond it. It has become the Fifth Estate, a factor in the life of the world without which no one can reckon."[46] Her long broadcast career carried her into the beginnings of television where she is credited with the choice of Dr. Frances Horwich (Miss Frances) for the successful and long-lived children's series, "Ding Dong School." After her official retirement in 1954 she was named consultant to the novel educational television experiment, the Midwest Airborne Program for Television Instruction.[47] During *Myrtle Stahl's* forty years in broadcasting, all at WGN in Chicago, her responsibilities ranged from programming to management and her philosophy of public affairs and educational broadcasts matched those of her colleague, Miss Waller. She retired as WGN's director of public service, education and religion in [1962].[48] *Hester Kyler, Rose Fiorani* and *Ann Shaffer* are examples of the few women who achieved station management status early in the industry. They became co-owners and programming executives of radio stations in Kentucky, Pennsylvania and Colorado, respectively.

Marjorie Mills became a household word in the Boston area because of her newspaper and radio exposure. After her WEEI home program, she graduated to interview programs on the Shepard Network on WNAC, and later on WBZ in the era of early television which she found "a little difficult...it was very restrictive." She is proud of her temerity in telling Dorothy Thompson, who never read her radio fan mail, that she should read and respond to it. "You'll feel that you're useful if you're in communication," she advised Miss Thompson.[49]

Dorothy Gordon became an international figure as a result of her "Youth Forum" broadcasts. When she conceived the idea for a junior "Town Meeting of the Air," *The New York Times* responded favorably and the first "New York Times Youth Forum" went on the air over WMCA on April 3, 1943, and later to WQXR.[50] The series went to NBC in 1945, to NBC Television in 1951[51] and continued until her death in 1970 at age 81.[52] Through that one program series alone, Mrs. Gordon brought together thousands of young people to discuss world and local issues with guests of *Who's Who* stature.

Evadna Hammersley, a published poet, wrote the poetry for "A Rhapsody of the Rockies," a Sunday morning network program, for seven

years. She left KOA in 1959 to join the American Sheep Producers Council where she is director of education and information (1975), produces and appears on a package radio program aired on fifty stations and writes lamb cookbooks.[53]

In 1930 *Gertrude Hardeman,* still a young woman, moved on to New York City where she produced "Children's Sunday School" for WOR and became "Pollyanna, the Glad Girl" for Pollyanna Shoes on CBS. Among the children's network program series she wrote and produced on NBC were "The Adventures of the Maltex Safety Soldiers," on which she played Lizbeth Ann; and "The Tattered Man." In the late 1930s, Mrs. Hardeman moved back to Louisville and opened her own advertising agency. She is credited with inventing the integrated commercial in the mid-1940s.[54]

In 1949 *Madge Tucker* (Miller) moved into television with her "The Lady Next Door" children's program on which she had produced, written and performed over NBC radio since 1929. She produced television programs for all three networks until her retirement from broadcasting in 1952.[55] *Edythe Meserand* became Assistant Director of News and Special Features at WOR, and in 1949, WOR-TV, New York City. She was founder and first president of Amerian Women in Radio and Television (1951-52).[56] She organized several successful campaigns of Mary Anne Krupsak in New York state politics in the 1970s. She still runs her own advertising agency from Windy Hill Farm in upstate New York (1977).[57]

Mae Horne Lopez married a broadcaster and retired from the industry in 1931, at which time she was program traffic analyst for the Yankee Network.[58]

Agnes Law was one of the founders of American Women in Radio and Television (1951).[59] Her experiences as librarian of CBS were the basis of the play "Desk Set," played by Shirley Booth on Broadway in 1956, and by Katharine Hepburn in the motion picture (1957).[60]

Marion Murray Cornell became an expert on music copyright and clearance while at NBC. She retired after 34 years with the network.[61]

Ruth Crane Schaefer was a founder of and national president of the Association of Women Broadcasters (the predecessor of AWRT).[62] Her "Modern Woman" radio program continued but also moved to WMAL-TV in 1947. Then in 1950, management added the weekly "Shop by Television" program to her schedule; eminently successful, it frequently resulted in $6,000 worth of telephone sales per program for a Washington, D.C. department store.[63] After more than 26 years on the air, she retired in 1955.[64]

In 1943 *Fran Harris* won a position as newscaster of WWJ, replacing a *Detroit News* "rip and read" man who enjoyed his liquor.[65] She was the first woman television broadcaster in Michigan (1946) and in 1964 she relinquished her on-camera career and moved into management at WWJ, retiring ten years later.[66]

Mildred Carlson took on a twice-a-week television interview program in 1949 added to her radio show, and was named food editor of the Boston *Post.* She left WBZ in 1956 to become an advertising and public relations executive until her retirement in 1973.[67]

After her many years of producing plays for radio, *Dr. Evelyn Walker* became a performer in 1947 as "Miss Ann" of "Miss Ann and the Comics," a seven-day-a-week children's radio program which ran for ten years. She is now (1975) head of television programming for the Birmingham Schools, and a staff producer for the Alabama Television Network.[68]

Mrs. *Alice Wyman,* after her successful career at WFBC, went to the University of South Carolina to produce television programs about the university on WIS-TV, Columbia. She retired in 1970 after 37 years in broadcasting.[69]

After a brilliant career as composer-writer-singer-broadcaster, *Hank Fort* McAuliffe came to Washington, D.C. in 1952.[70] There she moved in top political and social circles and continued to write songs, including one for Speaker of the House Sam Rayburn.[71]

Fay Wells became White House Correspondent for Storer Broadcasting in 1964, one of the few newswomen who have accompanied presidents of the United States on their international diplomatic tours.[72]

* * *

This article presents a biographical melange of women who joined the new broadcasting industry in the 1920s and 1930s as opportunities opened up for them. The examples are based solely on those women whose oral histories and related biographical information are contained in the Broadcast Pioneers Library. What these women saw and what they thought of the new communications phenomenon deserves further serious study.

Notes

When page numbers are indicated for interviews, they refer to the typed transcript. Locations indicated in footage, e.g., 664', refer to audiotaped interviews for which there is no transcript.

[1]Judith Waller interview with Frank Ernest Hill (Chicago: June 1, 1951), p. 5.

[2]Judith Waller interview with Len O'Connor on WMAQ, "News on the Spot" (Chicago: April 11, 1952), 664'.

[3]Judith Waller interview with Mr. Philbrook for a Cedar Rapids, Iowa, radio station (Chicago: March 6, 1949), 92'.

[4]Myrtle Stahl interview with William S. Hedges [Chicago: 1965], p. 2.

[5]Hester Kyler interview with Lin Folk (Nashville: March 16, 1976), p. 1.

[6]Ibid., p. 3.

[7]Marjorie Mills interview with Freddie Seymour (Boston: Dec. 9, 1975), p. 2.

[8]Dorothy Gordon interview with Frank Ernest Hill (New York: Nov. 1950-Jan. 1951), pp. 6, 8.

[9]Ibid., pp. 16-17.

[10]Ibid., Dorothy Gordon chronology, n.p.

[11]Gordon-Hill interview, op. cit., p. 28.

[12]Ibid., pp. 31, 34.

[13]Ibid., p. 41.

[14]Madge Tucker Miller interview with Edwin L. Dunham (South Wallingford, Vermont: May 29, 1965), pp. 1-2.

[15]Ibid, pp. 3, 6.

[16]Ibid., pp. 8-14.

[17]Evadna Hammersley interview with Mary Lou Chapman (Denver: Dec. 7, 1975), p. 2; "Backgrounder: Evadna Hammersley," p. 1.

[18] Ibid., p. 3; p. 1.
[19]Hammersley interview, p. 2.
[20]Hammersley interview, p. 4; "Backgrounder," p. 1.
[21]"Backgrounder," p. 1.
[22]Edythe J. Meserand interview with Catharine Heinz (Esperance, New York: Aug. 31, 1977), pp. 1-2.
[23]Ibid., p. 4.
[24]Ibid., p. 17.
[25]Ibid., p. 20.
[26]Ibid., pp. 21-23.
[27]Mae Horne Lopez interview with Edwin L. Dunham (Greenville, Rhode Island: Aug. 17, 1965), p. 1.
[28]Agnes Law interview with Lenore Kingston (Los Angeles: March 8, 1976), pp. 1-2.
[29]Agnes Law biography, p. 1.
[30]Law interview, pp. 3-4.
[31]Law biography, pp. 2-3.
[32]Marion Murray Cornell interview with Edwin L. Dunham (Fort Pierce, Fla: Nov. 11, 1965), pp. 1-5.
[33]Gertrude Hardeman interview with Julie Shaw (Louisville: Dec. 5, 1975), p. 3; "Outstanding Events in Broadcasting Career of Gertrude Hardeman," p. 1.
[34]Ruth Crane Schaefer interview with Pat Mower (Washington, D.C.: Nov. 18, 1975), pp. 1-4.
[35]Ibid., p. 7.
[36]*Broadcasting*, Jan. 26, 1948, pp. 48+.
[37]Fran Harris taped interview with Judy Koteles (Detroit: Feb. 2, 1976), 90'-270'; "Biographical Information," March 1976, p. 1.
[38]Mildred Carlson interview with Freddie Seymour (Boston: Dec. 11, 1975), p. 2.
[39]Rose Florey Fiorani interview with William Thomas Rice, Sr. (Scranton: Dec. 5, 1975), p. 2.
[40]Ibid., pp. 4-7.
[41]Evelyn Walker interview with Rosemary Lucas (Birmingham: Dec. 1, 1975), pp. 1-2.
[42]Alice Wyman interview with Audrey Hunt (Columbia, South Carolina: Dec. 3, 1975), pp. 2-5.
[43]Hank Fort McAuliffe interview with Edwin L. Dunham (Washington, D.C.: Jan. 12, 1966), pp. 2-9.
[44]Ann Shaffer interview with Hazel Newton (Boulder, Colorado: Dec. 8, 1975), pp. 1-2.
[45]Fay Gillis Wells interview with Rochelle Moskowitz (Washington, D.C.: June 17, 1974), p. 29; conversation with Catharine Heinz, Dec. 22, 1976.
[46]Judith Waller, *Radio: the Fifth Estate* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1946), p. 3.
[47]Judith Waller interview with William S. Hedges [Chicago: June 25, 1965], pp. 2-6.
[48]Ibid., pp. 1,4.
[49]Mills, op. cit., pp. 3-5.
[50]Gordon-Hill, op. cit., pp. 85-93.
[51]Gordon-Hedges, op. cit., p. 2.
[52]Dorothy Gordon obituary, *The New York Times*, May 12, 1970, p. 39.
[53]Hammersley "Backgrounder," pp. 1-2.
[54]Hardeman "Outstanding Events..." pp. 1-2; miscellaneous clippings.
[55]Miller, op. cit., pp. 13-16.
[56]Meserand, op. cit., pp. 26-91.
[57]Ibid., pp. 93-94.
[58]Lopez, op. cit., p. 5.
[59]Law, op. cit., pp. 17-19.
[60]Ibid., pp. 7-9; Law biography, p. 3.
[61]Cornell, op. cit., pp. 10-11.
[62]Schaefer, op. cit., p. 26.
[63]Ibid., pp. 13-14.
[64]Ibid., p. 26.
[65]Harris, 470'.
[66]Harris, "Biographical Information," pp. 1-2.
[67]Carlson, op. cit., pp. 4-5.

[68]Walker, op. cit, pp. 1, 4.
[69]Wyman, op. cit., pp. 1, 7-8.
[70]McAuliffe, op. cit., pp. 16-17.
[71]Ibid., pp. 22-37.
[72]Wells, op. cit., p. 40.

Catharine Heinz has been director, Broadcast Pioneers Library, Washington, D.C., since the Library was opened in April of 1971. She is also Vice President-Secretary of the Broadcast Pioneers Educational Fund, Inc., the foundation which governs and endows that library. In 1959, she organized the Television Information Office Library in New York City where she was head librarian for more than eleven years.

Daytime Radio Programming for the Homemaker 1926-1956

By Morleen Getz Rouse

Long imprisoned within the four walls of her kitchen, as were millions of her sisters in suburban cottages and city apartments, she drifted through her traditional historic role, remaining prosaically at home and living through the old monotony of caring for husband, house, and family. Allowed to vote for the first time only six years before, the average woman of 1926 still did all her own work, confined in a colorless, dreary, unelectrified kitchen—confined not merely physically, but mentally. Her contacts each day with those outside her home circle were necessarily brief and hurried. The very nature of her work confined and encompassed her, never for an instant allowing her to escape from its burden. In a day in which almost all foods were prepared in the kitchen from scratch, and in which the wash was boiled and most clothing still handmade, the average American woman was too busy to reach out for new contacts or, in fact, to feel the need for them. With an unconscious philosophic acceptance, she took life as she found it, but not without the toll of an unexpressed dissatisfaction. But then came the housewife's electronic liberator: radio[1]

Though the description above might be considered melodramatic, the daily demands on the typical American homemaker in the 1920's were anything but glamorous. Lacking the many timesaving appliances and luxuries we have available in the 1970's, the housewife and mother in the 1920's was literally the "chief cook and bottle washer." Of course there was a great deal of pride in surveying a counterfull of newly canned tomatoes in Mason Jars. But the homemaker's life in the 1920's B.R. (before radio) lacked one very important element that became so abundant once radio, and later television, arrived in her home—that element was companionship.

This paper provides an overview of that programming which was directed at the homemaker from 1926-1956. It categorizes those programs which served as companion, teacher, wet nurse and friend to millions of women throughout America during the daytime hours. Overall, the programs were not very sophisticated when judged by contemporary standards, but then, radio as a whole was not very sophisticated. Radio was an infant, teething successfully on celebrities of the day, with boundless energy and enthusiasm, and a homey intimacy non-existent in any other entertainment medium.

In most categories, several show titles are provided and one show is featured. The programs highlighted were chosen because they are representative of the category, not because they were necessarily the most enduring, popular or financially successful.

The sources consulted for this article include broadcasting trade

journals, popular magazines of the different periods, broadcast texts, homemaker's journals, Procter & Gamble archive materials, tapes and discs of early radio shows, radio and television entertainment guides, and related literature. Too often the impression is created that the only programs broadcast in radio's infancy were such successful hits as "Amos 'n' Andy","Easy Aces","The Goldbergs","Lum and Abner" and "Lowell Thomas and the News." In competition with, and supplementing these network radio hits, were shows designed to meet the specialized needs of the American homemaker. In the early years of radio there was an air of experimentation with programming. What direction the medium would take had not been firmly established. Some early pioneers saw radio as the greatest possible teacher, capable of educating the masses.

However, early in the development of broadcasting in this country the decision was made that the new medium should operate competitively in the marketplace of free enterprise. With this decision, the profit motive became the most important element in measuring a station's or a network's success or failure and in determining program types and content.

Experimentation in radio programming for the homemaker during the 1920's and 1930's took several forms, most notably shows to entertain, shows to teach, shows to help raise children, shows that offered conversation, and shows on cooking and shopping. But, soap operas were the most successful, with more than fifty on the air by the late 1930's. There is probably no advertiser more closely associated with the soap opera than Procter & Gamble. Its involvement with programming for the homemaker goes back as far as 1923, and includes such shows as "Ruth Turner's Washing Talks" for Chipso, and "Mrs. Reilly" for Ivory soap. On the theory that women at home enjoyed dulcet, friendly voices, P & G originated "Mrs. Blake's Radio Column" in 1931. Broadcast five mornings a week, a different friend of Mrs. Blake's hosted the show each day for a different P & G product: Emily Post for Camay, Mrs. Reilly for Ivory, "Sisters of the Skillet" for Crisco (two days), and a monologist on the fifth day.[2]

The homemaker-oriented programs that followed in the 1940's and early 1950's were very similar to those offered in the 20's and 30's. There were improvements in talent techniques and technology, but the content remained essentially the same as that in previous decades. As the profit motive became most important, and as TV began to challenge radio's existence in the late 1940's and early 1950's, radio went through a major transition period. Radio began using music extensively. Of course there had always been music on radio, but in the early 1950's there was more and more music of the recorded variety and less of everything else: talk, comedy, drama, games and quizzes. As radio experienced the transition, homemakers began turning to TV. But from 1926 through the early 1950's, network, regional and local radio provided the homemaker with the following programs created for her very special needs.

The Shows That Did Everything: "Housekeeper's Chat","The Heinz Magazine of the Air"

From 1926 through 1944—for almost nineteen years, for fifteen minutes a day, for five days each week, on more than one hundred radio stations (both network and independent) in America—Aunt Sammy was there. A welcomed guest in the homes of her five million listeners, this radio personality offered advice on what to feed the family for dinner, how to clean house most efficiently, how to fix a leaky faucet, how to sew a dress, and how to raise both vegetables and babies. She was modern, well-informed and had a keen sense of humor. Her roots, however, were traditionally small-town and conservative. She guided the American housewife through the grim realities of the 1930's and the consumer through the fraudulent and mischievous advertising of a naive age.[3] She wrote the best American cookbook of her day, a book unrivaled in popularity until *The Joy of Cooking* appeared later in the decade. "Housekeeper's Chat" featuring Aunt Sammy (Uncle Sam's wife!) was a creation of the U.S. Agriculture Department. In 1926 the Department created the Office of Information headed by Milton Eisenhower. The Office began a radio service which produced programs targeted to the farmer's needs: pest control, temperature information, scientific breakthroughs, market reports, etc. Aunt Sammy was the official radio representative of the U.S. Bureau of Home Economics, and went on the air in 1926 to provide entertainment and information to the farmer's wife.

In the fifteen minutes that followed, fifty women—standing before fifty primitive microphones in fifty radio studios across the country, and reading fifty identical scripts prepared by the Department of Agriculture's Radio Service—were transformed into fifty Aunt Sammies. Taking on every possible local pattern of speech and regional accent, 'Aunt Sammy,' in that first broadcast long ago, recited a stanza of doggerel verse, told several jokes, explained how to select and care for linoleum for the kitchen floor, directed how to roast wienies the modern way, how to use vinegar left over from a jar of pickles, and how to put up cucumber relish, defined what a vitamin was, enumerated the five foods essential to the daily diet, listed 'what foods should be taken from dishes with the fingers,' and ended by offering the menu for the day—meat loaf with brown gravy, scalloped potatoes, carrots or beets, fresh sliced tomatoes, and lemon jelly dessert.[4]

Joining Aunt Sammy were such regular supporting characters as Uncle Ebenezer, a crusty old relative; Billy, Aunt Sammy's six-year-old nephew; the Next-Door Neighbor, her nosy but warmhearted friend; Lettie, her car; the sweet-but-naive newlywed from down-the-street who could not bear to beat an egg for fear of hurting it; the Recipe Lady and the Menu Specialist; Finicky Florine and Percy DeWallington Waffle, fussy eaters who drove their mother mad; and WRB, the plant and garden specialist. The challenging years of the Depression put Aunt Sammy and her cast of characters to work

teaching the desperate poor to stay alive on grain products and milk and those merely poor how to save and use every scrap for a nourishing meal; encouraging those who could to return to the soil and to preserve the fruits of the earth as had their ancestors before them; endorsing the use and reuse of every stitch, of every piece of cloth, so that nothing was wasted and everything saved; inner tubes for rubber aprons, goldenrod for dye, used fats for homemade soap.[5]

In its early years on the air, "Housekeeper's Chat" ended with a segment entitled "Questions Women are Asking." Typical examples were "Should children have tea and coffee?" (No), "Is garlic eaten by respectable people?" (Yes), "What kind of sleeves are most becoming on a stout woman?" (The loosely fitted long sleeve is the most becoming for fleshy arms), and "My well water stinks. What shall I do?" (Boil it).[6] This was not the first radio program utilizing the question/answer format, nor was it the last. Regardless of the economic, social and intellectual level of the listener, if she is a homemaker, her main concerns will be the same as her sisters across the nation: to take care of her family and home. As long as people need to know how to remove lipstick stains, how to refinish a piece of furniture, and how to make chicken dumplings as light as their mother's, there will always be an audience for the question/answer format.

Like everything else, however, Aunt Sammy and her friends were eventually replaced by other personalities that provided help, encouragement and companionship to the American homemaker.

The Talk/Variety Show: "Don McNeill's Breakfast Club", "Houseparty", "Arthur Godfrey Time", "Breakfast at Sardi's", "What's Doin' Ladies?"

Typical of the talk/variety radio program was "Don McNeill's Breakfast Club" which obviously knew what the homemaker wanted since it experienced a successful thirty-five year run on radio (June 1933 to December 1968). Originating from studios in Chicago for the NBC Blue Network (later ABC) Don McNeill and his cohorts delivered puns, prayers, and plain corn to millions of listeners each day.

Though no breakfast or any other kind of food is served during the 'Breakfast Club,' the show unwinds with the unrehearsed informality of a typical household breakfast—also with an impressive disregard for formal broadcasting practices. McNeill gaily swings from a sales talk about refrigerators to prayers and poetry, from chatting with elderly ladies from the audience to kidding the pretty singer Peggy Taylor about her numerous boyfriends. In between he trades jokes with comedian Sam Cowling and acts as amiable straight man to 'Aunt Fanny,' (played by Fran Allison) a gossipy rural relation addicted to endless conversations on the party line.[7]

As important to the program as the comic and light features were its serious segments. "Memory Time" was that reminiscent time when McNeill read nostalgic verse sent in by listeners; "Inspiration Time" was devoted to brief inspirational vignettes; and "The Sunshine Shower" was McNeill's morning request for his listeners to write notes of cheer to the inmates of a hospital, an orphanage, or a home for the elderly.

A little later in the program comes 'Prayer Time.' The studio lights are dimmed, the orchestra plays a few soft strains of a hymn, and McNeill requests that both his studio and radio audience bow their heads and pray 'each in his own words...each in his own way...for a world united in peace.' 'Prayer Time' was conceived as a comfort for families with sons in the service during World War II. But in 1946 more than 100,000 letter writers persuaded McNeill to continue it. Members of Alcoholic Anonymous have written him that they use 'Prayer Time' to help stay on the wagon. A woman with five children wrote him that she had decided to give her husband the

divorce he wanted until she heard McNeill offer a prayer one morning for broken families. This changed her mind and soon afterward the family was reunited.[8]

Whereas Aunt Sammy was the wise and kind aunt-next-door dispensing recipes, stories and helpful hints, Don McNeill was the family man next-door described by the American Broadcasting Company as "righteous, God-fearing, orthodox in every way, he is not at all slick and could never be a sharpie."[9]

One-On-One Heart-To-Heart Show: "Mary Margaret McBride", "Elsa Maxwell's Party Line", "Kate Smith Chats"

There were shows directed to the homemaker that were historically more important, sophisticated, and successful than the Mary Margaret McBride Show, but there was no performer better able to carry a show almost totally by herself and who had more devoted listeners, than Mary Margaret McBride. She was so beloved and trusted by her listeners that *Printer's Ink,* a highly-respected business journal of the day, referred to McBride as "perhaps the most outstanding example of reliance upon the word of a human being in the commercial field." *Movie-Radio Guide* called her "Lady Number One of the Air"[10]

Mary Margaret McBride came to radio after making a name for herself in print journalism. But by 1932, magazines could no longer pay her accustomed rates and she was forced to look elsewhere for work. She auditioned for a housewife chat show on WOR in New York and won. Her air name in 1934 was Martha Deane. The show was tightly structured and she was given a fixed set of ideas for the program. The station tried to present Martha Deane (Mary Margaret McBride) as a wise old grandmother. This did not feel right to McBride so during a live broadcast she confessed to her audience, "I am not a grandmother at all, and I have no grandchildren, and from now on I intend to talk about myself."[11] And that she did for many years to come. In 1940 she left WOR and appeared exclusively over CBS on a fifteen-minute program. This shortened format (on WOR her show ran forty-five minutes), however, was frustrating to her. She claimed it induced oral claustrophobia, so she accepted an offer from NBC to join it on WEAF for a forty-five minute show for airing at 1:00 pm EST.

Built like Kate Smith, with an air of innocence and an Ozark accent, Mary Margaret McBride shared adventures of the stomach and the mind. She told her public what she had been doing, reading, thinking and then while dispensing wholesome thoughts and recipes, interviewed guests and sneaked in commericals. Her guests ranged from such celebrated people as Jimmy Durante and Sally Rand to politicians, Swiss bell ringers, trapeze artists and the Brooklyn electrician who built a robot out of ordinary electric fuses. Her ability to sell her sponsor's products was unmatched. Never one to agree to a new advertiser before personally testing the product, she had twelve faithful sponsors each paying $150 in 1944 for the privilage of being mentioned five days a week on her show. Her ability to work in the product's name and benefits was clever to say the least.

Last night those lovely ladies at Sea Girt told me what they do with the Mix...and do you know out in Flatbush where it's all hard water, well Dif washing powder is remarkable just remarkable, and I told Stella that the Smith's Split Peas are so warming to the insides, Frances was wiping the silverware with Noxon, of course...(to her announcer) What About O.D. 30? That beautiful unbelievable deodorant! Do you need to get rid of any bad smells around the house, Vincent?...and of course those beans baked in open pots all day yum until each bean is perfection.[12]

One of Miss McBride's distinctive trademarks was consuming her sponsor's products on the air while she discussed them. Her theory was that she could better describe their goodness while actually eating.

She must have been right since her listenership totalled between five and ten million daily. In celebration of her tenth anniversary on radio she was given a party in Madison Square Garden, filling the place to capacity. Her theme song was "Beautiful Lady," and the homemakers across America must have thought the theme fit Mary Margaret McBride to a tee.

Mary Margaret McBride dispensed personal and household advice for decades.

Kate Smith was the most popular woman broadcaster in the history of radio.

Raising The Children: "Parents Magazine of the Air" and "Two A.M. Feeding"

Made available on radio through syndication was a series entitled "Parents Magazine of the Air," which was produced in close cooperation with the editors of *Parent's Magazine.* The magazine was designed for parents, teachers, and their organizations. Contributors included doctors of education and child welfare authorities. Heading the roster of regular talent on the radio show were Clayton "Bud" Collyer as master of ceremonies; Betty Green, fashion editor and national authority on infant's and children's wear; Maxine Livingston, family home editor of *Parent's Magazine;* and Cecily Brownstron, food editor and authority on child feeding. In a promotional sheet, the program was described as follows:

> It dramatizes such vital 'Parent's Magazine' columns as 'Out of the Mouths of Babes', 'Where Do You Come From Baby Dear,' etc. The appeal is directed to all mothers...expectant, and mothers of children from one day to 16 years...who do most of the buying for the home. The sponsor is assured of its real service to parents. Guest parents appear on many programs, such as Jean Hersholt, Jay Jostyn (famed as Mr. District Attorney) and many more. Dramatized advice by baby experts includes talks by advisory editors of 'Parent's Magazine,' and the foremost authorities...an authoritative source of information on the endless problems which confront every mother.[13]

"Parent Magazine of the Air" was broadcast in 1944 and 1945.

Supposedly, the first program concerned with the newborn and his or her parents was called "Two A.M. Feeding," a fifteen-minute segment of the longer "Milkman's Matinee," which in 1954 ran from midnight till early morning six nights a week. Hosted by disc jockey, Art Ford, "Two A.M. Feeding" gave tips on baby psychology, played wake-up records at the beginning of the show to rouse the youngster and his parents, gave a soothing commercial or two on an appropriate product, amused the adult audience with chitchat, and played lullaby music when 2:15 A.M. approached, to rock the child of to sleep.[14]

The Specific Skill Show: "Let's Make a Dress"

"Let's Make a Dress" grew out of a series of twenty-five weekly three-minute talks developed for use on a show called "Woman's Hour," which was carried on seven radio stations in 1943. The war was on and conservation of clothing was of utmost importance. It was urgent to get timely ideas to all homemakers. "Let's Make a Dress" was an experiment to further test the possibilities of teaching a technical subject through radio. It was offered as a fifteen-minute program twice weekly on the Cornell University radio station, WHCU, beginning September 29, 1944. Each broadcast was planned to teach certain sewing fundamentals, to stimulate homemakers to activity, and to anticipate coming lessons. The show served as an extension course and the 1300 women enrolled were provided a copy of "Sewing Aids," a set of four booklets rich with illustrative sketches and explanatory notes related to sewing problems.

The Cooking Show: "The Mystery Chef," "Morning Market Basket,"

"Our Daily Food," "Crisco Cooking Talks," "Betty Crocker," and "Mary Lee Taylor"

Perhaps the longest running, most successful type of informational program directed at the homemaker was the cooking show. As early as 1923 the cadenced voice of WEAF announcer, Graham McNamee, introduced a woman who read mouth-watering recipes to her listeners. How successful that program would be, could not be determined, but the sponsor, Procter and Gamble's Crisco, became a devoted fan of radio. Procter and Gamble continued with radio by inventing a "Radio Homemaker's Club" to get a steady following. The Club members heard Ida Bailey Allen, of cookbook fame, give Monday morning chats about this, that and Crisco.[15]

Another early, quarter-hour food program for the homemaker was NBC's "Our Daily Food." Sponsored by A&P stores, the series was a discussion of recipes, food possibilities and menus with special features on how to make hot chocolate, how a grape juice factory functioned and how to start a school lunch program. The series ran until 1932.[16]

"The Mystery Chef" premiered in 1930, appealing to the Depression audience as Aunt Sammy had, teaching them how to save money on meals. The show lasted ten years, then took a year hiatus and returned to the Blue Network in 1941 as a new program five afternoons a week. "The Mystery Chef" concentrated on beating the soaring food prices with special emphasis on meat rationing.

His first broadcast...included a recipe for a meat dish which would serve six people for less than $1—a casserole, made of layers of chopped beef, fried eggplant, and tomatoes, and served with mashed potatoes. He cooked a full three-course dinner...for six hungry food company executives. It included soup, meat, two vegetables, potatoes, hot biscuits with butter and dessert—and cost only 21.1 cents per person.[17]

The television viewer of later years has been treated to similar cooking feats by such well-known culinary artists as The Galloping Gourmet and Julia Childs, queen of cooking. Each had his or her own distinct personality which helped to keep the listener/viewer interested even when the recipe did not. Although there are no regular cooking shows on either network radio or network television in 1978, viewers are occassionally treated to a new way of preparing a dish on one of the many syndicated talk/variety shows such as "Dinah," "Mike Douglas," and "Merv Griffin."

OTHERS:

The Fix-It With Frills Show: "The Wife Saver," "Household Hints," "Mr. Fix-it," "Household Advisor"

Making its debut on the NBC Blue network in 1932, "The Wife Saver" was a one-man comic shortcut to housework. Typical of the style of Allen Prescott, the host, was this hint.

Sometimes one simply can't help splattering grease on the kitchen wallpaper.... Make a thick paste of starch, add water, and put it on the spots generously.... If you peek, you sort of spoil the whole thing. So what you do is wait...until it dries, then brush it off and the spots will be gone. I

wish they'd think of something like that for freckles. I don't get them, but I have to look at the people who do. (18)

Like most successful homemaker shows, "The Wife Saver" received many helpful hints from its listeners. Based on his show scripts and the letters he received, Prescott wrote two books, *Aunt Harriet's Household Hints* and *The Wife Saver's Candy Recipes.*

Women on Women Show: "Women in the Making of America," "Gallant American Women"

A show that would make contemporary feminists proud, "Women in the Making of America," was a project of the Federal Radio Theatre, and debuted on NBC in 1939 as a thirteen-week series. Created by Eva vom Baur Hansl, and written by Jane Ashman, the dramatic series presented a history of the American woman's condition and the women's movement.[19]

The Husband And Wife Show:

"Tex and Jinx," "Breakfast with Dorothy and Dick," "The Fitzgeralds," and "Meet the Menjous" were four of the more popular husband-and-wife shows on radio. During the 1940s the American homemaker could have her breakfast or clean her house while listening to these famous couples. Ed and Pegeen Fitzgerald were the first team to take to the airwaves, but were soon followed by the others. The shows had several things in common: spontaneous chatter, topics ranging from current events to fashion, and the intimacy created by broadcasting the programs from the celebrities' homes. What distinguished the shows from one another was the style and personality of couples, ranging from Dick Kollmar and Dorothy Killgallen with their urbane sophistication, to Ed and Pegeen Fitzgerald who conversed in a familiar, folksy style.

The Domestic Problem Show: "The American Woman's Jury"

A somewhat offbeat woman's show was presented in 1944 by the Mutual network. The show entitled "The American Woman's Jury" was

a three-way parlay of courtroom drama, confession, and the endless domestic problems of the soap operas. The problems came out of the mailbag. One problem is chosen for each program and presented to the jury, which makes its decision after hearing the arguments of attorneys (one male, one female) for both sides of the question. The juries (a fresh one for each show) are chosen from Boston's women's clubs. No two-time divorcees or multi-widowed women are allowed.[20]

The master mind of the series was George Simpson who claimed to be constantly surprised with the jury's verdicts and the letters sent by listeners. One specific decision which bothered him occurred in the case of a wife whose husband admitted that he loved another woman but wanted her to stay with him while he pursued his new affair. She asked the jury what to do. They voted unanimously in favor of her staying on. Trying to explain the verdicts on the program, Simpson stated: "That's the damnation of women, security is all they're after. As long as they have it, that's all they

want."[21]

The Soap Opera: "Ma Perkins," "Stella Dallas," "Myrt and Marge," "When a Girl Marries," "Helen Trent," "Guiding Light," "Search for Tomorrow," ad nauseum.

If the women/homemaker is only after security, then how does one explain the incredible insecurity that has been served up daily, hourly, to the minute on the various soap operas that have provided the bulk of both radio and television daytime programming since 1933?

A great deal has been written analyzing the soap opera: who listens to them and why? how does listening to soap operas affect the audience? and what does and does not work in creating a successful soap? An advertising executive in 1940 suggested the following formula for what makes a successful soap.

> The daytime radio formula is based on four cornerstones. First, simple, understandable characters not too far removed from the average—the kind of person about who the average housewife, if she cannot say 'there but for the grace of God, go I' can at least feel that she recognizes and understands. Second, simple, understandable situations. Third, a woman as the central and dominant character, the one who shapes the action of the story and moves it along. Fourth, a philosophy exemplified by the conduct of the leading character, such as 'the meek shall inherit the earth;' 'virtue is its own reward,' and other equally familiar adages which have influenced hundreds of thousands of people for many years.[22]

Max Wylie, noted producer, director, writer, took a more cynical posture in analyzing the soap opera listener.

> ...women of the daytime audiences have physical and psychic problems that they themselves cannot understand, and cannot solve. Being physical, they feel the thrust of these problems; being poor, they cannot buy remedies in the form of doctors, new clothes, or fancy coiffures; being unanalyical, they cannot figure out what is really the matter with them; and being inarticulate, they cannot explain their problem even if they know what it is. The radio soap opera—as does the TV serial today—presented more difficult and complicated problems than those vexing the listener. Or it kept them away from their problems.[23]

But what does the social scientist suggest are the reasons the homemaker and others listen to the soap operas? In 1941, Herta Herzog published her findings in *Studies in Philosophy and Social Science.* The article "On Borrowed Experience: An Analysis of Listening to Daytime Sketches" was based on personal interviews obtained between 1939 and 1941 with one hundred women living in Greater New York. The women were from various age and income groups. All listened to at least two programs daily, some twenty-two. Following is a summary of Ms. Herzog's findings.[24]

1. The contents of their (interviewees) favorite stories boiled down to a formula, getting into trouble and out again.
2. The listeners studied did not experience the sketches as fictitious or imaginary. They took them as reality and listened to them in terms of their own personal problems.
3. The more complex the listener's troubles were, or the less able she was to cope with them, the more programs she seemed to listen to.
4. The stories appealed to the listeners' insecurity and provided them in one way or another with

remedies of a substitute character. This occured in three types of reactions.

a. Listening to the stories offered an emotional release. Several respondents liked the sketches because they gave them a chance to let themselves go, to release the anxiety stored up in them. A chance to cry. A number of listeners said they felt a sense of relief in knowing that other people had their troubles too. Misery loves company.

b. Listening to the stories allowed for a wishful remodelling of the listener's drudgery. Some used the programs to inject into their lives elements which they admittedly missed in real life. Other listeners used the stories to revive things that were past and gone, and associated with a more pleasant time in the interviewee's life. A great number of the women used the stories to compensate for specific personal failures such as a happy marriage. A few of the better educated among the respondents disclaimed any personal interest in the stories and said they listened for entertainment. These persons bet on outcomes as a means of feeling superior.

c. Listening provided an ideology and recipe for adjustment. A number of respondents claimed that the stories had filled their empty lives with content. The mere fact that something was scheduled to occur every day provided an element of adventure in their daily routine. Many explained that they like listening because the stories taught them what to do or how to behave. Listening not only provided the listener with formulas for behavior in various situations, it also gave them sets of explanations with which they might appraise happenings.

The soap opera helped the housewife time her day. Typically, she might sit down to her second cup of coffee with "Betty and Bob," wash the breakfast dishes to "Judy and Jane," pick up the living room through "Our Gal Sunday," and start lunch with "Helen Trent." Then, she might start the kids back to school with "Vic and Sade," scrub the kitchen floor to "Road to Life," make out the grocery list to "Right to Happiness," and start peeling potatoes for supper with "Just Plain Bill."

Although this article has been devoted to radio programming for the homemaker, this writer felt that it might be interesting to take a brief look at one of the more popular, early TV programs targeted at the homemaker, "The Home Show" with Arlene Francis. Debuting on the NBC network on March 1, 1954, the show provided a format much like many of the popular women's magazines on the newsstands. "The Home Show" covered such fields as family affairs, fashions, beauty, interior decorating, architecture, gardening, child care, and related subjects. A complete script for the July 26, 1954 telecast of "The Home Show" is included in Irving Settel's *Top TV Shows of the Year.* Of course the added dimension of video allowed for and encouraged such visual program segments as a fashion show, a travelog on a family in Italy, and a filmed feature on how to play badminton. But the other segments of the show replicated those segments heard on radio for thirty years: a cooking class, news from Washington and a book review. Hugh Downs, the announcer, promised that tomorrow the show would feature "Fish as Pets with Jim Moran...News from Washington...HOME's cooking school...Vacation by Car...Paris Boutique...and Chef Phillip.[25]

Although they were on television, none of these topics which Downs introduced, was substantially different than those predecessors on radio. For, while television did add a new dimension to broadcast programming, it certainly did not change, in any major way, the content of that programming.

Throughout its history, broadcasting has always provided certain programs for women. As we have seen, radio programs for the homemaker provided a vital element of companionship while at the same time they fulfilled some of her educational, informational and emotional needs. The homemaker of 1936 was considerably different from the contemporary woman. For while the former was proud of her function, and enjoyed the status and respect that came from being a homemaker, the later has almost been forced to deny that role. Nevertheless, there are millions of women who still enjoy the basic duties and responsibilities of being a homemaker. To them it is a noble and important profession. The broadcast media, which served them by fulfilling their needs in radio's "golden age," to a certain extent has now abandoned them. Only soap operas and a few talk shows aimed specifically at women remain. They, like the butter churn and the ice cream social, are the last vestiges of a need that was once crucially important, but now seems to have been sadly forgotten.

Notes

[1]Martin Grief, ed., *Aunt Sammy's Radio Recipes! The Great Depression Cookbook* (New York: Universe Books, 1975), pp. xiii-xiv.

[2]Alfred Lief, *It Floats* (New York: Rinehart, 1958), p.173.

[3]Greif, *Aunt Sammy's Radio Recipes!,* pp. vii-viii.

[4]*Ibid.,* p. xv.

[5]*Ibid.,* p. xxix.

[6]*Ibid.,* p. xvi.

[7]"Breakfast Everyday With 2,000,000 Women: Don McNeill's Breakfast Club," *Cosmopolitan* 135 (September, 1953), pp. 23-24.

[8]*Ibid.,* p.25.

[9]*Ibid.,* p.26.

[10]P. Hamburger, "Mary Margaret McBride," *Life* 17 (December 4, 1944), p. 48.

[11]*Ibid.,* p. 51.

[12]*Ibid.,* p. 52.

[13]Frederic W. Ziv Archive, Cincinnati, Ohio, File Number 0600-001.

[14]"Pied Piper: Radio Program for Cradle-bound Babies," *The New Yorker* 29 (February 13, 1954), p.24.

[15]Lief, *It Floats,* p. 152.

[16]John Dunning, *Tune in Yesterday: The Ultimate Encyclopedia of Old Time Radio 1925-1976* (New York: Prentice Hall Inc., 1976), p.459.

[17]"Who Is The Chef? Mystery Chef Has New Program," *Newsweek* 20 (December 21, 1942), p.79.

[18]"Wife Saving with Frills," *Newsweek* 18 (July 28, 1941), p.45.

[19]Dunning, *Tune in Yesterday,* p.652.

[20]"American Woman's Jury," *Time* 43 (June 12, 1944), p.94.

[21]Ibid.

[22]Hubbell Robinson, "The Housewife is the Doctor," *Journal of Home Economics* (December, 1940), 669.

[23]Sam Slate and Joe Cook, *It Sounds Impossible* (New York: McMillan, 1963), p. 172.

[24]Herta Herzog, "On Borrowed Experience," *Studies In Philosophy and Social Science,* IX, no. 1 (1941), pp. 65-95.

[25]Irving Settle, *Top TV Shows of the Year: 1954-55* (New York: Hastings House, 1955), pp. 241-266.

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Critic From Within: Fred Allen Views Radio

By Alan R. Havig

Unlike other arts—dance, theatre, the movies, fiction and non-fiction writing—radio broadcasting from the 1920's through the 1940's did not give rise to an influential corps of critics and an on-going body of critical evaluation. Although a few reviewers like John Crosby of the *New York Herald Tribune* wrote intelligently about what appeared on radio, for the most part Charles Siepmann's assessment, written after two decades of network programming, was accurate:

> While plays performed in the 'legitimate' theater (having comparatively small audiences) and books, even on abstruse subjects, are regularly reviewed in the press, similar reviews of radio's best productions, performed before an unseen audience of millions, receive only occasional and limited notice.

Radio needed thoughtful criticism. As Siepmann pointed out, responsible commentary could raise standards of taste, just as it did in other popular arts. And as Jack Gould of the *New York Times* noted in 1945, "no field more badly needs the jocular nudge" that responsible skeptics could provide "because, for all its dependence on humor, radio has precious little itself." Assessing his own role as radio critic, however, Crosby confessed that the task was not an easy one.

> Nothing resists criticism so strenuously as radio. A radio columnist is forced to be literate about the illiterate, witty about the witless, coherent about the incoherent. It isn't always possible.... They hover, these programs, in a sort of nether world of mediocrity and defy you to compose so much as a single rational sentence about them.

The better performers, Crosby granted, provided some gratification. But generally speaking, the necessary but difficult job of supplying radio with critical commentary was not achieved by the time that radio gave way to the onslaught of television.[1]

Fred Allen and Portland Hoffa were man and wife, and comedic partners on radio for seventeen seasons.

Fred Allen's programs spanned network radio's most important years, from his debut in October, 1932 until his retirement in June, 1949. As a humorist he found his material in the life that he observed around him, an important part of which was the world of broadcasting. Unlike most radio performers, who tended in public to boost the medium which gave them success, Allen came not to praise broadcasting but to expose its absurdities. His sometimes gentle, often sharp critique of radio's failures made him one of the most thorough-going, respected, and effective commentators on the state of broadcasting. As a critic-from-within, Fred Allen helped to compensate for the absence of an effective group of critics outside of the industry. "Perhaps the most heartening sign of all," John Crosby concluded in a searching analysis of radio in 1948, "is the fact that some of radio's severest critics are in radio, not outside it. The violence of their

dissatisfaction cannot help doing some good." And as columnist Jack Gould wrote: "among those with access to the microphone," Allen was "virtually alone in spoofing the nonsensical goings-on that so often prevail in what is known as 'the industry.'" He concluded: "Register Mr. A. as an extraordinarily articulate critic." Ben Gross agreed, as he called Allen "one of the country's most incisive critics of both radio and television."[2]

Like many of radio's early successes, Allen came to the medium under the pressures of a failing economy. The Great Depression limited his opportunities in vaudeville and Broadway revues. Radio provided security, Allen knew, at a time "when there is nothing left of the theatre but ghosts of Booth and Barrett running through their parts in the deserted wings," and when "there isn't enough vaudeville to tire out a trained pigeon act flying from town to town."[3]

It is erroneous to infer, however, that Allen resented radio because of the circumstances which forced him into it; that he "had no fun at all" in the new medium, one for which he developed "no particular affection;" and that his criticisms of broadcasting resulted from this long-smoldering dislike. Allen's friend, the novelist Edwin O'Connor, made some of these assumptions shortly after the comedian's death in 1956, but they ignore several important facts. Fred Allen may have felt a nostalgic longing for vaudeville during his radio years, but a career on the stage was not his ideal. "Acting has never appealed to me," he wrote in his autobiography, and on several occasions Allen revealed that if he could live his life again, he would be a writer, not a performer. Since he created his own material, he *was* a writer, but he had something different in mind. "A humorist with a column on a newspaper, or one who wrote for syndication," he reflected during his retirement, "enjoyed a greater security [than an actor]. . . and had a much more satisfying life." With John Steinbeck, James Thurber, and O'Connor among his friends, Allen's thoughts probably took their lasting achievement into account. "A writer at sixty can be a Steinbeck, a Faulkner, or a Hemingway. An actor at sixty can make a funny face or do a creaky dance."[4]

Fred Allen's critique of broadcasting did not grow out of a career-frustration in which radio was unable to match his earlier achievements as a vaudevillian and Broadway comedian. His role as critic-from-within, however, did have clear origins in his experience, perceptions, and sensibilities as a creative artist. Cultural critics often charge that those who labor in the popular arts are mere assembly-line workers, suppressing their individuality and potential creativity for profit. "Such art workers," writes Dwight MacDonald, "are as alienated from their brainwork as the industrial worker is from his handwork." Fred Allen does not fit this increasingly questionable model. His career, indeed, substantiates Herbert Gans' quite different conception of the motivation and role of some popular artists. "Many popular culture creators want to express their personal values and tastes in much the same way as the high culture creator and want to be free from control by the audience and media executives." Allen liked radio, and he saw (and realized) many comedic possibilities in the

medium. He had an artist's pride in his work both as radio writer and performer. What he resented, and what he attacked both on and off the air, were the obstacles to artistic freedom which he confronted at every turn during seventeen years of broadcasting. It was the unwarranted interference with his work by network executives, advertising agencies, sponsors, program rating surveys such as the Hooperatings, and studio audiences, among others, that provided the root cause of his thorough-going critique of broadcasting.[5]

The intervention of third parties between the popular artist and his audience is, of course, inherent in the commercial popular arts. As Russel Nye has pointed out, the artist's "relationship with his public is neither direct nor critical, for between him and his audience stand editors, publishers, sponsors, directors, public relations men, wholesalers, exhibitors, merchants, and others who can and often do influence his product." As a veteran of family-centered, strictly-censored vaudeville, Allen was well acquainted with this fact of show business life. But he believed that broadcasting's business executives carried their interference with the radio writer's and actor's art to unwarranted extremes and based it on false criteria. As he phrased the problem in 1948 while speaking to a radio conference, "no one involved in radio is really interested in the creative side of it." While the networks, ad agencies, and sponsors saw the medium *solely* in financial and marketing terms, Allen believed that broadcasting "can't survive without the creative people—the writers more than anyone else, even more than the actors."

> I think that if I went in to Mr. Charles Luckman of Lever Brothers and showed him how to make some Lifebuoy Soap, he'd resent it. He knows what goes in the vat there. I don't know anything about that. By the same token, I don't think he should come and tell me how to write the jokes.

Allen summarized his views in his autobiography: "Radio could not survive because it was a by-product of advertising." Its entertainment, and entertainers, were incidental to the sale of soap.[6]

Allen did not deny the need for observing standards of decency in programs broadcast over the public airwaves into American homes. Nor did he doubt that program content could offend listener groups—ethnic, religious, economic, and others—if writers and performers did not exercise care. But he objected to the basic assumption of broadcast executives that only business men and women, not radio's artists, could be trusted to control program content. That Allen's talents required an unfettered environment, and that the networks could safely allow them the freedom to roam and probe at will, was noted in a review of one of his early programs. "Obviously he is the kind of comedian who has to be given a free rein," *Variety* stated in 1934. "At the same time there is a minimum of need for supervision of his material because he is too clever ever to have to be off-color." It was inevitable that this comedian would come into conflict with cautious network censors and fearful sponsors and their representatives in the advertising agencies—those who dreaded the mere possibility of

alienating potential customers or affronting some group with political or economic clout.[7]

The views of one of Allen's antagonists at NBC, Janet McRorie, illustrates the tension that existed between the artist's and the corporation's perspectives. McRorie headed the Continuity-Acceptance Department at the network during the late 1930's, the office whose job it was to censor all program scripts and advertising copy. Hers was a necessary function, McRorie explained, "Because in the Company's relation to the public care must be taken that the sensibilities of one portion of the listening public are not sacrificed to gratify the preferences of another." And what standards did she apply to achieve such a potentially laudable goal? As described in the words of an interviewer in 1939 they constituted, when narrowly applied, a mindless, nit-picking, and humorless affront to the sensibilities of the radio writer. "To her mind radio is a sort of window into an outside world, which may be opened to let in fresh air and sunlight, and closed to shut out unpleasant weather, dirt, and street noises. Her duty is to delete the unpleasantness and encourage opening the window." Allen's experience with business interference in his work illustrated that such subjective and aesthetically crude criteria as these placed very serious obstacles in the way of radio programming. That some network entertainers like Fred Allen achieved anything worth recalling decades after their programs appeared represents their triumph over an essentially hostile environment.[8]

Approximately two days prior to each of his broadcasts, Allen had to submit a copy of the script to the network's Continuity-Acceptance Department for both legal and moral screening; another to the radio department of the advertising agency which handled the account; and a third to the vice president of the sponsoring company who supervised the firm's radio advertising. "These were the three sources at which the comedian's troubles originated." Before air time, occasionally just before, Allen, his writers and cast had to be prepared to defend their work and accept changes demanded by these three agencies of business control. Allen often maintained that humor was relative, a matter of opinion. Radio's bureaucratic structure, however, gave excessive power to untutored opinions. As Allen phrased the problem in 1945: "everyone in radio with enough authority to operate a memo pad has an opinion that jeopardizes the comdian's humor," and he offered an illustration. Suppose, Allen told a Peabody Award audience, that a comedian has these lines in his script: "Jack Benny told me a great gag today. Jack said, 'The best was to keep a dead fish from smelling is to cut off its nose.'" The NBC censor would delete the mention of Jack Benny because he broadcasts on a competing chain; the agency, fearing the anti-vivisectionists, would excise the reference to nose-cutting; and the sponsor would eliminate "fish," since his brother sells a competing meat product. With his joke destroyed, the comedian substitutes a story "about the housing shortage being so bad he went into a restaurant and couldn't even get cottage pudding." But even then his troubles continue, for the next day protest letters from people who live in inadequate

housing deluge the network. For alienating this important listening group, the comedian's show is cancelled. Allen found a humorous way to focus attention on a serious problem and one that, for all his apparent exaggeration, he depicted accurately.[9]

For example, Allen's sponsors directly intervened in the entertainment-creating process on several occasions. What Erik Barnouw has called the "folklore of sponsor meddling" in early radio included not only stories of company presidents arbitrarily ordering script revisions, but also rumors that their wives' whims sometimes determined the fate of programs and performers. A sponsor's wife never caused the cancellation of a Fred Allen series, but early in his radio career one did order an incongruous and bothersome change in format. Allen's first program, the *Linit Bath Club Revue* (1932-33), had progressed through several successful shows when the sponsor ordered the addition of an organ solo to the established format. "Playing an organ solo midway through a comedy show," Allen commented later, "is like planting a pickle in the center of a charlotte russe," but it was done because "the sponsor's wife liked organ music." In 1934, executives of the Bristol-Myers Company ordered Allen's cast in the *Hour of Smiles* series to dress in formal evening wear because they were performing before a live studio audience. Allen's opinion of the incongruity of performing comedy in dress suits is not known, but he frequently expressed his views of studio audiences. Their presence too often forced actors to play to the live rather than to the radio audience, and the sponsor, in this case at least, promoted this unfortunate practice.[10]

Advertising agency and network executives ordered script deletions much more frequently than did sponsors. These businessmen's fears and ignorance, as often as their legitimate concerns, made Allen's scripts some of the most frequently-censored on radio. In 1940, Allen complained to writer H. Allen Smith that "each week fifty percent of what i [sic] write ends up in the toilet... practically everything is taboo and we end up with ersatz subject matter and ditto humor." One problem was his knowledge and use of the English language, which was not only more sohpisticated than that of other comedians, but also than that of the censors. Over the years the wielders of blue pencils at NBC and CBS objected to the "salaciousness" of such words as "rabelasian," "titillate," "saffron," and "pizzicating." Allen also had to battle network censors over the right of fictional characters to say "pitch a little woo" and to call Bear Mountain "strip tease crag." As John Crosby commented, radio's moral guardians displayed "a zeal which would have alarmed even Savonarola." They suspected as immoral every unfamiliar word and phrase used in a boy-girl context.[11]

Sexually suggestive material was not the only category of taboos with which Allen had to deal. At least as important was that based on fears of alienating clients, customers, listener interest groups, and the government. Out of such apprehension developed a censorship as effective as any that Congress could have legislated—one perhaps more effective, since it was exercised out of public view and thus only weakly opposed. In 1934, for example, the Benton and Bowles Advertising Agency cut the following gag

from Allen's script:

Stooge: I have something to sell you that every advertising man should have.
Allen: You don't mean a relative who's in a legitimate business?

The Agency feared that the joke might offend someone in leadership positions of the sponsoring company, Bristol-Myers. Earlier that year NBC eliminated a joke about utilities magnate Samuel Insull's flight to escape prosecution. The securities manipulator "would have been safe had he, like Machado and Dillinger, remained in the country." Not only was Insull too important and controversial for mention on entertainment radio, but he had also helped NBC to acquire a Chicago radio station several years earlier. Allen won a second conflict with the network in 1934. The comedian wrote a sketch about the pampering of prison inmates which NBC executives feared would be interpreted as criticism by New York Mayor LaGuardia's administration, which had recently uncovered abuses at its Welfare Island facility. Potentially more embarrassing, NBC's executive vice president had been Commissioner of Corrections under the previous mayor, when the irregularities had originated. Maintaining that the Welfare Island episode had not inspired his comedy, and that no past or present officials could construe the script as criticism, Allen won his censorship appeal with top network executives. The threat of censorship, as well as actual deletions, also shaped what Allen could include in his scripts. As he wrote to an old Boston friend during the 1930's, his idea for a sketch satirizing the new social security system, in which every future citizen would be on a government pension, was a good idea. But, he lamented, "we could never get away with it. Since the federal radio commission has swung into action there can be no mention of anything that might tend to draw attention to the radio, sir." Radio was so anxious to avoid controversy and escape notice as anything other than an agency of entertainment and merchandising, that Allen was even ordered to cut the name of labor leader John L. Lewis from one of his 1930's scripts.[12]

Allen's experience with censorship produced numerous additional instances of what for him was the essential failure of radio: unnecessary, even irrational, business interference in the creative process. The broadcast executives' desire not to ridicule religion or marriage prevented the comedian from joking about a deceased judge in one of his skits "going to a higher court," and from playing on the wedding vows with the line, "She promises to love, honor and lump it till death do them part." Network leaders were unreasonably nervous about even hinting that competing broadcast chains existed. "Darn," Allen commented, "is a word invented by NBC, which doesn't recognize either hell or the Columbia Broadcasting System." His line about a "cigarette that grows hair, fixes up your nerves and fumigates the house" drew the objection of NBC because the reference to "nerves" resembled Camel cigarette advertising on a CBS program. The latter network cut the line "just plain Charlie" and altered the fictional fate of character "grandpa David" in one of Allen's soap opera burlesques in

1942, simply because both names suggested characters in actual serials on another network. NBC feared that Mrs. Pansey Nussbaum, a Jewish dialect character who turned out to be one of Allen's most notable creations, would affront Jews. With their business rather than show business backgrounds, the network executives were unaware of the long tradition of Jewish dialect humor on the stage. Allen even had to be cautious in his use of place names. For one program he invented the town of North Wrinkle, which the network allowed to remain in the script only after an exhaustive search of the United States Postal Guide proved that no such place existed. In the late 1930's, Allen was forced "to professional depths never before sounded by even a radio comedian" when he had to apologize to the town of Pottsville, Pennsylvania for an alleged slight made on his program. Facing prohibitions, pressures, and potential protests at every turn, Allen sometimes was hard put to arrive at the studio with a complete, much less satisfying, script. On some weeks the censors left "nothing but punctuation marks for you to put some new words between and have it ready to convulse our thirty million listeners, from coast to coast, by nine p.m. eastern standard time."[13]

Allen's most notable conflict with the censorial mentality of broadcast executives occurred in the spring of 1947, when he was on NBC with a half-hour, Sunday evening program. What was perhaps his greatest talent, lampooning radio itself, confronted what was perhaps broadcasting's strongest taboo, that against ridiculing the networks and their management. Because the studio audience's reaction to jokes could not be anticipated, Allen found it difficult to plan precisely the amount of material that would fill a half-hour of air time. "If the audience was enthusiastic the laughter was sustained and the program ran longer." For several weeks his program had run over, and the network had abruptly cut it off after thirty minutes. (CBS, by contrast, allowed programs to exceed their allotted time.) Allen's script for the program of April 20, 1947, began with satirical dialogue that a thin-skinned NBC vice president, Clarence L. Menser, demanded be cut. Portland Hoffa, the real-life Mrs. Allen and a member of the cast, asked Allen why the show had been cut off last Sunday. Allen responded:

The main thing in radio is to come out on time. If people laugh the program is longer. The thing to do is to get a nice dull half-hour. Nobody will laugh or applaud. Then you'll always be right on time, and all of the little emaciated radio executives can dance around their desks in interoffice anbandon.

He then explained what NBC did with the time that it saved by cutting off the ends of programs.

Well, there is a big executive here at NBC. He is the vice-president in charge of "Ah! Ah! You're running too long!" He sits in a little glass closet with his mother-of-pearl gong. When your program runs overtime he thumps his gong with a marshmallow he has tied to the end of a xylophone stick. Bong! You're off the air. Then he marks down how much time he's saved. . . . He adds it all up—ten seconds here, twenty seconds there—and when he has saved up enough

seconds, minutes and hours to make two weeks, NBC lets the vice-president use the two weeks of *your* time for *his* vacation.

"He's living on borrowed time," Portland commented. Yes, Allen agreed. "And enjoying every minute of it."[14]

When Allen refused Menser's order and used the original script on the air, the network "pulled the plug" on twenty-five seconds of the objectionable material. The incident immediately became "L'Affaire Allen," bringing unwanted publicity to the network, criticism of its censorship practices, and vindication to Allen and others who had long suffered under the industry's heavy hand. The powerful J. Walter Thompson Agency announced that it would bill NBC for the time Allen's sponsor had paid for but been denied. Two days after the incident both Red Skelton and Bob Hope were cut off the air on their NBC programs when they tried to joke about Allen and the network. Allen hired a group of midgets to picket the network's offices in Rockefeller Center with signs reading: "This network is unfair to the little man." NBC finally backed down, admitting that it had been too sensitive about the comedian's satire and wrong to cut him off the air. The network also promised not to silence other comedians who joked about the affair and, with an unaccustomed show of humor, made Allen an honorary vice president. To the public which followed the story it might have seemed that artistic freedom had triumphed over bureaucratic phobia. The student of radio censorship in all of its guises knows, however, that Allen's *cause celebre* brought no fundamental change. Business values, which included an acute corporate self-consciousness, continued to dominate what could be called showmanship to the very end.[15]

Interference in radio artistry included not only the direct and indirect censorship which has been emphasized here, but also such phenomena as the Hooperatings and other audience measurement surveys. The Hooperatings' quantitative reports of audience size encouraged broadcasting executives to evaluate program and talent success in quantitative rather than in qualitative terms. Since the number of listeners a program attracted was often a matter of pure luck—depending, for example, on the show's time slot or night or broadcast, or the success of programs immediately preceeding or following a given show—hard-working and talented writers and performers often experienced frustration at the results of the ratings. In other instances, program popularity resulted from pure faddishness, as was the case with the quiz and giveaway programs of the late 1940's. At the end of his radio career, in 1948-1949, Allen's program competed against another called *Stop The Music!*, which appealed to the get-rich-quick fantasies of millions of ABC network listeners. The quality of Allen's comedy, his decade-and-one-half of experience in broadcasting, meant little when pitted against the remote chance of a listener answering the phone, identifying a song, and winning money. That "Hooperism" or "ratingitis" should be allowed to dictate the kind and quality of network programming was evidence to Allen of radio's

creative, if not financial, bankruptcy.[16]

Through satire that was sometimes bitter, even cynical, Allen expressed his discouragement over radio's denial of free creative

Fred Allen as he appeared in caricature on the cover of a fan magazine in April of 1937.

expression. He was especially effective when depicting the mentality and behavior of radio's bureaucrats who were, if not the total source of the comedian's problems, at least the personification of his frustration. From the early 1930's to the late 1940's, his scripts and letters were peppered with bumbling chief executives and their "echo men"—ambitious but useless vice presidents. Allen left memorable characterizations of advertising executives, one of whom he called the "the Madison Avenue messiah," "the memo merchant," and "the happy huckster." It was rumored that a partner in one large New York agency was so important, Allen wrote, that "he had a wastebasket in his office in which he threw people." Allen called both the advertising agency and network executives "molehill men."

> Their job is to sit at a desk piled high with molehills and make mountains out of them. Every morning they get an "In" box full of mounds of earth. They sit all day in a high-ceilinged office, patting and piling the mounds into an "Out" box. By lunch time, they're usually above sea level. By five o'clock, they're up in the thin altitude, yodeling to each other. The first one to build a snow-capped peak is made a vice-president."

Allen defined an advertising agency as "85 per cent confusion and 15 per cent commission." Reacting negatively to the title given one of his series by broadcast executives, Allen commented that it "sounded. . . as though it had been spawned by two badly mated vice-presidents who had gone up-carpet out of season." Allen defined a radio producer as "an ulcer with a stop-watch." Playing the part of a big business executive on one of his programs, Allen was too busy to come to the phone. "He saw himself in a mirror and thought it was a conference. He is still talking to himself." On another show, an NBC guide marched tourists through Allen's studio and pointed out to them: "that little man with mildew on him is a Vice President."[17]

Although radio's bureaucratic structure and business leadership inspired a considerable part of Allen's comedy, it is the serious side of the matter that must be reiterated. Fred Allen became one of the most thorough-going and effective critics of radio during the 1930's and 1940's because of what he saw as its misplaced emphasis and distorted priorities. He did not naively wish that radio, which he knew was both a commerical device and an entertainment medium, shed its commercialism in the interest of the artist. He knew that without the sales appeal, the hucksterism, there would be no radio comedy at all. As this essay has indicated, however, Allen did strongly object to the extreme degree of business interference in the process of creating comedy. The passing of time, and the success of television, have demonstrated that the fears and phobias of broadcast executives during radio's heyday—the fear of alienating potential customers; the humorless, even grim, obsession with offending some listener interest group; the destructive overemphasis on the ratings—were excessive. Except for the ratings, most of these towering concerns of the 1930s and 1940s have passed into a kind of curious history which can only bemuse a generation exposed to television's openness in the late 1970s. Fred Allen spent a radio career fighting for the inclusion of material that would be bland if included on a contemporary television comedy program. What would Allen's comedic

achievements have been had he not been restricted by radio's narrow limitations?

Notes

[1]Charles A. Siepmann, *Radio's Second Chance* (Boston, Little, Brown and Company, 1946), 255, 257; Jack Gould, "Mr. Allen's Comeback," *New York Times,* October 14, 1945, II, p. 5; John Crosby, *Out Of The Blue: A Book About Radio and Television* (New York, Simon and Schuster, 1952), p. x. The reasons that radio criticism did not develop included the following: the hostility of newspapers to their perceived competitor, radio, and their resultant unwillingness to give broadcasting publicity through the writing of radio columnists; and the fact that radio programs were broadcast live, thus precluding preview by columnists and other critics.

[2]John Crosby, "Radio And Who Makes It," *The Atlantic Monthly,* 181 (January, 1948), 29; Gould, "Mr. Allen's Comeback," 5; Ben Gross, *I Looked And I Listened: Informal Recollections Of Radio And TV* (New Rochelle, New York, Arlington House, 1954, 1970), p. 130.

[3]On vaudeville as a source of radio talent see the essay by John DiMeglio in this issue; Allen's comments are in his letters to Frank Rosengren, December 11, 1933, and to James R. Naulty, April 15, 1933, in Joe McCarthy, ed., *fred allen's letters* (Garden City, New York, Doubleday and Company, Inc., 1965), pp. 120 and 71 respectively; Allen, *Treadmill To Oblivion* (Boston, Little, Brown and Company, 1954), p. 3.

[4]Allen, *Much Ado About Me* (Boston, Little, Brown and Company, 1956), p. 363 for O'Connor's comments, and pp. 311-12 for Allen's; audio recording of the program *Conversation,* March 22, 1956, which includes a discussion among Clifton Fadiman, Gilbert Seldes, and Fred Allen taped in 1954.

[5]Dwight MacDonald, "Theory of Mass Culture," in Bernard Rosenberg and David Manning White, eds., *Mass Culture: The Popular Arts In America* (New York, The Free Press, 1957, paperback edition 1964), p. 65; Herbert Gans, *Popular Culture and High Culture: An Analysis and Evaluation of Taste* (New York, Basic Books, Inc., 1974), p. 23.

[6]Russel Nye, *The Unembarrassed Muse: The Popular Arts In America* (New York, Dial Press, 1970), p. 5; on vaudeville censorship see John E. DiMeglio, *Vaudeville, U.S.A.* (Bowling Green, Ohio, Bowling Green University Popular Press, 1973), pp. 195-97; Allen's 1948 remarks are reported in *New York Times,* April 25, 1948, II, 9; similar sentiments are found in an interview with Allen in Ben Gross, "Looking and Listening," n.d., clipping in H. Allen Smith Papers, Special Collections, Morris Library, Southers Illinois University, Carbondale, Illinois, hereafter cited as Smith Papers; Gross, *I Looked and I Listened,* 130; Allen, *Treadmill To Oblivion,* 238; the Lever Brothers example was hypothetical as that firm never sponsored Allen.

[7]Review of the *Sal Hepatica Revue,* in *Variety,* January 9, 1934, p. 32.

[8]Ruth Knight, *Stand By For The Ladies! The Distaff Side Of Radio* (New York, Coward-McCann, Inc., 1939), 49-50.

[9]Allen, *Treadmill To Oblivion,* pp. 158-59; "Fred Allen Discusses Mr. LaGuardia," *New York Times,* April 15, 1945, II, 7.

[10]Erik Barnouw, *The Sponsor: Notes On A Modern Potentate* (New York, Oxford University Press. 1978), p. 3; Allen, *Treadmill To Oblivion,* 14; *Variety,* May 29, 1934, p. 33; Arnold M. Auerbach, *Funny Men Don't Laugh* (Garden City, New York, Doubleday and Company, 1965), pp. 125-26.

[11]Allen to H. Allen Smith, December 20, 1940, in Smith Papers; Allen to Bob Welch, October 6, 1942, and to Pat Weaver, n.d., in McCarthy, ed., *fred allen's letters,* 258, 272; Crosby, *Out Of The Blue,* 273.

[12]*Variety,* June 26, 1934, p. 40 for the Benton and Bowles example; *Ibid.,* May 29, 1934, p. 31 for the Insull case; *Ibid.,* February 20, 1934, p. 31 for the prison sketch; Allen to Joe Kelly, n.d., in McCarthy, ed., *fred allen's letters,* 98 for the pensions idea; and Allen to Pat Weaver, n.d., in *Ibid.,* 272 for the Lewis cut.

[13]The soap opera example is from Allen to Bob Welch, October 6, 1942, in *Ibid.,* 258; the problem with Pottsville is mentioned in Allen to Jack Mulcahy, April 12 [1938 or 1939?], in *Ibid.,*

192-93; the other examples are cited in Crosby, *Out Of The Blue,* 273-75; Allen's final comment is in his letter to Joe Kelly, n.d., in McCarthy, ed., *fred allen's letters,* 97.

[14]Allen, *Treadmill To Oblivion,* 211-14.

[15]*Ibid.,* 212; *New York Times,* April 21, 1947, p. 29; April 22, 1947, p. 33; April 23, 1947, p. 2"; April 24, 1947, p. 27; April 28, 1947, p. 25; May 7, 1947, p. 41; Jack Gould, "L'Affaire Allen," *Ibid.,* April 27, 1947, II, p. 9.

[16]On the Hooperatings see Allen to H. Allen Smith, n.d., Smith Papers; Thomas Whiteside, "Hooperism Clears The Air," *The New Republic,* 116 (May 5, 1947), 27-30; Jack Gould, "The Curse of Ratings," *New York Times,* February 17, 1946, II, 7.

[17]Auerbach, *Funny Men Don't Laugh,* 121; Allen, *Treadmill To Oblivion,* 8, 19-20, 24, 27, 30; Allen to H. Allen Smith, October 17, [1942], Smith Papers; Script for *Town Hall Tonight* program (microfilm), April 22, 1936, Manuscripts Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.; audio tape of the *Fred Allen Show,* May 26, 1946.

Professor Havig is preparing a book on Fred Allen and radio comedy.

Boake Carter, Radio Commentator

By Irving E. Fang

There was a time when radio news was more than headlines ripped from a wire machine and read by an announcer who couldn't care less whether Paris was in France or Kentucky. There was a time when lots of people looked forward each evening to hearing news and opinions from a favorite commentator, a span of 15 minutes that put an exclamation point on the day!

* * *

These were troubled times. The commentators brought explanations sometimes along with delivering the day's news. Depression sat at millions of tables in the thirties; the commentators brought understanding. A New Deal was coming out of Washington, D.C., and then the guns began rumbling beyond both oceans, although World War I was not yet faded from memory. The radio commentators helped to clarify it all, letting others see matters as they saw matters, talking to their fellow Americans, who digested dinners sometimes bought with relief checks and then, in the forties, paid for not only with cash earned in the war plant but with those damned little red points and blue points torn out of dog-eared ration books. The war came and the war finally went and we won it because we always won wars, but even though we won, it didn't turn out quite like we imagined because this new world was pretty confusing and it was a lucky thing, wasn't it, that our favorite radio commentator was there every evening to help us sort it all out.

* * *

HE was a pretentious little Englishman who may have been insane when he died at the age of 42, yet for a few crucial years in the midthirties he was the most popular radio news commentator in the United States and a pain in the neck to the New Deal.

His name was Harold Thomas Carter (Boake was an old family name on his mother's side). He was born in Baku, Russia, where his Irish father was a secretary for an English oil firm. Years later, political enemies trying to deport him saw a sinister connection in the similarity of his name and his birthplace. Carter claimed that his father was the British consul in Baku,

Selections in this article are extracted from Irving E. Fang, *Those Radio Commentators!* (Ames, The Iowa State University Press, 1977), pp.3-4, 107-114, 116-118. Reprinted with permission of author and publisher.

Boake Carter in 1937.

but considerable doubt existed about it.

* * *

His first chance to broadcast came in 1930 when Philadelphia radio station WCAU, a CBS affiliate, wanted someone to broadcast a rugby match between an Anglo-American club and a team of U.S. Marines, who had learned the game in Shanghai. Carter may have been the only newsman in Philadelphia who knew anything about rugby.

WCAU's next idea was to sell Carter as a news commentator. Carter quit his job at the *Daily News* and went on the air on a sustaining basis. He lasted only a month because no commercial sponsor could be found. Listeners complained that they couldn't understand his British accent. Carter went back to the *Daily News*. A year went by before he got another chance at radio.

* * *

In his new radio job he presented two daily 5-minute news broadcasts sponsored by Hearst Metrotone newsreel. As part of the job, Carter called himself the Globe Trotter and publicized the Hearst newsreel of the day and the theater where it was showing. The job raised his pay to $75 a week.

Carter insisted on choosing his own news items and rewriting them as he saw fit. He treated the news in a rather dignified manner, helped by that now modified British accent. To each news item, Boake Carter added a nugget of editorial comment.

The audience liked what they heard. Pep Boys, a chain of retail stores, signed on as a sponsor. His salary doubled as the nation was sliding into the Depression and most wages, when wages were still to be had, were being cut.

* * *

After a while, CBS had had enough and cancelled Carter. But the public wanted more of the same. They wrote and phoned that Carter and his analyses of the news must be returned, so Boake Carter returned to the air by popular demand. Pep Boys released him from his contract to let him sign with Philco. The Philadelphia Electric Storage Battery Company (Philco) made millions of batteries for radios until RCA came out with a vacuum tube which eliminated the need for the batteries. Nearly put out of business, Philco began manufacturing inexpensive radios. Dollar-pinched Americans, craving escapism and cheap entertainment, were a ready market. Philco had begun a successful expansion program when it hired Boake Carter not only to read news but also to read commercial copy. Carter switched from news to commercials without a pause: "The Communists became enraged. Chautemps collapsed. So the picture of Europe bubbles again—and becomes a point of interest again for those who like to tune long distances on their Philco 116 Double X's. One does not have to double oneself into knots as of old to see if you're tuned just right. That's the pleasure of a Philco Double X."

Listeners couldn't always separate news from promotion. When Philco sued RCA over patent rights, Carter supported the Philco position in several newscasts. Philco felt obliged to run a full-page ad in *Time,* unblushingly denying that Carter's comments were in any way influenced by his Philco connection. Not everyone swallowed it.

He later pushed Post Toasties and Huskies breakfast cereals for General Foods with equal skill. ("Hello, everyone. Huskies time. Boake Carter speaking.") He also appeared in newspaper ads for such products and services as the Nash automobile ("Boake Carter's Report on the New Nash"), Pullman sleepers on trains ("Pullman Is My Preference, says Boake Carter"), Gillette razors ("The Mystery of the Missing Whiskers—and 12 clues that solved it, by Boake Carter, Famous Radio News Commentator"). Underwood typewriters, etc. The Carter phiz, complete with pipe, clipped red mustache, and prominent chin cleft, was as familiar as the profiles of the stars of the silver screen.

People who listened to radio news in the thirties may recall Carter as a political conservative somewhere to the right of the early Fulton Lewis, Jr. That assessment is partly true. Carter liked argument. He once said: "I could have climbed the fence and been neutral, but what the devil? There's no meat in that. Meat is in argument. If I can provide an argument, so much the better."

* * *

For one reason or another, Carter engaged in verbal combat many of those with power over ships, both navy and civilian. After the *Morro Castle* ocean liner fire in 1934 took 134 lives, Carter made causes of ship inspection procedure, the shortcomings of the American merchant marine in general, and the secretary of commerce in particular. His ratings rose as he declared: "The U.S. merchant marine has been allowed to slide into decay and rot and not so very far from ruin. The vessels we do have are ninety-seven percent ancient, hardly seaworthy old tubs. They crawl when it comes to speed."

He predicted the day when air power would prove dangerous to battleships and he opposed spending very much money on building more warships. He further endeared himself to admirals and generals by repeated calls for pulling the army and navy air corps into a separate air force. "We in our small way try to point toward a better national air defense at less cost. But likewise never get to first base, either. For what reason?.... Because at the tops in both services, the gold braid and the brass hats like to play politics as much as any politician."

* * *

Not only were the War Department and the Navy Department sore at Carter, so was organized labor. Carter disliked strikes. He even disliked collective bargaining. He called the CIO a tyranny. He called John L. Lewis a dictator. In 1937 when the steel companies created vigilante groups to attack strikers, Carter went on to argue that these groups were a genuine local repudiation of collective bargaining. And he ominously reminded everyone that Mussolini's Fascists came to power after a wave of sitdown strikes in Italy.

Labor leaders protested. Carter's home station, WCAU, was picketed. The CIO called for a boycott of Philco products. Because the company's sales depended heavily on low-cost radios, that hurt. Although Philco executives squirmed, there was little they could do under the terms of Carter's five-year contract except wait for it to run out.

There was a corporate sigh of relief when the Philco contract expired in February 1938. Philco's loss was immediately General Foods' gain or at least the gain of Chairman of the Board Colby M. Chester, American Liberty League activist and former president of the National Association of Manufacturers. Chester detested the New Deal. Boake Carter's attacks were meat and potatoes to Chester. Not everyone at General Foods agreed that a

fire-breathing radio commentator was the best vehicle for selling breakfast cereal, but Coly Chester prevailed, even when the complaints came from F.D.R.'s ambassador to Moscow, Joseph E. Davies, whose new wife, Marjorie Post, owned more than a bite-sized chunk of General Foods stock.

Some of Carter's broadcasts were quite nasty. He implied that pressure from President Roosevelt to support unwanted New Deal legislation caused Senate Majority Leader Joseph T. Robinson's fatal heart attack. He accused the president of trying to duck his income tax, offering no proof. In tones variously described as "sneering," "bitter," "contemptuous," and "vitriolic," the commentator (whom Interior Secretary Harold Ickes called "Croak Carter") lashed out at one department after another in the Roosevelt administration until President Roosevelt himself felt it necessary to calm his exasperated son James. "If the President (or anyone else) were to undertake to answer Boake Carter, he would have no time to act as the executive head of the Government." said F.D.R.

In 1938 an estimated 2.5 million radios were tuned nightly to Boake Carter. His total radio audience was estimated at between 5 and 10 million.

* * *

When the U.S. gunboat *Panay* was sunk by the Japanese on a river in China early in 1938, Carter attacked what he alleged was a White House effort to involve us in an Asian war. These broadcasts, which drew strong listener support, were probably his most successful against the Roosevelt administration. Carter argued that Japan had a right to a kind of Monroe Doctrine of its own. Just as the United States could warn foreign nations to stay out of Latin America, said Carter, so could Japan tell foreign nations to stay out of Asia. Carter's analogy was poor. Japan was then engaged in a long and bitterly contested war with a fellow Asian country it sought to dominate and occupy, accompanied by much slaughter. United States forays into Latin America were not nearly so deep, long, or vicious.

Carter also thought England was trying to drag the United States into a war to shore up Britain's commercial empire. *Why Meddle in Europe?* the title of one of his seven books, was published in 1939, one year after *Why Meddle in the Orient?* (coauthored by Dr. Thomas H. Healy). "If Hitler uses force or threatens force." the radio commentator wrote in 1939, "it is primarily because he has learned from other nations of Europe that force is the only language that is effective in international affairs." He added, however, that he did not approve of Hitler's totalitarian government. In an earlier book, *Black Shirt, Black Skin,* he expressed disapproval of Mussolini's attack upon Ethiopia.

* * *

On August 26, 1938, CBS took Boake Carter off the air. It has never been made quite clear why. Certainly Carter had powerful enemies in and out of government. For some of those enemies, much more was involved than

political differences. There was hatred, deep, unrelenting, and implacable. For example, Congresswoman Virginia E. Jenckes had told a meeting of the Daughters of the American Revolution that every cherry tree around the Jefferson Memorial should be felled to show Japanese spies that the United States would brook no nonsense. Carter had fun with that one on the air. "Where is the lady from Indiana and her handy little ax?" he asked. The infuriated Mrs. Jenckes began a one-woman campaign to deport this nasty radio commentator.

Carter's dismissal may have been due both to pressure from the State Department on CBS and General Foods and to his own increasingly irrational attacks in broadcasts and lectures on American policy, particularly foreign policy. He saw it differently: "I pulled my punches and because of this and contributing reasons my radio rating, which had been at the top, began to drop."

In a bizarre turnaround, after F.D.R.'s reelection two years later, Carter sent a telegram to the White House, addressed "Dear Boss," saying, "Since yesterday's decision puts you again at the tiller, I'm ready to fall to and help trim sheets when you shout: 'stand by.'"

After leaving CBS, Boake Carter remained off the air for a year. From September 1939 until he died in November 1944, he was heard intermittently on Mutual affiliates at a variety of times and days of the week and with a variety of sponsors, including Land O' Lakes Dairy and Chef Boy-Ar-Dee, makers of spaghetti and sauce.

Friends observed that his behavior grew increasingly peculiar. Evidence exists that he was going insane, or was at the least under severe mental strain, which affected his behavior. Some right-wing extremists, including Senator Rush D. Holt of West Virginia, brooded about a British conspiracy that forced Boake Carter off the air, but, plainly, something, other than politics had crept into Carter's life.

* * *

Carter continued to broadcast, twice a week at noon. But the emotional pressures were building and building. On November 16, 1944, Boake Carter died of a heart attack in Hollywood, California.

"The Bad Boy of Radio": Henry Morgan and Censorship

By Arthur Frank Wertheim

Comedians often encountered problems of censorship on the radio in the 1930s and 1940s. Jokes and routines had to be cleared by the networks' program acceptance department, the sponsor, and the advertising agency. Since radio comedy was considered family entertainment comedians could not tell risqué gags and swear words were, of course, prohibited. Because of commercial considerations and the competition over ratings comedy shows had to appeal to the largest common denominator. A satirical skit about Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden performed by Mae West and Don Ameche on *The Chase and Sanborn Hour* in December, 1937, was criticized by religious groups and congressmen for its offensive parody of the Bible. The restrictions placed on radio entertainers were extreme. Sponsors feared offending listeners. Rival products and networks could not be mentioned over the air and references to living people and organizations had to be cleared. The sponsor particularly watched what the comedian said with a discerning eye.[1]

Henry Morgan's stormy career on radio illustrates the problems comedians faced with the censor and the sponsor. Known as "the bad boy of radio," Morgan was one of the wittiest comics on the medium in the 1940s. Born on March 31, 1915, Morgan (whose real name was Henry Lerner Von Ost, Jr.) started in radio as a page boy at New York station WMCA in 1931. One year later the seventeen-year-old youngster was promoted to part-time announcer. During the next few years he worked as an announcer and newscaster at stations in New York, Philadelphia, Boston and Duluth.[2]

During this time Morgan already showed an irreverence toward station policy. An individualist and non-conformist, he often read commercials in a cynical tone which got him into trouble with management. He was dismissed from one job after five weeks. On another occasion Morgan was fired for listing station executives in a missing persons bureau broadcast.

In 1940, the comedian joined WOR in New York City doing remotes from out-of-town dining and dance spots and a Saturday morning program called *Meet Mr. Morgan.* Because of his popularity he was soon broadcasting a fifteen-minute evening program of recorded music and comedy six days a week over the Mutual Broadcasting System. *Here's Morgan* achieved a large and loyal local following because of the comedian's innovative impersonations and parodies. No target was out of bounds for the irreverent comedian who, in a low-key satirical style, spoofed

The irreverent comedian, Henry Morgan.

commercials and give-away contests. Morgan's outrageously funny weather reports at the end of his program delighted listeners: "Snow tomorrow, followed by small boys with sleds and dignified old men getting conked on the beans by little boys with sleds following snow" and "Muggy tomorrow, followed by Tuegy, Wedgy, Thurgy and Frigy." Supposedly the United States Navy told Morgan to discontinue the reports.[3]

On his Mutual show the comedian heckled the sponsors especially the Adler Elevator Shoe Company. He called the firm's owner Jesse Adler, "Old Man Adler" and enjoyed spoofing the company's slogan "Now you can be taller than she is." Morgan once joked that he would not wear the elevator shoes "to a dog fight." "Old Man Adler" insisted the comedian apologize for the statement. "I *would* wear Adler's shoes to a dog fight," said Morgan. Annoyed at the comic's intransigence, Adler cancelled the company's sponsorship.[4]

Kidding of the sponsor was not a new comedic device on radio in the 1940s. Ed Wynn and Jack Benny had made fun of Texaco gasoline and Jell-O in the 1930s. Companies had learned that spoofing the sponsor could sell products provided the comedian's remarks were lighthearted and not taken seriously. Indeed, it helped link the radio star to the consumer item. Morgan's ribbing, however, suggested a tongue-in-cheek criticism of the product. He tore up the prepared commercial on the air and did his own amusing version. On the broadcasts Morgan told his listeners about how the sponsor and network management complained about his remarks. During one program the comedian conducted an auction of the station. He accused his sponsor, Life Savers, of cheating their customers by putting holes in their candy. He named the candy flavors "cement, asphalt, and asbestos" and "Morgan's Mint Middles." Fearing a loss in sales, the makers of Life Savers withdrew their sponsorship.[5]

The comedian later became noted for his flippant comments on *The Henry Morgan Show.* This thirty-minute Wednesday-night network program commenced on ABC on September 3, 1946, and ended up on NBC in 1949-50 as a Sunday-night feature. Morgan's frankness and spontaneity differed from the packaged slick comedy entertainment on radio in the 1940s. He ad-libbed frequently and was not afraid to satirize sacrosanct institutions and middle-class conventions. He began the show with his familiar catch-phrase, "Good evening, anybody, here's Morgan." He signed off occasionally by saying "Dont hate me. I did the best I could." If his listeners did not like his humor he suggested they tune into another show. On one broadcast he mentioned his program was going to switch to a new time:

> This may shock you. After tonight this program will no longer be heard on Wednesday night. Instead it will be heard on Friday night. Friday at eight o'clock! Well, actually Friday at eight o'clock is not such a new time. There's always been an eight o'clock Friday! Go ahead... try to think up a new time! If you can think up a new time, NBC will buy it from you. And if you can think of a new joke, *I'll* buy it from you!.... Now, what happens when a program changes its time? Well, right away some listeners say, "Oh yeah? It took us long enough to get used to not listening to you on Wednesday...." These people belong to my non-listening group. They just skip Wednesday altogether. They go from Tuesday to Thursday. Now all they have to do is go from Thursday to Saturday.... Then there's another group who react this way when you announce a time change. They say: "Okay, I'll go along with him. Listen, we're in it this far...." Now let me clear up this time change so there'll be no confusion. First, the listeners who are on mountain time. This doesn't apply to anyone east of Nebraska. Now then mountain timers, if you've been hearing this program Wednesday at nine o'clock, eastern time which would make it seven your time it'll be the same on Friday when we're heard at eight o'clock which would make it six o'clock your time, except that after we change from daylight savings there will be a three hour difference and though we'll be on at eight o'clock, it'll really be seven o'clock so that the difference in time will be two hours and if you tune in at six o'clock you'll be sure to get "Pepper Young".... Is that clear, Nebraska?[6]

Morgan often jested about certain taboo subjects that other comedians avoided for fear of offending listeners. The comedian daringly satirized fraud and commercialism in society. On one show he lampooned the large amount of chemicals in consumer products:

I just had a delicious candy bar...best I ever tasted...then I looked at the small print on the wrapper.... It says, "Contents, U.S. Government inspected...lecithin, rice, saccharine, softener, paprika, malt, salt, balt, asphalt"...(I ate that?) "...almonds, glycerine, gum base, banana seeds, protose, dextrose, glucose, blucose, camphor"... (I ate that?)..."artificial coloring, artificial flavoring, artificial chocolate, artificial peanuts, artificial skimmed milk...artificial water...real air"... (I ate that?)..."corn syrup, emulsifier, cane sugar, sugar cane, egg albumen, egg yoke, egg shells"..."Oleo oil, cream of tartar, gum arabic, soy beans, peppermint and hot pastrami!" Ichhh!! Did you ever read the label on a bottle of Cough Syrup? It says..."Menthol, ammonia, chloride, triammoniated-menthol-chloride, tri-mentholated-chloride-ammonia, tri-chlorinated menthol-ammonia...*anti* tri-ammoniated chlorinated menthol"...wonder if this cough syrup can hurt you? Doesn't say...just has a little picture on the bottom of a skull and crossbones.... The reason they put the contents on the label is so the consumer can read it and know exactly what's in it. Like a tube of tooth paste.... Just read the label and you know what it contains.... "55% primocarulated bromide." let's look that up...here it is, "medical term for profit to the manufacturer."[7]

Another of Morgan's favorite targets was the quantity of useless decorations on American automobiles that enticed customers to purchase a new car. "You know I went to an auto show the other day, and it was astounding," said the comedian.

Thousands of people carefully examining cars that they couldn't afford.... Those new cars really do have unbelievable features. Unbelievable! The price tags for one thing.... I asked one salesman the cost of the car he was exhibiting, and he said, $3000, FOB.... I wonder what he was mad about!.... There's one car that was being exhibited that actually had no brakes. They had this new invention where, when you want to stop the car, you open the door and drag your foot.... Or if you want to stop real fast, you look around and hit something inexpensive.... One curious thing occurred to me as I was looking over the new cars. No running boards! You remember when a cop used to jump on a running board and say, "Follow that car!" Now those cops will all get broken legs!... But the most impressive things about these cars are the amazing scientific features...superhetrodyne quintuplex drive...gyromatic transmission...panaromatic visibility...quadriflex gear coils...centerpoint rear suspension...highpoised engine mounting...unitized kneeaction self-setting valve lifters.... Yes, only American ingenuity and know-how could invent names like that!.... One car had a sextuple carbohydrate antivibrational gyrometric quastule.... That's a piece of cardboard to keep the windshield from rattling![8]

Morgan liked to joke about censorship on radio. He once jested about how he could not mention other products besides those of his sponsor:

Yes, you really have to be quite spry to avoid names of other products like...oops, I just did it again..."Spry" is tabu...oops I just did it again.... "Tabu" is a perfume! I spend half my life trying to dodge...oops, I just did it twice.... "Life" and "Dodge". Pretty soon you'll have to give credit to a corporation every time you open your mouth.

On his NBC show Morgan commented about his inability to refer to the rival networks, CBS and ABC:

Hey, do you know there are some things I can't talk about on the radio, and tonight I'd like to talk about them...the things I can't talk about. For instance, I can't mention names of other networks. There's another network around here known as "C.B.*mmmm*!"...I'm not allowed to use that last letter, but I can say "C" and "B" because those two letters are part of "N.B.C."... Also, around here, they don't like the first three letters of the alphabet. That's *another* network!.... Of course, you're not supposed to mention programs broadcast on other networks, either. Four of my best friends are Charlie, Agnes, Irma and Mike. I can talk all I want about

Charlie, Agnes, and Mike, but I'm not allowed to *have* a friend Irma.... I can't talk about Jack Benny or Arthur Godfrey. Of course, I can talk about H.V. Kaltenborn, but who wants to?[9]

The comedian also made fun of the network censor who "cleaned up" dirty jokes:

But of course the networks are most insistent that the material be kept absolutely clean. Don't get me wrong, now. They're not narrow-minded. For instance, I have a joke here that they approved after some very slight changes...it's about a travelling salesman whose car breaks down so he goes to a farmhouse. The farmer's daughter answers the door and the salesman says, "My car just broke down...you have any room where I could stay tonight". She says, "No I'm sorry...there's no room" so he goes to the YMCA. (LONG PAUSE).... Well, you'll have to admit it's *clean*.[10]

The entertainer also had a feud with the Eversharp Company, the sponsor of *The Henry Morgan Show*. Morgan changed the Schick Injector Razor slogan from "Push, pull, click, click" to "Push, pull, nick, nick." The company accused the comedian of causing their sales to drop. Morgan went on the air to tell his audience about his arguments with the company and the real reason for the firm's financial loss. "Frankly, I don't think it's my show," he said. "I think it's their razor." Low ratings caused the Eversharp Company to drop the program in 1947.[11]

Although *The Henry Morgan Show* continued on radio until 1950 he was never able to capture as many listeners as the more popular comedians, Jack Benny and Bob Hope. His off-beat urbane humor mainly appealed to a cult of loyal listeners who admired his boldness. His fans nonetheless considered him the only "honest" comedian on radio. His anti-Establishment style was undoubtedly daring for the late 1940s, a period of post-World War II conservatism. Radio comedy was commercial family entertainment and he needled the sponsors and censors that perpetuated this type of innocuous humor. Bob Hope's topical humor was superficial compared to Morgan's style. Morgan did capitalize on his "bad boy" image and publicity about the feuds with his sponsors. On the other hand the controversial "bad boy of radio" misbehaved too much for his sponsors who mainly cared to sell products. Both Morgan's reputation and limited appeal stemmed from the fact that he was working in a medium controlled by the pressures of commercialism and censorship.[12]

Notes

[1]H.B. Summers, *Radio Censorship* (New York, 1939), p.29; Warren Susman, ed., *Culture and Commitment, 1929-1945* (New York, 1973), pp.110-11.

[2]John Dunning, *Tune in Yesterday: The Ultimate Encyclopedia of Old-Time Radio, 1925-1976* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J., 1976), pp. 273-75; Frank Buxton and Bill Owen, *The Big Broadcast, 1920-1950* (New York, 1973), p.110; Joan Buchanan, "Madman Morgan," *Radio Life* (Nov. 24, 1946), pp. 4-5, 32.

[3]Buchanan, "Madman Morgan," Dunning, *Tune in Yesterday*, p.273.

[4]Buchanan, "Madman Morgan," p.5.

[5]*Ibid;* Dunning, *Tune in Yesterday*, p.274.

[6]Buchanan, "Madman Morgan," p.5; *The Henry Morgan Show*, Sept. 28, 1949, pp.2-3, NBC Papers, Radio Scripts, Series F-4, Box 2, Division of Archives and Manuscripts, State Historical

Society of Wisconsin, Madison.

[7]*The Henry Morgan Show,* Dec. 2, 1949, pp.2-3, NBC Papers.

[8]*The Henry Morgan Show,* March 7, 1947, pp.1-2, NBC Papers.

[9]*The Henry Morgan Show,* July 27, 1949, p.2; Nov. 4, 1949, p.2, NBC Papers.

[10]*The Henry Morgan Show,* Nov. 4, 1949, p.3, NBC Papers.

[11]Buxton and Owen, *The Big Broadcast,* p.110.

[12]In January 1947 Morgan's Hooper rating was 8.2 compared to Hope (30.2) and Benny (27). See Harrison B. Summers, *A Thirty-Year History of Programs Carried On National Radio Networks In The United States, 1926-1956* (Columbus, Ohio, 1958), p.14.

Radio Drama: No Need For Nostalgia In Kalamazoo

By Eli Segal

While scanning tonight's television listings I come across *A Salute to the American Imagination.* I wonder what part radio will play in the program. Media-wise, the American imagination reached its zenith in what is now patronizingly referred to as Radio's Golden Age, the implication being that we ought to rerun 1938 through 1952 including the entire output of the Mutual Broadcasting System. Transcriptions from this period reveal that some of it was indeed pure gold, some gold plated, but most of it was yellow plastic.

Heresy? No. But after ten years of teaching radio history and production to students who know not a golden age from chopped liver, my sense of reality is better served by a more dispassionate view of what radio drama *was.*

The nation's nostalgia media merchants peddle about half their wares to persons too young to remember or to have experienced what they are buying. Their purchase is akin to my pining for the hills of Vermont, never having lived there. To these young people the old-radio experience means something different from the high that may be achieved by those who remember radio as it once was. For if radio ever had a golden age, surely its patina is enhanced with the passage of time. The listener of old now remembers with fondness not so much the programs themselves, but his own state of being when his imagination—not his trinitron—painted the pictures.

Radio drama is not merely what people listened to before there was television. It was—and, more to the point here, *it can be again*—a viable, creative medium of entertainment. It is this belief that motivated a noble experiment in community radio drama in Kalamazoo, Michigan. At this writing the experiment has yielded over fifty half-hour dramas, many of them outstanding.

In the mid-fifties network radio drama died. Few mourned the corpse; they were too busy fine tuning their tv sets. The "golden age" epithet was really a delayed eulogy transcribed earlier for presentation in the sixties when the novelty of tv programming paled. (We are now sufficiently removed in time from those same tv programs to canonize *their* kinescopes: TV's Golden Age.) The golden part of radio's age glistened from the financial support of national advertisers. Sure, many excellent programs were sustaining (unsponsored); their existence, however, attested to the solid fiscal structure of an industry that could afford talent, time, and facilities to produce good programs, sponsored or not. When national advertisers deserted the medium, the radio networks' incentives to creativity flickered and died. It is ironic that many of the programs that emerged during radio's death throes are among the medium's finest creations. *Gunsmoke, Dragnet,* and the two NBC science fiction series come to mind immediately.

One cannot help wondering how network radio drama would have fared had the national tv networks not been corporate relatives of the radio networks. Perhaps, then, radio would have been forced to compete. Maybe it would have tried harder and not given up so easily. In any case, it was easy—and expedient—for the parent corporations of ABC, CBS, and NBC to write off radio. Television was pulling in record profits. Who cared about radio.

More than two decades have passed since radio drama died. In the interim many ghosts of this art form have flitted across the dial. CBS stayed in the game until the early sixties with two Sunday mystery programs. (I'm not considering NBC's *Eternal Light* in this discussion, although it has run continuously on the network since 1944 and many of its scripts and productions have been outstanding. It is produced under religious auspices and should be considered separately.) ABC's 1964-5 effort, *Theatre Five,* had problems finding good scripts, getting enough affiliates to carry the program, and happening too soon; radio's age of drama had not yet become "golden". Nevertheless, *Theatre Five* was a good try on the part of ABC and the programs it produced were far superior, on the average, to those of the current *CBS Radio Mystery Theatre* in terms of imaginative scripting and quality production.

More ghosts: scratchy samplings of *The Shadow* resurrected and horrendously edited to feed the cravings for camp; *The Lone Ranger,* better produced and better edited. More than a dozen old series, from *Fibber McGee and Molly* to *Dragnet,* were syndicated to local stations. Mutual aired *Zero Hour* and several ethnic dramatic series. Public radio stations aired high falutin' stuff from the BBC and some good things from Canada, as well as *Earplay,* a lavishly funded uneven series of esoteric experiments for the erudite.

WMUK, the broadcasting service of Western Michigan University, had aired some of these ghosts from time to time and, in 1971, the first of several Nostalgia Night programs invited listeners to phone in their requests for short excerpts from their favorite radio programs of the past. By 1973 we

Inside the Kitchenette Studio of the WMUK Players during a recording session.

were ready (with some apprehension) to attempt the production of our first half-hour drama using talent from the Kalamazoo community. The program was acceptable and we learned much from producing it. But in addition to the nuts-and-bolts came the knowledge that there is an audience for family hour radio drama and an abundance of local talent to draw on to produce the dramas.

In May, 1974 we began airing *FUTURE TENSE!*—a two-month series of science fiction dramas heard every Monday through Thursday evening at seven o'clock. By the series' conclusion, some 200 listeners had reacted to *FUTURE TENSE!* by phone or mail. Were WMUK to attribute the same audience measurement conclusions to this response that are drawn by some commercial stations, *F/T*'s audience would appear to be as astronomical as some of its plots. No, the whole country wasn't listening, but the many who did tune in *F/T* really enjoyed it.

The judges of the prestigious Ohio State Awards liked it, too. "Network quality radio drama," they called it. "Encouragement of local talent is highly significant and commendable." And "... very competent production of thought-provoking fantasy. A good cast."

The initial *F/T* series included 18 scripts. When it was rerun, in 1976, eleven new productions were added to the package. In between the two airings we produced a gory double feature titled *Halloween Horror* and, in honor of the bicentennial, a series of eight half-hour historical dramas, *Voices From Michigan's Past.* This series boasted an original musical score played by a 35 piece studio orchestra and the added talents of two

professional actors from Detroit's *Lone Ranger, Green Hornet,* and *Challenge of the Yukon* series, Paul Hughes and Rube Weiss. Both professional and local talent had a marvelous time. In 1977 we ran a 13 week suspense series called *The Grip of Terror.* This past summer, as part of a community arts festival, we broadcast two "live" dramas from the stage of the Civic Auditorium. Yes, local radio drama is alive and well in Kalamazoo.

Production of one of our programs begins, quite naturally, with a script—either an original work or an updated adaptation—frequently "localized" in setting to southwest Michigan. We take care to select scripts that are within our capabilities to produce effectively; not all scripts are. When a script is an adaptation of material from another medium, we are careful to insure that the adaptation fully exploits the *radio* medium. Long narrative passages are avoided if, indeed, any narrator is used. We prefer to dramatize sequences of short scenes that compress time and build to a climax rather than rely too heavily on a narrator.

In every scene and montage we take pains to provide a complete aural setting. What are the sonic perspectives of the scene? Do the actors remain on-mike or off-mike, or do they move around within the scene? Do they stand out from a crowd or are they part of a group? What is the perspective of background noise in establishing the sonic setting of the scene? Do the actors' voices "top" the roaring waters of Niagara Falls, or is He whispering sweet nothings to Her in a clandestine meeting in the back booth of a restaurant near the highway?

We avoid stage-type entrances and exits. Music bridges the high point of one scene to the high point of the next. There's no obligatory entrance line or exit line as in stage productions. We try to limit each scene to about two minutes.

We try to make sound effects work with the dialogue without overusing them. They should *suggest* the action, not replace it, like a good caricature that, in a few strokes of the pen, suggests the essence of what a detailed photo can often miss. It makes little sense to portray a man shoveling dirt without *both* the sound of the dirt and shovel *and* the sound of the man's exertions in his voice.

Overuse of music and effects is self-defeating once the listener becomes aware of them. They should serve merely to further the action in the mind's eye of the listener. The best sources of music that helps the story without calling attention to itself are the commercial mood music libraries. They offer complete catalogues of mood bridges, stings, stabs, and underscores specifically designed for dramatic radio. These libraries are well worth their cost since the alternative to their use is home recordings which audiences will find familiar and distracting. Home records will utlimately detract from the mood of the drama.

What about length? Generally, from 18 to 22 typed double spaced pages of dialogue, music, and effects fill half an hour of air time.

We usually have a problem casting our dramas; everyone wants to get into the act. Kalamazoo has several little theatre groups. In addition, many

The materials of which sound effects are made—footsteps in an all-terrain box and on an inverted empty box.

of our listeners like to participate in the production of the shows. When holding radio auditions, though, the end of the line is the sound that emanates from a loudspeaker. Appearance, age, or the ability to project one's voice to the second balcony make no difference here. The actors are playing to the microphone, hopefully, in an almost intimate relationship to it. We keep an ear open for vocal contrast and good character voices. A radio drama is not a bunch of leading man—leading lady voices. Rather, it tries to portray human beings who don't all speak in announcers' pear-shaped tones. We maintain a mental casting file on who can do what.

In the heyday of "live" radio drama, the production set-up usually consisted of a large 30 by 60 foot studio containing a 25 piece orchestra, a narrator's isolation booth, 3 or 4 manual sound effects persons and their gear, another sound technician manning 4 turntables for recorded effects, and ample space for the actors to perform at different distances from the microphone. All elements of the production were coordinated in sequence—as they happened—to create the finished program.

In today's non-professional community radio drama, it is more expedient to work with the cast alone, dealing intensively with each scene, recording the results, and adding music and effects at a later date. A typical rehearsal begins at 6:30 in the evening with the director assigning pre-cast roles. The actors read aloud through the script. Once each actor knows who he is within the context of the script, we begin working scene by scene, defining characterizations, perhaps changing dialogue that sounds forced, working out in advance microphone perspectives that will apply once we enter the studio, and coordinating voices with the sound effects that will be added later.

After a ten minute break, the actors go before the microphone in the studio. A studio can be any acoustically dead room that separates the actors from the director, yet affords them both a window view of each other. Our dramatic studio is a former faculty dorm kitchinette that measures only 5 by 6 feet, but it works. We use only one bi-directional microphone. Its figure-eight pickup pattern allows the actors to move at an eighteen inch radius around the mike and achieve a variety of sonic perspectives (for varying presence), as well as to face each other in one-to-one dialogue without the hollow sound of two cardioid mikes used back-to-back on loud dynamic dialogue.

We rehearse each scene "on mike" until the desired effect is achieved; then we tape that scene and go on to the next one. I have found that recording an entire script all in one sequence shakes the confidence of semi-professional and amateur actors. Too many retakes after the show is recorded really lower a cast's morale. After recording all the scenes separately, but in sequence, we edit the acceptable material together to form a dialogue reel.

Any facilities that offer access to two tape playback decks, one recorder, one turntable, one bi-directional microphone, and a mixing board will afford the opportunity to create community radio drama. We left our project, in the above paragraph, with an edited reel of dramatic dialogue. To finish

the project one need only play the dialogue reel back on one of the two tape players, while mixing into the control board the dialogue plus "live" or recorded music and effects from the other sources just mentioned. The output of the control board is fed to and recorded on the third tape machine. Fluffs can be redone as many times as necessary and the "good takes" then edited together on the third tape machine to create the finished program.

We found that not all the sound effects we needed are available on records. Here is where our own ingenuity came into play. We began by constructing an "all terrain" box from 3/4-inch plywood, 4 feet long by 2 feet wide by 10 inches deep. We divided the 4-foot length into three separate felt-lined compartments and filled one of these compartments with a mixture of clay and sandy soil. The other compartments were filled with gravel and dried leaves and twigs respectively. The effects person can "walk" or "run" manually using bathroom plungers or halved coconut shells. The different compartments' contents provide the sounds of differing terrain.

Changes in volume and playback speed will allow different uses for the same effect. Wind or surf that sounds gentle at low level may become a hurricane or a raging torrent, respectively, when played back at full volume with the actors' voices tyring to "top" the effect. A vacuum cleaner played back at half speed makes a convincing moving space ship interior. Two luxuries that add even greater versatility to the effects department are a reverb unit and a hi-lo sound effects filter.

Golden ages, historically, have been so labelled long after their own demise. Relevant, well-produced community radio drama can and should be done today. If it is, perhaps the critics of the future will call this the age of the golden rebirth of the medium of the imagination.

Eli Segal, Associate Professor of Instructional Communication at Western Michigan University and Manager of its Audio Services and Aural Press for the past ten years, was raised in the studios of New York radio drama. He is also president of ETC Enterprises, a Kalamazoo electronic media production service. His programs have won numerous national awards for excellence.

Photographs by Kanti Sandhu.

Obtaining Old Radio Programs: A List Of Sources For Research And Teaching

By Marvin R. Bensman

When studying the culture of the United States one cannot ignore the impact that broadcasting has had upon it. Teachers are just now becoming cognizant of the problems and prospects of research and teaching using nonprint materials. This article deals with the basics of locating original broadcast material to be studied and used in a variety of disciplines.

The beginning of radio program collecting starts with the ability to preserve sound. At the turn of the century, 78 rpm records became quite popular. Commercial 78's with radio program matter were available to the public from 1928 on, the first being "Amos 'n' Andy" recording their routines for use by over thirty radio stations when they were still known as "Sam 'n' Henry." The five minute playing time and noise level kept such recordings from being used by broadcast stations in any quantity. In 1927, Thomas Edison had experimented with a long-playing record and had achieved 20 minutes per side on a twelve-inch disc, running at 80 revolutions per minute. Edison was unaware of the use for such an invention and left the recording industry soon thereafter.

Columbia had excellent sound quality on a 10″ 78 rpm disc, but the playing time was only five minutes. In 1932 Victor introduced the "transcription" running at 33 1/3 rpm, on a ten-inch disc. These did not last long and are now considered rare.

The standard *E*lectrical *T*ranscription running 15 minutes per side at 33 1/3 rpm on a 16-inch disc was introduced in the thirties. The sound quality, even on those pressed for syndication, were quite high compared to the standard home 78 rpm record. Transcriptions were also cut by the networks and their affiliated stations for re-broadcast of the programs at different times or for legal purposes. This type of ET was aluminum based, with a black coating. During World War II, when metal was scarce, many of these ET's were scrapped for their metal content. Wartime ET's were of a glass base, and considerably more fragile. The networks have systematically destroyed many of the recordings made as they moved operations and reduced their storage costs. However, many affiliated stations, primarily on the West Coast which had to record network programs because of the time difference, kept their recordings.

A small group of programs available today from the thirties and early forties were originally recorded on home disc recorders using 7″ discs which ran for 5 minutes a side. The home wire recorder was also introduced for

home use in the forties. During the war years, the Armed Forces Radio Service preserved a great many programs for rebroadcast to troops overseas. The AFRS disc had a brightness and lack of distortion that is hard to find even among network disc copies. With the discovery of magnetic tape recording developed in Germany, and Bing Crosby's dislike of performing live and uncut, tape began to be used in 1947 by ABC with the other networks and broadcast stations soon following suit. Because of the initial newness of tape equipment, the programs were often then transferred from the tape master to disc before being aired. In the late fifties, radio programs were aired directly from tape.

Collecting of radio programs on home tape recording equipment began around 1950 after some twenty companies introduced the recorder to the consumer market. Sources for older programs dating as far back as 1938 were engineers which had taken discs home and people who had acquired disc and wire recorders. Radio program collecting began in earnest in the late 1950's. This material, along with AFRS discs and a few network and syndicated discs, comprised the starting base for material which began to be privately traded in the sixties.

In the sixties, when radio as it was almost was gone, people began to seek out other collectors and small groups began to form on both the West and East coasts to exchange material, information and sources. People in the armed forces began to smuggle AFRS discs or tape recordings of AFRS programs home and radio stations began to make their stored material available.

The first private seller of radio programs was David Goldin and newsletters began to circulate on radio program collecting. The most infuential newsletter to set the standard was the now defunct "Radio Dial" by the Radio Historical Society of America founded by Charles Ingersoll, then a 70-year old radio buff. Carrying on the tradition, the leading newsletter today is "Hello Again" by Jay Hickerson which began publication in 1970 and tied together over 100 of the most active collectors.

What follows is a listing of the best sources available to those who wish to obtain broadcast programs for research and teaching.[1] The sources are arranged in categories:

Scholarly Association and Publications
University Collections
Libraries and Museums
Collectors' Publications
Clubs with Newsletters
Sellers of Tapes and Discs

Each category will be preceded by a short discussion of the usefulness of the sources and those items that are considered most helpful will be indicated.

When writing to the private individual collector or collector organizations, include a self-addressed stamped envelope. This will guarantee a reply as the private collector is generally operating on a very

limited budget.

Many collectors—trading and selling radio program material—make a charge for their catalog which lists their material. This charge is generally no more than one or two dollars to cover the cost of printing or duplication. Obtain a wide range of representative catalogs so price comparisons can be made. The same program can range up to double in cost depending on the party from whom it is obtained.

If you have material to trade include as complete a description as possible in your letter and make your request as specific as possible. You can ask if the collector will trade for blank recording tape rather than for money. This means generally that you send two reels of tape, one of which will be retained and you would receive back one reel with your requested material. It is extremely easy to obtain any program which represents a particular type of program material, but when seeking a very specific dated program of particular content you must check every possible source to make sure you have not overlooked that program.

The field of collecting old radio programs has the excitement and tension of the traditional historical hunt for original source material. New material is constantly surfacing. Recently some valuable "Vic and Sade" recordings were discovered in a pile of transcriptions which were about to be thrown out at San Francisco State College after having been transferred to tape. The original scripts of that show are at the State Historical Society of Wisconsin, but permission is needed for copying. Antique shops, producers, actors, flea markets and radio stations are prime research sources. Every Jack Benny show, including his first from 1932, is available. The complete run of the science-fiction shows "X Minus One" and "Dimension X" is circulating. All of "Lum and Abner" is available. "Dragnet" as it appeared on radio was donated by Jack Webb to the Los Angeles Police Department as their files provided the story ideas and is becoming more widely available.

Estimates vary—but there may be at least 10,000 separate U.S. radio programs circulating among private collectors, with many more shows in institutional archives which have not yet been permitted by terms of the owner's agreements to circulate generally. These library and archive collections are available to bonafide researchers but require travel and often restrict copying. If there are any sources you are aware of which were not included in the following listing please contact the author.[2]

Scholarly Associations and Publications

The following associations provide a contact point for like-interested individuals and act primarily as a referral service to a wide-range of material. The publications provide greater detail on the art of collecting.

Association for Recorded Sound Collections, "A Preliminary Directory of Sound Recording Collections in the United States and Canada." (New York Public Library, 1967), 157 pages. The association address is: Rogers and Hammerstein Archives of Recorded Sound, 111

Amstedam Avenue, New York, N.Y. 10023.

British Institute of Recorded Sound. Contact: Patrick Saul, Director, 29 Exhibition Road, London, SW7.

International Association of Sound Archives. Contact: Dr. Rolf L. Schuursma, Secretary, Documentationcentre SFW, Hengeveldstraat 29, Utrecht, The Netherlands. The association issues "Phonographic Bulletin," which describes current state of worldwide archives of sound.

Speech Communication Association, Committee on Archives of Recorded Materials, c/o 5205 Leesburg Pike, Falls Church, VA 22041

Bensman, Marvin, R. and Walker, Dennis, "Computerized Catalog of over 100 Collections of the Most Active Private Collectors of Old Radio Programs," ERIC/*RCS Module,* Speech Communication Association, 5205 Leesburg Pike, Falls Church, VA 22041 (Microfiche or Hard Copy, Dec., 1975).

Deihl, E. Roderick, "Using Media to Teach Broadcasting History—A Bibliography of Materials," *Communication Education,* Vol. 25, No. 2, March 1976, pp.167-172.

Drake, H. L., "Special Report: Teaching Speech Communication with Recordings including Old Radio Shows," *Central States Speech Journal,* Summer 1975, pp.150-152.

Lichty, Lawrence, W., "Sources for Research and Teaching in Radio and Television History," *Performing Arts Resources,* Theatre Library Association, Vol. 1, 1974, (Drama Book Specialists/Publishers, New York), ed. Ted Perry.

Pitts, Michael, R., *Radio Soundtracks: A Reference Guide,* (Scarecrow Press, Inc. 1976). A somewhat incomplete look at what is available, but unique for its specific coverage.

Shivers, Gary, M., "Recorded Documents in Public Communication: A Discography of Broadcasting and Public Address," M.A. Thesis: University of Kansas, 1972.

Summers, Harrison, B., *A Thirty-Year History of Programs Carried on National Radio Networks in the United States, 1926-1956;* Arno Press Reprint, 330 Madison Avenue, New York, N.Y. 10017. Data on what was on—when and where.

University Collections

Most of this material has various restrictions placed upon it by the original contributor. However, a letter noting the research or teaching goal and proper scholarly appeals may result in service via the mails. Generally, you should anticipate that a trip will be necessary once it has been clearly established that the material being sought does exist in a particular collection. Private collectors may also have duplicate copies which may be obtained much more readily so do not stop with the first source. Request any catalog or make a specific request for material.

Columbia University, Oral History Collection, Butler Library, New York, N.Y. 10027. Collection of interviews with persons active in early years of

broadcasting. Most of the original taped interviews were destroyed at first after being transcribed into print. Catalog: *The Oral History collection,* and portions published in *American Heritage,* Vol. VI, No. 5, August 1955.

Hershberger, John D., "The Arrangement and Cataloging of the Miami University Broadcasting Service—WLW Electrical Transcription Archive," M.A. Thesis: Miami University, Oxford, OH, 1965. Describes the over 1,000 recordings in Miami collection.

Memphis State University Radio Program Collection, Dr. Marvin R. Bensman, Department of Theatre and Communication Arts, Memphis State University, Memphis, TN 38152. Over 1,000 hours of a variety of material available.

Michigan State University Collection of Classic Radio Programs, Department of Radio and Television, 322 Union Building, East Lansing, MI 48823.

Ohio State University, University Archivist, 2070 Neil Avenue, Columbus, OH 43210. WOSU-AM/FM collection of some 8,300 discs from 1930s to 1960s.

Stanford University Archive of Recorded Sound, Palo Alto, CA 94305. Broadcasts collection of some 3,500 discs.

Temple University, Philadelphia, PA. Department of Radio-Television-Film. WCAU collection.

University of California, Communication Archives, Department of Speech, 405 Hilgard Avenue, Los Angeles, CA 90024. Jack Benny collection and other material.

University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, University Archivist, 19 Library, Urbana, IL 61801. 2,989 discs and 400 tapes with catalog.

University of Washington Milo Ryan Phonoarchive, School of Communications, Seattle, WA 98105. Extensive KIRO-CBS transcription collection of WWII material. Computerized catalog of over 7,000 tape recordings.

Wisconsin State Historical Society, 816 State Street, Madison, WI 53706. Numerous discs and papers, primarily NBC.

Libraries and Museums

The same comments on universities can be applied to libraries and museums. However, the National Archives does provide a rather expensive duplicating service on most of their material. Again, check collector catalogs for possible sources of the same material.

Broadcast Pioneers Library, Director: Catharine Heinz, 1771 N Street, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20036. Referral service.

Electronic Communication Museum of the Antique Wireless Association, Inc., East Bloomfield, NJ. Original equipment of broadcasting.

Eleutherian Mills Historical Library, "Cavalcade of America" DuPont Radio Series, Wilmington, DE 19807. Over 7,000 discs.

Library of Congress, Recorded Sound Section Librarian: Mr. James

Smart, 1st and Indiana Avenue, S.E., Washington, D.C. 10540. Over 350,000 recordings and AFRS material.

Museum of Broadcasting, Contact: Mr. Robert Saudek, 1 East 53rd Street, New York, N.Y. Copies not readily available except at site.

National Archives, Contact: Mr. Les Waffen, Archivist, Audiovisual Archives Division, Washington, D.C. Much WWII material and will record most for fee.

National Broadcaster's Hall of Fame, Contact: Mr. Arthur Schreiber, Freehold, N.J. Little material made available at this time.

National Voice Library, Michigan State University, Main Library Building, East Lansing, MI. Recordings numbering over 20,000.

Pacific Pioneers Broadcasters Association, Contact: Mr. Martin Halperin, 6208 Belmar Avenue, Reseda, CA 91335. Extensive collection but not easily obtained.

Smithsonian Institution, Division of Electricity and Nuclear Energy, Washington, D.C. Little audio but repository for actual equipment and documents.

United Nations Archives, Sound Recording United, New York, N.Y. Catalog: "List of Speeches and Visits Made by Heads of State and Dignitaries, 1945—".

Collectors' Publications

The following newsletters contain names and addresses of collectors, listings of material available and requests for material, want-ads for those selling old radio programs, articles detailing various aspects of broadcast program history, interviews with pioneer performers, etc. The most valuable are noted. It is recommended that you write for a sample of a publication before subscribing.

Airwaves, 438 W. Neptune, NIU, DeKalb, IL 60115. Monthly publication, $10. yr.

Collector's Corner, 5 Valley View Drive, Yonkers, New York, N.Y. 10710. Monthly publication, $7.50 yr.

Dumont, Lou, 81 Kendall Road, Keene, New Hampshire 03431. Collector who writes column for *Hobbies* magazine (1006 S. Michigan Avenue, Chicago, IL 60605—Monthly, $6.00 yr.)

Hello Again, Jay Hickerson, Box C, Orange, CT 06477. Monthly publication, $6.00 yr. Most valuable source of all noted. Has logs available on programs collected, collector's list available for $3.00. Highly recommended.

National Radio Trader, P.O. Box 1147, Mount Vernon, VA 98273. Quarterly publication, $8.00 yr.

North American Radio Archives, c/o Al Inkster, 3051 S. Jessica, Tucson, AZ 85730. Quarterly publication, $14 yr. Non-profit educational corporation founded in 1972. Provides a wide variety of services such as tape-lending library, print-material lending library, slide library and scripts. The best organization for a scholar to belong to who wishes to make

good contacts and develop materials. Newsletter also reviews other major newsletters and publications. Excellent source.
Nostalgia Radio News, The Nostalgia Radio Network, Box 114, Liverpool, New York, N.Y. 12088. Monthly publication, $6.00 yr.
Nostalgia Newsletter and Radio Guide, Box 421, Morton Grove, IL 60053. Monthly publication,$6.00 yr.
Old Time Radio Collector's Handbook, Charles Seeley, Rogue Press, 194 Victoria Blvd., Kenmore, New York, N.Y. 14217. 14 p. $1.25. Good source on how to start your own collection.

Clubs with Newsletters

If there is a club in your area this can be a prime source of easily acquired material. These groups tend to be composed of the most dedicated and knowledgeable individuals and will be of great help in starting a collection of material. They will generally be happy to send a copy of their newsletter upon request for a stamped self-addressed envelope.

Arizona Radio Club, Walt Hart, 9015 N. 10th, Phoenix, AZ 85020.
Golden Radio Buffs, David Easter, 106 King Charles Circle, Baltimore, MD 21237.
Indiana Recording Club, William Davis, 1729 E. 77th, Indianapolis, IN 46240.
Milwaukee Area Radio Enthusiasts, Ron Polmatire, 1905 N. 32nd Street, Milwaukee, WI 53208.
Old Time Radio Club of Buffalo, Box 119, Kenmore, N.Y. 14217.
Radio Collectors of America, Dick Sullivan 68 Hillock, Roslindale, MA 02131.
Radio Historical Association of Colorado, John Lloyd, 2667 E. 99th Avenue, Thornton, CO 80229.
Society to Preserve and Encourage Radio Drama, Variety and Comedy, 14807 Bestor, Pacific Palisades, CA 90272.
Vintage Broadcast Collectors Club, William Sharp, 8936-147 Street, Edmonton, Alberta, T5R 0Y3.

Sellers of Tapes and Discs

Some 20 companies make available old radio programs on records as well as tapes. The following are sources where you may obtain—for a price—both tapes and disc recordings. A charge is generally made for their catalogs.

AM Treasures, 110 Montgomery Avenue, North Babylon, NY 11704.
American Radio Heritage Institute, P.O. Box W, Culver City, CA 90230.
Audio Antiques, 416 E. 8th Street, Brooklyn, NY 11218.
Audio-Text, 8110 Webb Avenue, North Hollywood, CA 91605.
Blalock's, c/o Don Och, 654 Chynoweth Avenue, San Jose, CA 95136.
Brooks, Barry, 54 Woodside A. Wintrop, MA 02152.
Burnham Radio Collection, 17173 Westbrook, Livonia, MI 48152.

Double R Radio, 505 Seeley Road, Syracuse, NY 13224.
Golden Age of Radio, Box 25215, Portland, OR 97225.
Great Radio Shows, Inc., P.O. Box 254, Woodinville, WA 98072.
Hehn, Joseph, P., 422 N. 9th Street, Allentown, PA 18102.
Hickman, John, 1825 Parkside Drive, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20012.
Lenk, Richard, E51 Helen Avenue, Paramus, NJ
Majestic Reruns, 3521 Arden Circle Road, Sacramento, CA 95825.
Mar-Bren Sound Ltd., P.O. Box 4099, Rochester, NY 14610.
McCoy's, P.O. Box 1069, Richland, WA 99352.
Memorabilia Records, Box 24, Northridge, CA 91324.
Old Radio Warehouse, 5 Valleyview Drive, Yonkers, NY 10710.
Radio Re-Runs, Box 724, Redmond, WA 95052.
Radio Yesteryear, David Goldin, Box H. Croton-on-Hudson, NY 10520.
Radio Vault, Box 9032, Wyoming, MI 49509.
Weiss, Stuart, 136-49 Jewel Avenue, Flushing, NY 11367.

Notes

[1]I would like to acknowledge the help of Lawrence W. Lichty, Jay Hickerson and Ray Stanich.

[2]Memphis State University provides old radio programs of a wide variety. Send for a copy of the "University and College Policy Document and Catalog," c/o Dr. Marvin R. Bensman, Department of Theatre and Communication Arts, Memphis State University, Memphis, TN 38152.

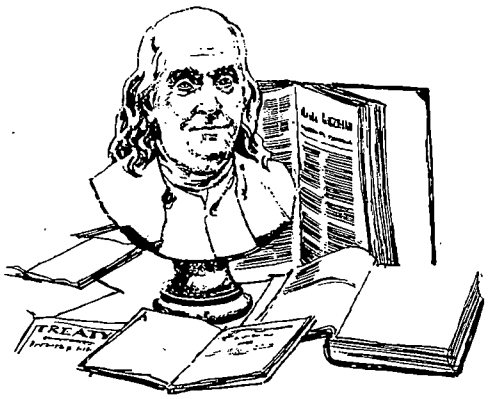
Dr. Marvin R. Bensman, a graduate of the University of Wisconsin, is an Associate Professor of Broadcasting at Memphis State University. He began collecting old radio programs in the late 1960s to provide his students with an understanding of the history and aural art of mass communications.

Call for Papers

The *Journal of Popular Culture* will be publishing an issue with an "In-Depth" section on "Latin American Popular Culture." We are especially looking for substantive papers of not more than 15 to 20 pages on any of the following topics: comics, pulps, radio, television, tabloid press, carnivals, sports, popular music, cinema, *fotonovelas,* cartoons, and popular poster or wall art. Other popular culture subjects will be seriously considered. Papers must be completed by Jan. 1, 1980, but one or two page proposals should be submitted as soon as possible to the guest editors:

Harold E. Hinds, Jr.
Division of Social Sciences
University of Minnesota, Morris
Morris, Minnesota 56267

Charles Tatum
Department of Foreign Languages
New Mexico State University
LasCruces, N.M. 88003



Review Essay

REVIEW ESSAY

POPULAR LITERATURE: A HISTORY AND GUIDE FROM THE BEGINNING OF PRINTING TO THE YEAR 1897. *By Victor E. Neuburg,* London: The Woburn Press, 1977. 302 pp.. Cloth $18. Sold in the U.S. by the Woburn Press, c/o Biblio Distribution Center, 81 Adams Drive, Totowa, NJ 07512

TOWARD EDUCATION IN EIGHTEENTH CENTURY ENGLAND. By Victor E. Neuburg. London: The Woburn Press, 1971, 200 pp. Cloth $18. Sold in the U.S. by The Woburn Press, c/o Biblio Distribution Center, 81 Adams Drive, Totowa, NJ 07512

CHAPBOOKS: A GUIDE TO REFERENCE MATERIAL ON ENGLISH, SCOTTISH AND AMERICAN CHAPBOOK LITERATURE OF THE EIGHTEENTH AND NINETEENTH CENTURIES. *By Victor E. Neuburg.* London: The Woburn Press, 197 pp. Cloth $14. Sold in the U.S. by The Woburn Press, c/o Biblio Distribution Center, 81 Adams Drive, Totowa, NJ 07512.

Probably not enough is known in this country now of one of Britain's leading scholars in popular culture. Victor E. Neuburg's works over the last two decades have been directly in line with what popular culture scholars should be doing, and as he plows the particular fields of his interests he uncovers much that is of primary interest to us all.

Reviewing the books from the earliest, the chapbook bibliography sets forth the importance of the chapbook in Britain and America during the 18th and 19th centuries in society, the distribution of knowledge and the encouragement of reading in general—and it was great. There follows a bibliography of references to chapbook literature and a very important index to printers and publishers of these inexpensive books. This volume should be on the shelf of every library.

A topic of parallel though much wider interest is Neuburg's study of 18th century education. The motivation for allowing the poor and lower class to learn to read, though couched in high-sounding moralistic terms, was reprehensible. Such people should be allowed to *read*, it was felt, because they could then study the Bible and thus save their souls. But they should not be allowed to write because they might get ideas and presumptions and aspirations. The conservatives sensed the power that lay in mass literacy and wanted none of it. As a Mr. Davies Giddy, M.P., said in a House of Commons debate in 1807:

...Giving education to the labouring classes of the poor...would be prejudicial to their morals and happiness; it would teach them to despise their lot in life, instead of making them good servants in agriculture and other labourious employments. Instead of teaching them subordination, it would render them fractious and refractory.

Education taught the children to ignore useful labor—such as mending stockings—and to waste time in learning to read and write.

Despite such attitudes against education, however, the forces favoring it were winning the day. By the end of the 18th century the various forces advocating teaching the poor to read and write—revolutionary fervor, Christian charity, general humanitarianism, and belief that the two skills would eventually lead to greater contentment and better service—coalesced, gained momentum through the 19th century and finally triumphed.

But the battle was not easily won. Frequently the teachers were ignorant, often condescending and indifferent, got sidetracked through theory onto serious false sideroads, and generally taught by dull rote. Though there were numerous well-intentioned teachers and theorists, the reader of this volume oscillates between tears and anger at man's slowness and clumsiness in trying to transmit the rights of humanity to all individuals.

Neuburg charts the conflict sensitively, comprehensively and compassionately. This is a book that should be read by all who are interested in Britain's leap up from illiteracy, and by extension the fight of all people for their basic rights. This volume is especially useful for the student of popular culture because it chronicles the considerable — indispensable—role played by chapbooks, broadsides, religious tracts, popular poetry and popular fiction of all kinds. The volume concludes with valuable statistics on teachers' salaries in the 18th century, a bibliography of chapbooks, and a listing of printers, publishers and booksellers in London and the provinces. As Neuburg says, there is much work yet to be done on the role of popular culture in furthering the growth of literacy and mobility.

Another immensely important book to the student of popular culture as well as the general reader is Neuburg's study of the growth and development of popular literature.

He quite properly begins with oral literature before 1600. He points out how with the growth of even primitive technology in the form of the printing press, oral literature, though providing the sources for printed material to feed on, was bound to become subordinated. Through the 17th century this printed literature consisted generally of broadsides and paper-covered books, sold around St. Paul's in bookstalls, covering subjects such as romance, crime, traditional songs and strange happenings—in other words, sensationalism. Those people who could not get to London to buy their books were served by ballad-sellers, chapmen and hawkers throughout Britain.

By the end of the 17th century the very unreadable black-letter, which had characterized the broadside during the period, was giving way to the

lighter and cleaner forms of printing characteristic of the chapbook, which, as we have seen, was instrumental in educating the masses to read and write by the end of the 18th century. The ballad as street literature persisted throughout the 19th century, running, as Neuburg says, to such general categories as "street drolleries, ballads about the Royal Family or politics, 'ballads on a subject,' and ballads concerning crime." He gives fine examples of all types, including one on the Crystal Palace (1851), which ends:

> Great praise is due to Albert,
> For the good that he has done,
> May others follow in his steps
> The work that he has begun;
> Then let us all with one accord,
> His name give with three cheers,
> Shout Huzza for the Crystal Palace,
> And the world's great National Fair!!

As Neuburg points out, there remains a great amount of work to be done in the study of street literature, for "Through street literature we are able to penetrate, however vicariously, the world of feeling of the urban poor—and the ephemeral nature of the street ballad could be taken to symbolize the precarious quality of their lives."

At this time fiction—of a romantic and sensational nature—sold in the form of novels that cost a penny for a part or a complete work. At the same time, of course, other novels were selling for considerably higher prices—up to 3 shillings and very widely. For example, G.W.M. Reynold's *The Mysteries of London* (1845) was selling in serial form some 40,000 copies in weekly numbers at a penny or in monthly installments at sixpence. There were also, of course, the gothics—which Jane Austen derided—and the romances—like *Geraldine; or the Street Assassine of the Old Stone Cross* (1844), which ran for twenty-six numbers, or *Ada the Betrayed; or, the Murder at the Old Smithy* (1847), which ran to 56 numbers. Both were published by Edward Lloyd, who also brought out unauthorized Dickens plagiarisms such as *The Post-humurous Notes of the Pickwickian Club,* edited by 'Box,' which was called the "Penny Pickwick" and ran 1838-42 in 112 numbers, and *Memoirs of Nicholos Nicklebery*, by 'Box,' which ran to 40 numbers. The best seller of all was, of course, *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (1852). But most English writers—including Byron, Milton and Pope—were included in cheap editions.

Books were sold however they could be. A famous 18th century bookstore—Lockington's—had an inventory of 30,000 volumes, and apparently was the first story to remainder those volumes he could not otherwise sell. But the usual bookstores intimidated the poor reader of the penny dreadfuls, so he bought his by mail, at humble stalls and from travelling hawkers.

The full saga of the right of the poor to material they wanted to read—even if it were not elevating and was an embarrassment to the elite—is

charted here in all its details. It is a story well worth reading.

In a way Neuburg comes full circle in his book. He begins with the oral tradition before printing and ends with the oral tradition in 19th century society, particularly with popular songs. He correctly points out, "Song sheets and pocket songsters represent (as did chapbooks in the earlier century) a living oral tradition literally transfixed in the fastness of the page." And he insists—again correctly—that, "The persistence of an oral tradition into the 19th century is a theme which requires investigation."

Neuburg's books—and the latest one especially—are valuable contributions to the study of popular culture. The study of popular literature should be required reading for all students of English literature and history as well as of popular culture. Neuburg's scholarship is wide, his understanding and sympathy deep. With these books on my shelf I look forward to his next study.

Bowling Green University Ray B. Browne

POPULAR CULTURE IN EARLY MODERN EUROPE. *By Peter Burke.* New York University Press, 1978. 365 pp, including index. $20.00 Cloth.

THE SHOWS OF LONDON: A PANORAMIC HISTORY OF EXHIBITIONS, 1600-1862. *By Richard D. Altick.* Harvard University Belknap Press, 1978. 553 pp. $35.00 cloth.

These two monumental books are of inestimable value in the present and future study of popular culture. Both are exhaustive and need never be supplanted.

Mr. Burke's book comes from his working as Reader in Intellectual History in the School of European Studies at the University of Sussex. His main purpose is to present the popular culture in a comparative study of the whole of Europe during the period 1500 to 1800 because these centuries constitute the best-documented period before industrialization. His effort is toward synthesizing all of the sweep of European popular culture during the period.

His definition of popular culture is somewhat traditional, which he outlines in a negative sort of way as being the culture of the non-elite people, those persons who are non-learned and un-lettered, belong to the "little" tradition rather than the "grand" tradition of learning and letters.

Within these definitions—which he posits with a certain hesitation—Burke studies all approaches to the subject. He demonstrates that in the late 18th and early 19th centuries the Romantics began associating with the un-lettered "folk," and in so doing initiated the study of popular culture. He reaches back to the 15th century, then, to demonstrate that in the early years in Europe the lines between the elite and the non-elite were real and at times unbridgeable, but at the same time in many other ways almost non-existent. That is, there was considerable downward mobility for the elite — they could and did mingle with the lower class people in virtually every activity—though the upward mobility of the lower classes was more constricted and constrained. Nevertheless there was great mixing of the two cultures. Burke demonstrates that culture in the country—among the shepherds, swineherds, weavers, wives, etc.—differed somewhat from that in the towns among the poor, and that much of it was taken back and forth among the people by the various wanderers of all kinds who moved freely from one community to the other. But all the culture of the people tended to be held together in stereotypes, formulas and repetitions, granting that there were certain variations advanced by the strong and creative popular artists among the numerous types of minstrels, fools, jugglers, charlatans, strolling-players, ballad-mongers and the like. Further, as Burke points out, although the sameness and continuity of the various forms of entertainments that were a fundamental part of everyone's life, there were changes—perhaps slow but inevitable—that resulted from altering social conditions if nothing else. Traditional forms did change, often dripping

down from the upper classes, but also frequently percolating up from the lower. Thus Burke makes clear his point that the only difference between the two cultures is not in kind but in degree.

If one were going to cavil with this study it would be in the time and period chosen for coverage and in the caution and conservative nature which Burke deliberately assumes throughout. He chose to begin in 1500 when print was beginnning to undermine the oral tradition; more background in the oral tradition would have given his point more historical perspective. But in choosing these centuries he selected a period that is well-documented and therefore presents incontrovertible evidence of the mixing of elite and popular culture. In definition he agrees with the early twentieth century English folklorist Cecil Sharp that though an individual may invent folk culture the community selects, and in so doing grants life or death to the individual folk item. Such an attitude is not acceptable any more throughout the folk scholar community in America.

But this caution on the part of the author ought to shield his study against any attack of his having been guilty of unscholarly enthusiasm or too quick to draw conclusions. His research is exhaustive—he had access to and quotes from the written material from all the countries of Western Europe—and his method is meticulous. The conclusions are overwhelming, and are sure to change radically the approach of future historians to the study of popular culture. In fact, after this book any historian who tries to understand a culture and does not include detailed examinations of the popular aspects will be guilty of evasion and superficiality. This work clearly establishes the Pillars of Hercules which cultural historians of the future must pass between.

Mr. Altick's work is more limited in subject matter and therefore more detailed. His concern is the various kinds of shows that played in London for two and a half centuries, what they were, who attended them, their effect on the upper class Londoners as well as upon the commoners. The result is a fascinating, lively history of the various ways people played and learned in a city that demanded more and more instructive entertainment. The kinds and numbers of these forms of entertainment was surprising.

By Altick's definition, exhibitions are "displays of pictures, objects, or living creatures—including human beings—that people as a rule paid to see." And Mr. Altick, agreeing with Bulwer that the Britons were a "staring nation," insists that a marvelous profile of a people can be gathered from the study of their exhibitions. He would, I suspect, almost agree with a paraphrase of a portion of the Scripture: "By their exhibitions, ye shall know them."

Therefore Altick traces the development of the earliest "cabinet"—a small collection of any kind of relic or curiosity, frequently having something to do with the "very Goddis body" and saints' bones—to the collections made and stimulated by the Royal Society, after its being founded in 1662. Another fascination of the Londoners from the earliest part of the 17th century was the freak—either in the form of human beings or in that of foreign exotic animals. John Evelyn, the tireless Londoner,

sniffed out freaks whenever the opportunity presented itself, as did Pepys. The older man visited, for example, the "hairy Maid" whose "Eyebrowes were combed upward, & all her forehead as thick & and even as growes on any womans head, neately dress'd," and Pepys, soon after, wrote about the Irish giants that he examined carefully. Both undoubtedly went to see the various animals that ships kept bringing in from far and exotic lands, along, occasionally, with strange human creatures—American Indians, Eskimos and other people—who because they could not speak English elicited all kinds of awe and respect; apparently such people would have agreed with Mark Twain, later, that since these people were human beings they should speak English, the language of human beings.

Equally important in London life were wax figure museums, which were immensely popular in the seventeeth century, as they are today. So were the peepshows, consisting of modeled groups of figures which were artfully placed against a painted background. They were used as toys and for catch-penny shows carried around by wandering showmen on their backs or in donkey carts to the remotest regions. Sometimes the peepshows utilized mechanical figures, and thus developed into the widely popular clockwork mechanism. All kinds of mechanical shows, including the automaton, which often included such phenomena as automaton writer, harpsichord player and draftsman, for example, were immensely popular.

Other fascinating entertainments to bewitch the Londoners of the 17th century included various forms of moving pictures (the magic lantern, the shadow show and the "Eidophysikon, or Representation of Nature," also sometimes called, "Various Imitations of Natural Phenomena, represented by Moving Pictures", the various forms of Panoramas, which brought before the eye almost unbounded pictures of the world around one, the Cyclorama (which enhanced the panorama by giving a perspective from great heights and gave a new dimension to the exhibition of pictures, though the pictures did not utterly enclose the viewer, the Diorama (which added depth to the panorama), moving Panoramas (which could mean pictures in continuous motion or in quick succession), the Noble Savage brought from various lands, Monsters from the animal kingdom (like two-headed calves, skeletons of whales, mermaids, etc.), zoos, and numerous other similar forms .

In addition to the world of the exotic and incredible, there were numerous entertainments in the fields of science and physics. There were lectures such as pictured by caricaturist James Gillray's "Scientific Researches! New Discoveries in PNEUMATICKS!—or—an Experimental Lecture on the Powers of Air." And the Thames Tunnel, which brought a kind of terror to Nathaniel Hawthorne when he visited it, and which is still in use.

The multiplicity of the forms of entertainment and ways to pass time in the London of this period were almost too numerous to itemize in this review, let alone describe. Description cannot but cheapen and lessen the joy of visiting them first-hand in this absolutely incredible book. With a life time spent in studying the popular culture of London, Mr. Altick has again

created a book the likes of which will be difficult to surpass. The research and scholarship required for this book almost equals that need to produce many of the shows that Mr. Altick describes. This book is a fitting addition to his books *The Scholar Adventurers, The English Common Reader* and *Victorian People and Ideas.* This book takes the reader back to a London of yestercentury when the forms of entertainment that are still with us were getting their first trial runs. In so doing it gives us glimpses into life styles that are almost incredibly amusing and informative. This book demands to be read by everybody who pretends to be interested in English history, art, entertainment or popular culture of any form.

These two books represent the finest achievement in scholarship in any subject. The fact that both center on popular culture demonstrates again the great need for continued scholarship in the field and the real informative value of such studies.

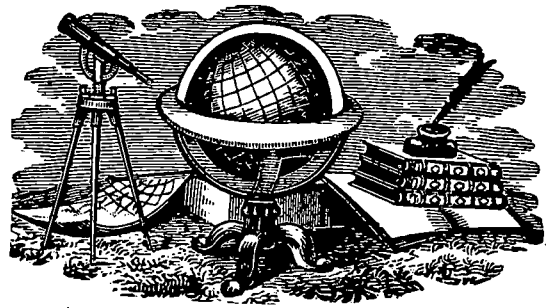
Bowling Green University Ray B. Browne

Baseball's Structure

Baseball's structure is art:
infinite possibilities
and action of all sorts,
confined by a diamond's degrees
and rules an ump imparts,
keep batters from hitting foul
and pitchers in control
while the meter of coaches' howls
blends individual
players into organic wholes
which never, from the start,
know how they'll be down or winning
in the flux of the ninth inning:
ordered reflex is art.

Matthew Brennan

BOOK REVIEWS



CRACKLIN BREAD AND ASFIDITY. FOLK RECIPES AND REMEDIES. *Compiled by Jack and Olivia Solomon.* University, Alabama: University of Alabama Press, 1978. 215 pp. $12.50 Clothbound.

This charming volume is a labor of love, of realization of the importance of the material and of the interests of the general reader both inside and outside the Alabama state lines.

The editors have managed to collect through the years a sizable body of folk recipes and home remedies which illustrate comprehensively the vast store that has through the centuries persisted in oral and popular tradition in Alabama. They collected these materials from students and older people where and when they could, including the use of the Alabama National Writer's Project, Folklore Division, of the Works Progress Administration, 1936-1939. They have worked also in the very valuable, though sometimes thought minor, areas of wills, letters, inventories and other non-oral sources. The collection comes out, then, as pretty much the materials of "white, middle-class, rural and small-town Alabama folk" which closely sticks to the flora and fauna of Alabama (and the South).

But the editors' interests lie far broader and deeper than merely cataloging the habits and practices of the good old days, though they state several times that through the years as they worked on these materials they have grown in their admiration and appreciation of the value of these practices. The editors actually want to use their collection to demonstrate that the South (and Alabama) through the years has been and still is indeed different from other parts of the nation, and that these differences are worth examining in the context of Southern and American cultural studies. They introductory essays all point toward this particular goal.

This, then, is a significant volume of Alabama (and Southern) culture, beautifully enhanced by the illustrations by Mark Brewton, which will be especially interesting to and valuable for academics and nonacademics alike who are interested in charming general reading and in cultural studies.

Bowling Green University Ray B. Browne

MAKE A JOYFUL NOISE UNTO THE LORD: HYMNS AS A REFLECTION OF VICTORIAN SOCIAL ATTITUDES. *By Susan S. Tamke.* Athens, Ohio: Ohio University Press. 1978. 209 pp. Indices.

Tamke's study of hymn lyrics joins Martha Vicinus' *The Industrial Muse* and J.S. Bratton's *The Victorian Popular Ballad* as a major work in the continuing examination of the role of popular lyric forms in the Victorian period. She describes her work as "a survey of a vast untapped reservoir of evidence about the social history of Victorian England," and, indeed, it is, providing new evidence of the close interrelationship of social attitudes, popular religion, and historial change. Like so many forms of popular culture, hyms both reflect and help to create public concepts. What is significant about them is that they are a part of "one of society's most conservative institutions, the church," and by indicating the shifts in social attitudes of the church, they become an index to principal changes in the way Victorians viewed themselves and their society.

The study includes a brief history of hymns and a chapter on Victorian hymn imagery, but most of it is arranged by themes present in the hymns. This thematic approach allows Tamke to trace the changes in thought reflected in the hymns throughout the period. She treats evangelicalism, didacticism, hymns for children, the condition of England question (social concerns or the lack of them), and foreign missions. Without each area, she finds that "during the nineteenth century hymns were used as much to propagate acceptable modes of behavior as to teach theology and to accompany ritual." And they usually stressed the negative, being more proscriptive than prescriptive, whether defining children's duties, advocating temperance, or describing "the rude barbarian" whom the missionaries must save.

Another recurrent element in the hymns is "the unresolved dichotomy between the world as benevolent or malevolent." This division led by the end of the century to the two conflicting attitudes toward the proper nature of the institutionalized church still being argued today: the humanistic, socially active versus the evangelical, other worldly. The conflict is implicitly expressed by the four principal images Tamke discusses. On the one hand are the sentimental images of idealized family and mother and the rural images of the past: on the other are the military images of war and wrath and the unpleasant—to say the least—images of blood, wounds, and pain.

By tracing such hymnic themes, Tamke has impressively shown how popular materials can illuminate truly important issues of a past time, many of which are still with us and still important. Her extensive research (there is an exhaustive bibliography of the subject) and her cogent analysis of that research make her work a model for others who are using Victorian popular materials for explication of the social attitudes of that diverse period.

Wesleyan College Earl F. Bargainnier