NIEMAN REPORTS

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Media's Chance to Interact With the Voters

By Bill Kovach

Journalists who monitor computer bulletin boards report a kind of personal interaction and involvement with the news that offers exciting new possibilities for public service journalism.

The first reports came during the Persian Gulf War last year when computer bulletin boards lit up across the country, becoming 24-hour channels of news, information, arguments, and debates among computer hackers.

As the presidential campaign heats up these same computer networks carry a rich menu of campaign speeches, candidate position documents and general political information. They have become new conduits of focused political campaigning by both political parties.

During the Los Angeles riots, blacks from Central Los Angeles and whites from the surrounding communities talked directly for the first time on computer screens. In at least one reported case these computer talks led to face to face meetings and racially integrated meetings on rebuilding projects in the riot devastated area of Los Angeles.

Thus is born computer as community hearthstone. It is a role originally filled by community newspapers. It is a role many news organizations now seek to recover with elaborate marketing campaigns.

But the example of these computer linked communities offers another model in place of those designed to sell super-market products for news organizations to consider.

Times of intense anxiety of citizens of the community offer important opportunities for news organizations to engage that community in a truly democratic process.

For newspapers caught up in these moments of heightened community awareness and hunger for information, why not consider the following:

- Expand the op-ed page and invite new and diverse expert voices to share opinions and ideas.
- Expand the letters space for a broader, more democratic participation in the discussion and debate.
- Sponsor town or community meetings on the facts and the issues and the arguments, a report of which becomes the content for a special section of the paper.

For the news departments of radio and television stations a similar agenda could provide not only compelling programming but could help citizens become active in community decisions in the way envisioned when a free press was conceived.

With the capability of interactive electronic broadcast rapidly spreading the possibilities for important citizen empowerment by news departments of the electronic media grow by the day.

To the extent that thoughtful public interest journalists fail to take part in providing the information base and the forum for community participation the self-governing process will either find an alternative source of information or fall prey to control by rumor, prejudice and vested interest information.

We are seeing just such a development in the current presidential campaign. When the news divisions of the non-cable television networks sharply reduced their coverage of the 1992 campaign the campaigns inevitably turned to other formats—to network talk shows and to free-content hungry cable networks.

These new venues are dominated by programs driven, not by public interest journalism concerns, but by marketing considerations which favor psychodrama of personal conflict and controversy.

Predictably campaign-as-soap-opera has done much to shape all political coverage in the campaign. As Maureen

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How the Press Savaged Perot

Spokesman Likens Treatment of Texas Entrepreneur To Police Beating of Rodney King

By Jim Squires

Of all the good reasons why Ross Perot quit running for President, only one is personally embarrassing. For me, not him.

After nearly 30 years as a reporter and editor, going to work for a presidential candidate gave me the extraordinary opportunity to see what I had been doing all my life—from the other side. It was not a pretty sight.

For 100 days I truthfully answered thousands of questions from dozens of reporters on subjects on which I had first-hand knowledge and then watched them played back on the front pages and television screens.

Watching the press cover the Perot campaign up close underscored my growing conviction, shared by many veteran journalists, that the traditional institution of the press of which I was so proud is no more; and that the news media that has replaced it is so rife with careerism and incompetence and so driven by marketing compulsions that it has ceased to be a positive force in the democracy.

Could this be the bitterness of a disappointed politico-come-lately whose candidate quit? Judge for yourself.

For reasons so many and arcane it would take psychiatrists and political scientists years to explain, the media treatment of Ross Perot was the journalistic equivalent of the police beating of Rodney King. It was herd instinct at its worst—all in the noble cause of examining potential presidential character.

Only a few news organizations that offered a balanced perspective of the Perot campaign, reporting accurately, with traditional fairness and caution, the negative, as well as the positive, aspects of the candidate and the campaign. Outstanding among them were The Associated Press, U.S. News & World Report and The Los Angeles Times. Unfortunately, some of the most famous and thus the most influential were derelict in their duty. Here's a taste of the work of the creme of journalism, some of the best and brightest of the craft.

Woodward Tosses A 'Cowpie' at Perot

Famed Watergate reporter Bob Woodward of The Washington Post is a good place to start. A friend for 20 years, Woodward told me on April 22, the day I went to work for Perot, that I was walking into a "cowpie." A few weeks later he showed up with it in his hand, and on June 21, hurled it at the Perot campaign.

It was a front-page story in The Washington Post, the headline and thrust of which was that Perot had secretly "investigated Vice-President George Bush and his children." Picked up and repeated as if fact, The Post's characterization effectively took the Republican distortion of the Texas tycoon as "Inspector Perot—a threat to your bedroom privacy " to its highest and most absurd degree.

Stripped of its sensational angle, however, the investigation of Bush in question was in fact Woodward's, not Perot's. In 1988, when Woodward was investigating Bush's finances, Perot had simply turned over to The Post some public records gathered by a Washington law firm on a federal tax credit-for-land-donation deal done not by Bush but by a former oil business partner of his. Perot had gotten interested in the matter only because the oil company had tried to sell him some land adjacent to that which it had donated to the government—at a price much less than that which the government had valued the first place.

As far as Bush's children were concerned, there was no investigation at all. Perot had simply telephoned Bush privately to tell him that some of the people his sons were doing business with in Texas had unsavory reputations—a fact which he had relayed to Woodward.

Perot believed all his conversations with Woodward on these and other matters had been "off the record" as part of a conventional reporter-source relationship. Woodward evidently thought so, too, as he called me repeatedly asking my help in getting Perot to "put these stories on the record." Twice at Woodward's behest, I asked Perot to do that. Twice, he refused.

Woodward kept calling, replaying the conversations to me, as if I could somehow authorize their use. I told him over

Jim Squires was press secretary for Ross Perot earlier this year when the Texan explored the possibility of running for President. Squires, former Washington Bureau Chief of The Chicago Tribune, has covered every national political convention and Presidential campaign since 1968. He was Editor of The Tribune from 1981 to 1990.

Jim Squires with Ross Perot.

and over to call Perot, who I knew would take his calls. On Thursday, June 18, I suggested to Bob that he come to Dallas and make his plea in person. He indicated he would do just that.

But the next afternoon, Woodward called and asked if the campaign wanted to include a response. "To what?" I asked. To the allegation that Perot investigated Bush and his family, Woodward said.

"I thought you were going to talk to Perot first," I said, stunned. "I'd like to," said Woodward, "but the problem is I'm leaving for Italy tomorrow."

It was hit-and-run journalism—"world class" as Perot would say—and it left The Post media critic Howard Kurtz in a literary contortion of similar distinction. "Woodward recently succeeded in getting the ranch issue placed on the record when Perot's spokesman, James Squires, issued a statement confirming Perot's inquiry and the fact that he had given the documents to The Post," explained Kurtz.

Right, Howard, and as they say down here in Texas, here's a sidesaddle for that racing cow I just sold you. And good luck convincing all the good reporters in the world that Woodward didn't just burn a source in the interest of a cheap piece of the hottest story going—the scrutiny of Ross Perot.

Why? The only explanation I can give is that simply taking the story to a new level and creating controversy does more for a reporter's career today than the more mundane truth ever could. Besides, everybody was doing it, which in itself has become a mandate.

Tyler's Vietnam Story False and Damaging

In The New Yorker, Elizabeth Drew had pronounced Perot a Mussolini-style fascist because he claimed the people as the source of his candidacy. In The New York Review of Books, Gary Wills based a similar pronouncement on a widely disputed and wildly out-of-context Perot remark on what could be done to rid an inner-city community of drug infestation. And more important to people at The Post, the really big hits on Perot had come from The New York Times, specifically from ex-Post reporter Patrick Tyler.

One of the most damaging and inaccurate stories was a Tyler story in The Times headlined "Perot, in Vietnam, Sought Business." Just as Woodward's story would do, Tyler's allegation had aided the Republican Party opposition goal of distorting Perot in the public mind—this time by completely soiling 20 years of effort to free American POW's.

The overriding and indisputable implication of the story was that Perot, through conversations with top Vietnamese officials, had somehow sought to use his official role there for private financial gain. There was not a word of truth to it.

The fact is that anyone who wants anything from an underdeveloped country—in this case help in locating missing U.S. soldiers—must constantly hold out the carrot of financial investment. Otherwise, the conversations cease. In Perot's case, he never talked to the Vietnamese in anything other than terms of general economic development. When, on his seventh trip to Hanoi, Perot's emissary came back with a letter from the Vietnamese offering to make Perot's company its official representative in the event relations between the two countries were normalized, Perot said, "What the hell is this?" Then he ordered the man never to return or discuss business again.

Yet this story nagged Perot persistently, becoming part of the lore and the basis for attempting to drag Perot before a Senate committee investigating MIA's. Indeed, its false premise was a major source of interrogation during a deposition Perot finally gave the committee. In lengthy conversations with Tyler, Perot had explained how attracting investment was always the first order of discussion by the Vietnamese anytime he met with them. He explained his reasoning for tolerating it, his adverse reaction to it and the total lack of financial interest such an invitation would hold for any American business.

But the story came out as one-sided as its headline was inaccurate: "Perot, In Vietnam, Sought Business."

Safire Wrong On Roy Cohn Link

The nation's paper of record behaved similarly in its efforts to link Perot with the late and reputedly evil New York lawyer, Roy Cohn.

In a steady drum roll of doom that he saw Perot portending for democracy, William Safire, the most eloquent Timesman and resident expert on fascists since he worked alongside so many in the Nixon White House, repeatedly accused Perot of siccing Cohn on John Wheeler, a writer who headed the Viet-

nam Veterans Memorial Committee, in a dispute over the memorial design. This was repeated in news stories by the young reporters in the Washington bureau. There was no truth in it.

The man who hired Cohn was a San Antonio businessman named John Delavan Baines, who wrote a letter attesting to the circumstances, and I handed out letters to other members of the press from Cohn's law partner, Thomas C. Bolan, which named Baines as the client and said that neither he nor Cohn had ever met Perot or discussed the matter with him.

But the Perot-Cohn link became part of the lore, too, and thanks to The New York Times, now part of American political history. What The Times believes—true or not—becomes reality.

Once after reading a New York Times account of how I had been shunted aside as the Perot spokesman, my mother telephoned me to see if I was okay.

It mattered not that my diminished role as a spokesperson was my own idea, that it was all my own maneuvering in order to shift more press calls to my deputies so I could find time to work on speeches that Perot would never give.

USA TODAY took its cue from The Times and repeated the story the following day. The truth did not matter, only what The Times reported mattered.

Into the footprints of these journalistic giants scrambled all sorts of dwarfs and wannabes, seemingly armed with more ambition than fact. Television was especially bad. For example, CNN's John Camp, doing his first story for the special assignment team, sought to "puncture the myth" surrounding the rescue of Perot's EDS employees from an Iranian prison by proving that it was different from the story romantically depicted in Ken Follett's "Wings of Eagles."

Similarly, angry Sidney Blumenthal wrote "On Wings of Bull" in The New Republic and the venerable Bill Gaines raised the possibility on the front page of The Chicago Tribune that the entire rescue might be "just a good book."

The thesis of all three of these journalistic triumphs was the same—that Perot's two employees were freed by an angry Iranian mob that stormed the prison to release their countrymen in contrast to false claims by Perot as to how this occurred. But in each story, it was a straw man that was felled.

"Wings of Eagles," which Perot regards as the bible on the subject, clearly acknowledges that unknown to Perot and other rescuers, an Iranian EDS employee named Rashid accidentally fell into the company of Iranian radicals and suggested that they carry out the prison assault.

Source Available But Not Interviewed

All the reporters relied on former U.S. diplomat John Stempel for their view that Perot people had nothing to do with the actual prison break. But none of them found or interviewed the Iranian Rashid, Follett's source of information who was among the rebels and alongside whom I worked every day in Dallas during the Perot campaign. If any of the reporters actually read Follett's account, it did not seem to matter.

In reality, there was no myth to puncture. But reality sometimes guarantees neither news space nor air time.

Stories like these are more the rule than the exception in a business that is fascinated with the aberrant. Without an angle, or an edge, stories cannot get in print or on the air.

For some reporters, this means the difference between a front-page byline or nothing to show for a week's work, between a 30-second standup on the evening news or another day without evidence of their worth to the financially pressed network news divisions.

One female television correspondent, whose rare on-camera reports from the Perot campaign were invariably terse little snippets of attack journalism, fielded my complaint about inaccuracy and unfairness with total nonchalance.

"Now Jim, you know how it is in this business," she said.

I sure do. And what a disgrace it has become. ■

How The British Press Savaged Labor

By Patricia Ramsay

When my plane left Heathrow on Polling Day morning, April 10, I was flying high. I had been in England for four weeks as Foreign Press Secretary to Neil Kinnock in his campaign for Prime Minister. Now I was heading home to my husband's 50th birthday party. Everyone knew that after 13 years, Labor was going to win. Neil was going to be Prime Minister of England.

After a long transatlantic sleep, with an enthusiastic 50th birthday party in full swing, I called Craig Whitney at The New York Times London Bureau. "Craig, I'm home and I want to check in on the election." Craig's somber voice replied, "Sorry, Pat, but things aren't looking so good for Labor. It's not clear when Neil will concede."

Concede? Not looking so good? When I left London, victory was only hours away. Soothed by memories of the 1948 Truman-Dewey turnabout, I decided to wait until the next day. But Neil conceded and two days later resigned as Leader of the Labor Party.

"What went wrong?" was the question repeatedly asked in Britain. Here in America, people wondered whether Kinnock's loss in April foreshadowed a defeat for Clinton in November. And did a flash-fire performance by the third-party candidate, Paddy Ashdown, preview a similarly transitory popularity for Ross Perot?

To a large degree, I believe, Labor lost because of the biased British press and the inherent conservative nature of the British

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Wounded at Sarajevo

American Photographer Tells of Being Struck And Companion Wounded by Grenade

By David Brauchli

For nearly three weeks, the shelling and sniping in Sarajevo had been growing more intense. Finally, one day in May, after the BBC's hotel room in Ilidza on the outskirts of town took a direct hit from a rocket-propelled grenade, most foreign journalists concluded it was too dangerous to stay any longer.

The handful of us remaining decided to move into the city proper, where we would be closer to the story and wouldn't have to drive each morning through "snipers' alley," a prone stretch of roadway to downtown.

Hunting through abandoned hotel rooms, pleading with friends and other nervous journalists, my Associated Press colleague, Santiago Lyon, and I tried desperately to find flak jackets before we made the trip into Sarjevo. While the rest of the press corps was trying to leave the Serbian-held suburb 10 kilometers west of Sarajevo, a cameraman from Britain's ITN finally appeared with two jackets. Our problem solved, we were ready to roll past the Serbian checkpoint, along sniper alley and into Sarajevo.

For most of May, my colleagues and I had been trying to put Sarajevo on the international news map. The atrocities we were witnessing were terrifying. The skies were alight every night with artillery fire. In the morning the dead and wounded would be brought to the few, overcrowded hospitals and morgues. But getting into the U.S. media was difficult. Sarajevo was news only if there was large-scale shooting. But the real news, the horror of families split up because of death, refugees fleeing their

Twenty-four journalists have been killed in Yugoslavia since the civil war began, according to the New York-based Committee to Protect Journalists. Thus, in a year, the toll is slightly more than half the 45 journalists killed in the Vietnam War in 20 years, between 1955 and 1975.

life-long homes, indiscriminate killings, this was really hard to get into the papers.

Like many jonrnalists now covering Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union, I have found it difficult getting attention for stories that have deep, often violent, historical roots. The place names are unfamiliar to Americans, and memories of conflicts that were suppressed during the Cold War are weak.

I encountered barriers in Nagorno-Karabakh early this year when a colleague and I working for AFP discovered the Armenian forces there had massacred up to 500 innocent older men, women and children. In that case my colleagues and I persisted, putting out forceful pictures and text, not offending, but strong, telling stuff. In the end, the story got good play and drew attention to what was happening.

Getting through these filters is easier if television is present. Most Americans didn't get serious about the situation in Sarajevo until CNN broadcast video of a man, his leg blown off by a mortar that killed 18 others waiting in a bread line, crawling towards the camera pleading for help. It was dramatic footage, enough, perhaps, to spur the reluctant State Department to action.

The forces in Bosnia know the power of the media. More than in many past conflicts, journalists are seen as legitimate targets. The Serbs, in particular, have made a point of identifying journalists whose coverage hurts their image. Television in Belgrade attacked The New York Times's Chuck Sudetic by name.

More than 20 journalists were killed, many intentionally, during the fighting in Slovenia and Croatia last year. Another AP photographer, Dusan Vranic, who was based in Belgrade, was sniped by Croatian forces behind Serbian lines. An AK-47 bullet tore through his lower left arm, and he is still undergoing reconstructive surgery and bone grafts so he can use it again.

As coverage dwelt more and more on Serbian atrocities, the press ran into increasing difficulty. Ron Haviv, a photographer for Saba pictures, is widely rumored to have a price on his head for photos he shot of Serbian troops committing atrocities against Bosnian civil-

David Brauchli, 28, was on assignment in Sarajevo for The Associated Press when he was wounded by a rocket-propelled grenade on May 17. A Prague-based photographer, Brauchli has also covered the former Soviet Union and Eastern Europe for Sygma, Reuters and Agence France-Presse. Before moving to Prague in 1990, he was a photographer and editor for Reuters in London and Hong Kong. He is a graduate of Syracuse University.

ians. The pictures ran big in Time magazine's European edition and offended the Serbian high command.

And the animosity isn't just against foreigners. Two Reuters photographers, Belgrade-based Serbs, were on the scene when Serbian troops flushed out a sniper and executed him. Their pictures were transmitted without bylines but a former Reuter employee, now working for Serbian radio in Belgrade, broadcast their names. There were threats and demands that Reuters disclaim the authenticity of the photos. Both photographers were pulled out of the country, but one had to go back because of threats against his family. Serb photographers also have been beaten up by Croatian forces.

One of my greatest worries once we had moved into town was what the Serbs would do to us if they did manage to take the city and find us. Would we be shot for transmitting anti-Serbian propaganda? Would they even stop to ask? Would I end up like my friend Gad Gross, a young Prague-based photographer who last year was executed by Iraqi troops when he was discovered hiding with his Kurdish guide? I've been in tight spots before, flying in Soviet helicopter gunships over Nagorno-Karabakh while they were being shot at, and on the other side in Stepanakert while it was being shelled by the Azeri forces, but nothing has frightened me as much as the ferocity and vengeance this fighting has taken on.

As the battle intensified for Sarajevo, my colleagues from AP and I could see the Serbians trying to cut the city in half at the Marshall Tito Barracks. We realized that if we got into town but didn't catch the next UN convoy back out, we might get stuck for a very, very long time. But we were torn by our desire to cover the story, not simply because we would be the only foreign agency in Sarajevo, but rather because we felt the story needed to be reported from Sarajevo live, not from Belgrade via radio reports.

So we found ourselves deciding, even before the hotel in Ilidza had been attacked by Bosnian forces and the BBC suite destroyed, to move into town. Tony Smith, the AP correspondent, Lyon, the other AP photographer, and I reasoned that if the shooting did get heavy, the chances of the Serbs letting the press out of the suburbs to cover it were slim. During the three weeks I had been covering the story the Serbs had gone from initially cooperative to downright nasty.

The Serbian command, whose headquarters were less than 100 meters away across a pleasant garden, said anyone caught outside taking pictures would be shot. They also couldn't guarantee the security of anyone shooting pictures from the windows of the hotel. It made for an extremely frustrating day, but, given the choice, I don't think anyone would have gone outside to take pictures anyway. What the Serbs did do, however, was confirm our fears of censorship as soon as the real shooting started. It became imperative to leave Ilizda and get into Sarajevo.

If the Serbian irregular forces decided to make a push to free the troops stuck in the Marshall Tito Barracks in the center of town, or if they decided to cut the city in half, we wouldn't have a chance to cover it from Ilidza.

AP PHOTO

Brauchli being helped by United Nations medics prior to his evacuation from Sarajevo.

Until May 14, covering the war had been pretty simple. Most of the heavy shelling or shooting was at night. Snipers would be out in the daytime, but they would stake out the same strips daily, and if they were avoided, generally it was safe. Lyon and I would split up, one going with Smith to make sure we matched his stories with our pictures and the other on "enterprise," seeing what he could come up with. It worked well, and we were making nice pictures that told the story of what was happening to the former Olympic city. At night, while the residents of Sarajevo underwent random shelling from the hills surrounding the city, we were able to return to a hotel where we could get fresh salad from the Serbian market, drink Serbian wine and eat the finest fare our hotel could prepare.

Three days after we had moved into town and left our comforts, the violence was escalating and we had decided to retreat again. We packed our bags, the darkroom, the Leafax negative transmitters and the food and prepared to pull out to the UN headquarters. At the last minute, we heard there was a demonstration in the center of town, where the Serbs of Sarajevo were supposed to protest against the destruction of the city. So we piled into our cars and raced downtown. Compared to the day before, there was no shell-fire at all. An occasional explosion on the outskirts of town was all we could hear. When we got to the demonstration it didn't make for pictures. So we split up into teams of two to look for photos.

Lyon went with Peter Northall of Black Star pictures and I took Jordi Pujol from the Spanish newspaper Avui with me. We agreed to meet at the apartment at 12:30 to leave.

It was a beautiful day and quiet. As we walked I saw two men fishing along the banks of the river in front of the PTT office, which had been destroyed during one of the earlier attacks. It was a nice feature. We shot that and moved along, hoping to find something else.

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The New Yorker's Blind Spot

New Editor Tina Brown Might Want to Consider Giving Those Attacked an Opportunity to Reply

By Gilbert Cranberg and Amy Stewart

Editors come and go, but Jeffrey Masson's $10-million libel action against author Janet Malcolm and The New Yorker just keeps chugging along. The psychoanalyst's suit, begun in 1984 when William Shawn was editor, continued during Robert Gottlieb's five-year stint and is likely to last well into Tina Brown's tenure. The case is expected to go to trial next spring. With appeals, it could drag far into the 1990's. Would a more open-door policy by The New Yorker have spared everybody the ordeal?

According to Masson, that's entirely possible. He told us in a recent interview that he might never have gone to court if The New Yorker had taken his complaint seriously and given him space for reply.

Masson's claim highlights an oddity: the absence of a place in The New Yorker for persons attacked in its columns to defend themselves.

Critics usually win access to readers via the letters column. Subjects savaged in articles may not get the last word—editors often reserve that for themselves or for their contributors—but the traditional journalistic practice is to run at least portions of rebuttals as letters to the editor.

Space for response isn't just a favor to faultfinders; it's a service to readers. How else, after all, can they learn that exception is taken to what they've read?

Not, though, readers of The New Yorker. The magazine never has routinely provided space for letters from readers. Once in a very great while through the years a reader's letter has appeared, but not any since 1979.

Robert Gottlieb, interviewed a few weeks before his announced departure as editor, said that he "inherited and totally agrees" with the letters policy, which dates from the magazine's founding by Harold Ross in 1925.

"We are jealous of space for our writers," explained Gottlieb. Given the space available, he said he prefers to give it to people more gifted than contributors to a letters column.

Opportunity for dissent isn't needed, he added, since The New Yorker's "aim is to be judicious and accurate" and it's not a commentary magazine but "a magazine of reportage." Gottlieb expressed distaste for the letters from editors that appear in some publications, and said that he would no more run such letters in The New Yorker than he would letters to the editor.

Gottlieb's successor, Tina Brown, regularly featured in Vanity Fair both an "Editor's Letter" over her signature and letters from readers. As for doing the same at The New Yorker, Brown relayed word that it would be inappropriate to talk about New Yorker policies or her plans until after she actually takes over from Gottlieb in September.

The absence of access to the pages of The New Yorker has put other publications in the anomalous position of doing the magazine's duty. Thus, strangely enough, Malcolm's unflattering 1983 two-part portrait of Masson in The New Yorker was answered by him in The New York Times. Masson managed to get space in the Times because Malcolm's article was recycled into a book reviewed by the paper.

Masson's letter, published in The Sunday Times Book Review section, denounced The New Yorker's "renowned 'checking department'" and lashed Malcom's rendering as "deeply dishonest, malicious, distorted and tendentious.... Many of the statements attributed to me are, at best, distortions of my words and ideas, at worst, outright fabrications."

Asked recently how he felt having to vent his complaint about The New Yorker in the Times, Masson said, "I felt foolish. I ought to be able to publish it in The New Yorker."

To make matters more bizarre, two weeks after The Times ran Masson's letter, it gave Malcolm her say. In her response in The Times, she denied misquoting Masson. She added: "I would be glad to play the tapes of my conversation with Mr. Masson to the editors of The Book Review whenever they have 40 or 50 short hours to spare."

Many, if not most, New Yorker readers weren't privy to this controversy which, although born in their magazine, had shifted to the columns of an innocent bystander.

The Times also was a surrogate forum for author Joe McGinniss, who replied in The Times to Malcom's withering disparagement of him in 1989. "I want to set the record straight," McGinniss wrote in a Times op-ed essay, "on Janet Malcolm's recent and wrongheaded two-part New Yorker series."

Any record-straightening, of course, escaped New Yorker subscribers who lacked access to McGinniss's piece.

If nothing else, The New Yorker is an equal no-opportunity-to-reply publication. That is, media giants CBS and Time magazine received no more space than others for their letters of complaint to the editor. Renata Adler in 1986 had scorched the pair and their lawyers in her account of the libel actions brought by William Westmoreland

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Critics & the Arts

A Harvard symposium on drama criticism was the starting point for this 67-page section. Excerpts from the transcript of the conference are followed by assigned articles on books, films, classical music, jazz, country music, popular music, art and architecture.

The Theater

Following are excerpts from the conference, Critics and Criticism, organized by Robert Brustein, Artistic Director of the American Repertory Theatre, and Bill Kovach, Curator of the Nieman Foundation and supported by the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation.

Opening Remarks

Robert Brustein

For more years than I care to count, the critic and the artist have circled each other warily, staring into each other's eyes with coldness and suspicion, in a manner usually associated with the mongoose and the snake. Drama critics tend to regard playwrights, actors, directors and designers as thin-skinned egotists who respond only to ecstatic and unqualified praise, while theater people tend to think critics lack any understanding of their process, preferring to treat them as sacrificial animals to be lacerated in public for the sake of a glib phrase or an easy witticism. Many theater artists are so alienated from the critical process that they profess not to read reviews any more. Almost all will deny that criticism ever played any part in the development of their art.

Robert Brustein

This conference, then, is an opportunity to bring these two warring factions together, to explore the ways they can inform each other without sacrifice of detachment or autonomy. Creative artists have much to learn from informed writers about the nature of plays and the nature of theatrical roles. By the same token, critics have much to learn from artists about new directions in theater and the need to loosen up preconceived ideas.

Bill Kovach

We are meeting in a time of a communications crisis. In part it is a crisis brought on by the end of the "Cold War"—that prism through which or around which we looked at the world.

Now it seems no government knows how to respond to Serbia, Bosnia or Herzegovina outside that framework. But it is not just government which has failed. Governments have failed largely because the press did not help us understand Serbia, Bosnia or Herzegovina in their own terms or define them outside the Cold War framework.

Journalists are finding this to be true in other things we mediate and explain for a public which has neither the time nor the access to experience all things directly. In the United States this has led to a crisis in public affairs journalism because of the degree to which the profit motive now disciplines everything we do. Even in its worst aspects the Cold War competition encouraged public affairs journalism because it was a contest of social and political visions as well as a contest of economic systems.

With the social and political visions stripped away, the simple demands of profit in corporate and chain journalism in the United States devalue the public affairs content of everything we do. So much so that an editor last week told a returning Nieman Fellow that his paper would not cover the political party conventions "because that's not what we do now."

It is not what many newspapers do now because it is not cost-effective. With a declining sense of any public affairs obligation on the part of the ownership that bottom-line judgment becomes the only relevant judgment.

You in the theater know this process well. So I hope this conference will begin a search for a more meaningful foundation upon which journalists stand to examine the theater arts in a context of public affairs journalism. For if it is a process which brings us together in community in order to reassess our past and to contemplate our future, journalists have an increased obligation to assure that these public purposes of the theater are stimulated, nurtured and supported. ■

Bill Kovach

KEYNOTE ADDRESS

Benedict Nightingale
Theatre Critic of The Times of London

The Multi-Tier Critic

Let's briefly consider this tension, this issue, always a live one, of individual personality, individual conviction and critical openness. On the one hand, we have the virgin slates, the human hard discs of criticism, waiting to be programmed or reprogrammed. On the other, we have the insistence of George Jean Nathan that there can be no such being as an impersonal critic until there is an impersonal person. Indeed, Nathan went much further, insisting that the good critic holds up the mirror of drama to his own nature, hoping that there will be reflected what he called "the vital features of a red-alive man." Good criticism thus becomes, as he put it, the record of the adventures of a soul, heart and mind among masterpieces.

The dangers of the latter approach are obvious enough. Criticism becomes narcissism. The observing eye turns inward and stays there. The critic's readers end up learning more about his soul and red-alive nature than about any masterpiece. That happened rather often in what one might call the critical belle-lettrism of earlier eras. Or, more commonly these days, criticism becomes the parading, overt or surreptitious, of moral, social, or political bias. The masterpiece is missed because in some sense it does not accord with the critic's idea of what is "correct."

The best critics have at times succumbed to this lure, and for the best of reasons. In England, Kenneth Tynan toiled gallantly to resuscitate a dead theater and make it more socially alert and responsible. But that also led him to deride Pinter's first play, "The Birthday Party," seriously to underrate Beckett and, on the classic front, to prefer the sweep of Shakespeare's Henry IV plays to what he regarded as the over-individualistic soul-searching of the tragedies. Some of his successors have gone further, embracing what might be called the paddy-field school of criticism. Classic authors can be execrated for the crime of having lived before Marx, and modern reputations demolished by the suggestion that their dramatic creations are spoiled, self-indulgent people who deserve only to be sent to the factories or the paddy-fields for re-education. Thus do the Pol Pots of contemporary criticism reduce the intricate task of analysis and assessment to one of mechanical measurement. I have reason to suppose you over here have your counterparts and your equivalents.

Yet where is the line to be drawn? How can a critic not have his beliefs and his idiosyncrasies? If there is a point after which his convictions limit him too much, isn't there another where his lack of convictions diminishes him as a person and therefore as a critic? And yet again, where is the line to be drawn? Isn't it also possible and perhaps necessary for a critic, whatever his partialities, to embrace, at least up to a point, that old-fashioned virtue, tolerance? Isn't it the duty of the critic whose instincts are powerfully with Brecht also to think and feel his way into the mind of Beckett and present what he finds as fairly as he can? If one task of criticism is disinterestedly to propagate "the best that is known and thought in the world," as Matthew Arnold said, does that not mean suppressing as well as expressing the self, even when a dramatist's idea of the "best" is far from his own? To be a good critic is to be a good listener as well as a good talker. It is to embrace variety and complexity. Indeed, it is perhaps to live and write on several levels simultaneously. It is, so to speak, to be a two or three-tier reviewer; a multi-tier critic. It is to empathize, and if necessary, also passionately to demur. So often criticism seems to be a courtroom in which theater practitioners are arraigned. If that is so, then perhaps the critic should think of himself as court recorder and defense attorney at least as much as a prosecutor and judge.

Yet clearly this can only be asked of a pretty sophisticated critic working for a sophisticated editor and writing for sophisticated readers about a theater sophisticated enough to be worth writing about. And here, as elsewhere, new problems appear. Internal questions about the nature and function of criticism inevitably raise external ones about the society and the culture in which the critic operates. Let's face it. In both our countries it can happen, that inadequately qualified critics are employed by philistine editors to give the nod or the brush-off to shallow shows for readers who want only to know whether or not to dish out their fifty bucks on a particular ticket.

But how is a critic to become adequately qualified, and what are adequate qualifications anyway? I do not know of any systematic research into the subject; but my own knowledge and experience suggests that many, perhaps most, critics drift almost accidentally into the business. The man or woman who consciously sets out to prepare him or herself for the task, a John Mason Brown, a James Agate, is a relative rarity. In Nineteenth-Century England we find belle-lettrists and literary essayists expanding their activities to embrace the theater. Among the colleagues with whom I have worked are a dramatist, a novelist, a poet, a couple of Oxbridge dons, and John Simon, as well as an assortment of journalists and literary journalists. In both our countries the old sneer, that the critic is the fellow covering football last week, has more truth than we always like to admit. I know a man who had

Benedict Nightingale

demonstrated no special interest in any of the arts yet was whimsically offered the job, first of film critic, then of theater critic, by a press lord impressed with a journalistic book he had written about the fall of Nazi Germany; and he only retired last year, having spent thirty years as the drama critic of a major London newspaper. Not to let myself off the hook here, I worked as a general writer on what was then The Manchester Guardian, a paper still inclined to idealize the memory of Neville Cardus, the doyen of music critics and of cricket correspondents; and the first book I published was a sociological study of charity and charities.

True, I went to the theater a lot while I was growing up, acted a bit, and, since I read English at university, studied some of the great dramatists in the highly literary way still sadly characteristic of educational practice in my country. The American university system, being broader, would very likely have allowed my transatlantic counterpart to take theater courses too. However, I suspect that most critics in both our countries have learnt on the job what they know about acting, directing, design and, in some cases, even the drama itself. To me this is a matter of personal regret and broader concern, though I have heard it defended by some. For instance, I have heard it argued that the critic may become so involved with the process of production and performance that he will tend to forget that it is the results that are his prime concern. I no more accept this than I can imagine a motoring correspondent accepting that he should avoid learning how a carburetor works lest it should spoil his appreciation of the ride. More knowledge of the process, properly assimilated, can only help a critic understand and explain the adequacy or inadequacy of the results; and I for one regret that many of us pick it up in so haphazard, ad-hoc a way. Indeed, there are areas in which I suspect some of us never pick up the necessary knowledge at all. Am I right to think theater history a particular problem at the moment? The late James Agate was not the most penetrating of critics, but he would commonly compare that latest actor approaching a great classic role, Macbeth, Othello, or Lear, to those who had performed it in the past: Betterton, Garrick, Kean, Booth, Irving. I find among my colleagues in England few or none with the same sense of the past, the same enthusiasm for what's surely one of the most exciting challenges facing a critic: the placing of a performance in a continuing tradition.

Yet at least the London critic who praised what he called the "new business" of having Hamlet spot the king listening in on the "nunnery scene" with Ophelia should be taught by experience that it is actually very common, very old business. At least the British theater, for all its financial woes, gives a critic a chance of learning on the job. During the year I spent in New York, I was able to see and review precisely one Shakespeare play, a "Henry V" in Central Park, and no other Sixteenth, Seventeenth, or Eighteenth Century work at all. The way much of the American theater currently looks, it is scarcely likely to educate or improve a critic. The New York theater is, if anything, more likely to reinforce ignorance and, at least as far as play texts are concerned, to encourage low standards. It is often said that a flourishing theater needs good critics; but perhaps critics need a flourishing theater if they themselves are to become any good. Given this increasingly dismal, increasingly destructive circle, it greatly impresses me that some of my erstwhile American colleagues have still somehow managed to become the strong, authoritative voices they are. The outlook, however, must be worrying.

What is to be done to counter or correct such inadequacies? As long as criticism remains a branch of journalism, and editors mostly continue to hire the livewire writer with an interest in theater rather than the theater livewire with an interest in writing—well, I do not see any clear answers. As I implied a moment ago, the American university system is friendlier than the British to the man or woman who thinks he or she may eventually take up theater criticism. If he goes to a college with a decent theater department, he can learn a lot about the theater while majoring in quite another subject. Perhaps there is even a case for the MFA in theater criticism we offered when I was teaching at the University of Michigan. An aspiring critic had to take courses in the history, theory and practice of acting, the history, theory and practice of directing, and dramatic and critical theory and practice; he or she could explore dramatic literature, design, technical theater, theater architecture, the sociology and organization of theater, and so on. I hesitate to offer any general conclusions about this MFA, since it lasted far too short a time and was really in the wrong place, Ann Arbor and Detroit not being great theater cities. If I learned anything, though, it was that it was far easier to teach a practicing or aspiring journalist about the theater than to teach a theater major or practitioner how to write lively, stimulating prose.

At this point, let me make an important distinction. I may be complaining that journalists who write criticism sometimes lack theatrical experience and knowledge. I am not, however, complaining that journalists write criticism. There may be, I am sure there are, more trenchant and informed voices than those of us who actually work in this area; no doubt it is a matter of regret that in the English-speaking cultures they cannot get the wide hearing they deserve; but if they lack the art, the trick, the knavery of journalism, they are obviously unlikely to do so. Yet, and this is my second point, we journalists should not necessarily or invariably be apologetic about ourselves.

The journalist is, after all, taught that it is an elementary duty to observe and accurately to describe. That is or should be a corrective to a prime fault I see in much amateur and some professional criticism: a willingness to leap to judgment without having first uncovered and presented the evidence without which that judgment is worthless; at worst, a propensity to attack a play or a production for being what it never was. Then again, can there not be something exciting and more than exciting in lively, dashing literary journalism?

Read an old review by, say, the late Ken Tynan, and like me, you may well find yourself unable to put it down. Certainly, you will be struck by how, in the playwright John Whiting's unwilling admission, fiendishly well written it is. Yet it is not just a matter of stylistic showmanship. Somehow Tynan brings the theatrical experience to concrete life.

Tynan was not content merely to state a conclusion: He showed it. He did not report, he evoked. He did not opine, he demonstrated. Simile, metaphor, anecdote, allusion: all combined with vivid powers of description to seize the reader's attention, hold him, and convince him. Convince him, not just because Tynan allowed the reader to see what others would tend to leave general and abstract, but because the sheer energy, wit, and inventiveness of the writing had its own inbuilt persuasiveness.

I do not, however, deny that this literary journalism may be misused. It lends itself rather easily to smart-ass, show-off writing. Indeed, I have sometimes wondered if it does not insidiously entice reviewers to be more negative than they might otherwise be, the language of vilification being so tempting for some to indulge. Nor do I deny that Tynan was exceptionally gifted as a writer and more than usually knowledgeable about the theater. He was also lucky in that on The Observer he was working for a civilized editor and writing for a relatively sophisticated readership. That is not always so obviously the case. The other day a leading Fleet Street editor actually fired his theater critic, a good, literate writer, because he was so unenthusiastic about a stage adaptation of a popular children's book, "The Wind in the Willows." He was presumably not thought to have enough rapport with those faceless, elusive creatures, the readers, in this case those of The Daily Telegraph.

I can tell you, that sent a bit of a shudder through the Fleet Street winebars. There was a lot of nervous spilling of house claret. Yet at least it was a salutary reminder of real pressures in the real world. We journalist-critics may like to think we have a duty to the theater, to posterity, and other such grand things. We may even succeed in fulfilling it at times. But we practice our craft because an editor continues to believe that we are able to communicate successfully with our readers, and our primary responsibility is of course to them. In the case of The Daily Telegraph, that would seem to mean that a critic's qualifications must include a willingness to kowtow to nostalgia and English infantilism; no doubt it places limitations on the kind of intellects some other papers are willing to hire; there would be no more likelihood of The New York Daily News hiring someone whose speciality was Pirandello than The New Republic engaging a critic who was a sucker for "Starlight Express." Each paper, each journal naturally has its own parameters, depending on its conception, accurate or otherwise, of its readers and potential readers.

Speaking for myself, I have to say that I have not felt any untoward pressure from any of the papers for which I have worked, The New Statesman, The New York Times and now The Times of London. The New York Times was and is a bit iffy about strong language, and once made me cut the word "fart" out of a review; The Times of London prefers "is not" and "does not" to "isn't," "doesn't" and other such contractions; but I am unaware of either paper requiring me to distort my personality or my views. Though I would be more likely to explain a recondite theatrical reference for the wider readership I presumably now have than if I were writing for The New Statesman, I still assume I am writing for someone with roughly my own interests and tastes. No, if I ever felt any pressure at all to distort my views, it has been from theater people; and here in America, not in England. I well remember a very senior New York producer complaining to me that critics on The New York Times applied what he thought were less exacting standards to off and off-off-Broadway productions than to those on Broadway; and he was not, I think, asking me to do the logical thing and toughen up on the off-Broadway. He was suggesting that we should soften up on Broadway, for what, if I had not changed the subject, he would doubtless have said was the good of the American theater.

The answers to that are obvious enough. First, critics cannot tell fibs, even kindly fibs, not if they wish to retain self-respect, the regard of their readers, and the ear of the theater itself. Second, a lowering of standards is not good but bad for the ultimate health of the theater, not to mention the minds and hearts of the theater audience, many of them the readers to whom we are responsible.

At any rate, that is my answer and, I think, that of your own most prominent critic, Frank Rich, who through no fault of his own has to live with the same pressures every day of his life. I am aware I am stepping into controversial territory here, so let me make my views clear. I regard Rich as a man of integrity, a receptive, intelligent, knowledgeable and conscientious writer, more genuinely stimulating and far less bland than Brooks Atkinson and those of his other predecessors with whom he is sometimes compared. His fundamental limitation seems to me this: that he is one man, with one set of responses; and that is a limitation he shares with everyone who ever wrote. Admittedly, this may be more significant in New York than in London, where it has been said that some 10 critics share whatever influence is to be had over the box-office. But it is not Rich's fault that The New York Times is so dominant, American readers more reliant on critics when they plan a trip to the theater than their British counterparts, and Broadway so financially vulnerable and often, so artistically dire. What's he to do, become a showbiz publicist? What's The New York Times to do apart from hire itself a good Sunday theater critic, as it recently did? If there are problems here, they are deeper in the culture than one critic and one newspaper.

Why is it, for instance, that American audiences do seem so much more dependent on their critics than we British? Is it, as I have often heard suggested, simply because theater-going is more expensive and a reader's willingness to take risks correspondingly less? Is it that the British are more balky, skepti-

cal and resistant to authority, including intellectual authority? Or as I suspect, that theater criticism is correctly seen as a branch of journalism and journalism is vaguely associated with Grub Street, the hack with the foot in the door, the paparazzi hounding Fergie and Di? If so, I cannot altogether resent it. Still less do I regret the fact that plays that I and others dislike frequently seem to flourish on what the profession calls "word of mouth." I am much more interested in engaging my readers in argument, stimulating them, risking or even courting their disagreement, and encouraging them to think about the theater, than in selling tickets. If my reviews provoke lively letters to the editor, combative articles from playwrights and directors, and so on, I am happier than if I see theater frontages plastered with adjectival extracts from those reviews. So is every other theater critic I know.

Nevertheless, there is no getting away from it. Of course a critic writing for a mainstream newspaper, either in this country or my own, must accept that he is a consumer guide or, in the case of those people who become aware they dissent from your taste, a kind of anti-consumer guide. That is to say, you present or, better, suggest an overall opinion of the particular event you are reviewing, and you leave your readers to act or not to act upon it, as they themselves choose. Perhaps you make qualifications. Perhaps you say that such-and-such a play is more likely to appeal to such-and-such a person than it is to you. If you are aware that those in the theater around you enjoyed the event more than you, and that others might therefore do so in the future, maybe you say so. It rather shocked me that so many London critics failed to mention the genuinely rapt faces at the first night of "Les Miserables." In the end, whatever the qualifications, a critic must (as I say) make a judgment, give an opinion, take responsibility for it, and accept that it may influence his readers and have an impact on the box office.

But is often possible simultaneously to do more. For instance, Robert Brustein has written convincingly about the need for what he calls repertory critics. By that he means critics who do not simply review the offerings of a theater one by one, in isolation from each other. That is perhaps inevitable in the West End or Broadway, but at the National Theatre, the RSC, Lincoln Center, Playwrights Horizons, the critic should be looking at the institution's unfolding identity, its overall shape, development and health as each production helps to define it. He should cast aside English indolence, European fatalism, American impatience for instant success, or whatever, and try to discern the deepening perspectives as well as the specific event in the foreground. He should ask long-term questions about the reasons for what might at first glance seem to him an incongruity or a folly. Indeed, a critic can and should go further, monitoring the evolution of dramatists, performers, directors, designers, as well as reacting positively or negatively to their latest effort. He should accept that risks will be an inevitable part of the development of a theater and a career; that errors will occur; that failure may in some respects be more interesting than easy success; that, at least in the short term, there may even be that very un-American thing, a right to fail.

Indeed, the more I think about it, the less inherent contradictions I see in my profession, trade, call it what you will. A critic can often be both/and; not either/or. He can be self-effacing and self-assertive, detached and passionate. He can react vigorously to the present, and keep in mind the past and the future. To a greater extent than is realized, he can surely also serve both the theater and the reader.

He is the man in the middle, the eternal mediator between the stage and the stalls. He elects himself as a sort of unofficial spokesman for the dramatist, the director, the performers, the designer; he determines what they are trying to achieve, and he makes that clear to audiences or potential audiences. At the same time, he appoints himself as a representative of the audience, an educated spectator able, unlike most of those around him, to tell the dramatist, the director, the performers, the designer, what he thinks they did and did not accomplish. He listens as he reacts as he observes as he feels as he analyzes as he ponders as, inevitably, he judges. Of course, he quite often has to do all this in 400, 500, 600 words; but that is another story. ■

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The Institutional Theater

Moderator—Robert Brustein

Panelists

William A. Henry III—Drama Critic, Time Magazine. Winner of Pulitzer Prize for criticism while television reviewer for The Boston Globe.

Lloyd Rose—Drama Critic, The Washington Post. Former literary manager, Arena Stage; director, New Playwright's Theatre.

Stanley Wojewodski, Jr.—Artistic Director, Yale Repertory Theater. Former artistic director of the Center Theatre in Baltimore.

Joanne Akalaitis—Artistic Director, New York Shakespeare Festival. Former member of Mabou Mines.

Jeremy Gerard—Theater Editor and Chief Theater Critic, Variety. Former theater reporter, The New York Times and former critic for Fame magazine and The Dallas Morning News.

Todd London—Assistant Professor of Theater at New York University's Tisch School of the Arts and Freelance Writer and a former artistic director in New York and Washington.

William A. Henry III

I was thinking as I pondered how to get into this that I'm not really a very good paragon for the relationship between the critic and an institutional theater because I am not a local critic in a city. And the fundamental problem is to what extent you are either a booster of a local institution or a nurturer of cultural life where you live, which applies much more to a writer for a newspaper—a newspaper's being decentralized in this country—than to a writer for a national magazine where, per force, we are trying to downplay even the fact of our New York identity.

Our readers are all over and where we know that virtually none of our readers are going to see most of what we cover and they're hearing about these things or choosing to read the pieces that I manage to fight into the magazine much more because they want to know about the life of the mind in the country than because they have a consumer impulse.

The moral problem is much more, I think, for the critic in the community, partly because he is much more apt to have more frequent association with artists he's writing about. Most newspaper reviewers are in the uncomfortable position of writing advance pieces that are supposed to be neutral and that, by implication, are therefore very positive.

Now, the average reader is not all that sophisticated. He reads what appears to be an endorsement and then two days later reads a staggering condemnation of the same production. It's a little perplexing.

I certainly know people in the theater community but I don't do advance pieces so I don't wind up facing that conundrum. But as I looked around the table, I realized that to some degree every critic's situation is sui generis and that is in part an explanation of why there are so many of them.

Another is that, ultimately, opinion is opinion and no matter to what degree you articulate an aesthetic or an ideological framework for the basis for your decisions and to what extent you follow what I think is the best thing to do, which is to bring the reader through the process of your arriving at your opinion rather than simply share the product. The end result is the opinion itself [and I'm] much more interested in defining what the thing is than the vehemence of my endorsement or opposition.

Even if you do all of that, ultimately, it's a personal expression. And it arises partly from beliefs that are purely personal in character and partly, frankly, from whim and personal circumstance.

I mean, I've on occasion had the opportunity to go back to something the second time before writing about it. The first Kevin Kline Hamlet at the Public Theater I saw at the end of a week and I was very tired and it was a very dark production and for some reason everyone thinks Hamlet has to be staged inside a closet with the door closed.

I contrived to come back and look at it but one doesn't very often get that opportunity and I liked it a little better the second time. But, even then, in the Heisenberg Uncertainty Principle mode, I wasn't sure whether I liked it better because I had something invested in it, having gotten on a train from my house in New Jersey and come an hour into New York to sit through a three-plus hour production a second time—and I sure better have a different opinion to justify giving up a Sunday.

I, therefore, spent a lot of time getting onto planes and I've been to institutional theaters in, I think, it's 33 or 34 out of the 50 states. Now, that means

that there's a third of the country that still has the right to complain of neglect after the better part of eight years.

And we have run a lot of reviews of such places and a number of pieces that were broader looks at the scene at a particular institution or in a city.

I have concluded in pondering for the last couple of days what I might say here that probably my coverage has erred on the side of generosity in two significant regards.

One is that by emphasizing new work and distinguished re-interpretations, really genuinely significant re-interpretations, of classics and writing only about those, one gives the impression of much greater courage and innovation at the institutional theaters than is, in fact, the case.

The paradigmatic example is this Actors Theater of Louisville, which does 80 percent of the time the kind of schedule that you would have found on the summer straw hat circuit 40 years ago but then has done this Humana Festival of new plays every year and brought in the nation's press and agents and so on.

And the one piece that appeared in the national press every year about Actors Theater of Louisville was about their producing these nine new plays, which they would give a handful of performances each to.

The other area in which I think I've been overly generous—and this is mostly my omission—is in the realm of acting. To be honest, I ask myself when I look at an institutional theater production, is this up to a New York standard? And more often than not the answer is no and most of the time I don't say that in print.

I find, you know, unless it's really egregious that I tend to let it slide. Having been nurtured under Mr. Brustein's wing, I was a believer for a long time in the repertory system and the resident company. And I'm not now.

Because I really think if you don't do it for an audience, it's not art. It's therapy. And however good and nice it may be for the artists to have a permanent home and work with the same people over and over again, if actors have five roles in the course of the season, they're just right for one, they're okay for two and they're really miscast-cast in two.

You could get somebody who was better if you jobbed people in and the audience would be better served. I also think the playwright would be better served, both from the point of view of having people who are more nearly what he created or she created—I want to be as politically correct as I can manage here—and also because, although it may be wonderful for the actor to demonstrate how he can slip into role after role after role, in truth, there were repertory companies that I attended a lot, one began to recognize certain characteristic vocal and facial gestures that were there time and again regardless of the character because, let's face it, it's one person and most people, even the best actors, are not chameleons.

Now, the more that you are committed to an anti-realistic, expressionistic theater, as Mr. Brustein is, the less that troubles you. But I don't share that aesthetic commitment of his and so it trouble me more.

My primary concern in writing about institutional theaters is the non-audience ways in which my pieces get used. The major impact that I have is not selling tickets. A Time review may actually generate some help at the box office but most of these theaters, if they don't have a significant subscription audience, are not going to be around very long anyway.

By the time my piece appears, it's usually halfway through the month. But the pieces show up in grant applications with enormous regularity. The mere fact of being covered tends to assume disproportionate importance in the judgment of what a theater does. And the fact you're being covered favorably obviously has even more impact.

I, therefore, made it a personal rule to try to visit an institution three or four times before writing about it in a way that might be construed as a general endorsement because I could hit the one good production in 10 years. That's really unfair, not only to that theater in that it would encourage it to accrue money and take on ambitions it's not ready for. But it's obviously even more unfair to the theaters that won't get funded.

The other thing that I find difficult to deal with is, as a matter of reality, that the line between the nonprofit institutional theater and the for-profit theater has plainly been blurred.

More and more stuff that appears on Broadway, straight plays more often, but also musicals, is in some way tested in the institutional theater. That raises the old do-you-cover-it-out-of-town question. I have tried with plays of August Wilson to see them at every stage of development and sometimes I'm writing about them earlier on and sometimes I'm simply accruing knowledge but I've never been able to arrive at a satisfactory definition.

The Critics and Criticism symposium at Harvard

I just usually use as the operating rule that if I regularly cover an institutional theater I'm normally there at least once a year.

Lloyd Rose

I came to work at The Post 18 months ago, somewhat to my surprise, because I had no newspaper experience. And I spent quite a lot of time wondering why they hired me, not because I'm a unnaturally modest person but because I did wonder why they hired me.

And I finally figured out that it was because of my background in the community and in the theater and they sort of figured, thank God, here's someone who knows something about it. We'll just let her loose and then we won't have to worry about it too much.

I must say on behalf of The Post that during one of the series of interviews that I went through to get the job, I had lunch with Len Downey. Len, who's very straightforward, sat down and said, "Well, you're probably wondering why you're having so many interviews when you can obviously write, you obviously know the subject." And I said, "Well, yes, mm hmm." And he said, "Well, they talk about the power of The Post all the time and some places we have power, some places we don't. This is a place where we really have power, this position. You cannot learn on the job."

And I thought, fine, great, I understand that, what a nice thing to think. Then they hired me even though they weren't sure I could [meet a] deadline, which I turned out to be able to do.

However, the point there is not about me. It's about Len and The Post and their feeling that there is some responsibility there. Like New York, although, of course, the stakes are much less high, Washington is a one-paper town as far as critics go. I saw this demonstrated myself at Arena when David Richards, who is now at The Times on Sunday, was at The Post and we did a couple of shows at the same time but one of them, "All the King's Men," he gave the only really good review to and everyone else sort of went "eh" or panned it and it was a hi. [There was] an adaptation of Harvey Pekar's "American Splendor" with which I was involved. David did not like it. Everyone else thought it was really pretty terrific.

Well, guess which one was the flop and guess which one was the hit? It was great really because it was like a chemistry lab experiment. I mean, it couldn't have been more perfectly controlled.

So, I came into the job with that in my mind. I also came to the job knowing a lot of the people in the community, of course, but not very well. Nobody knows what a literary manager does.

I thought, well, here I am. I'm going to be going out with all this immense and unwanted power and reviewing these people and I knew from experience exactly what sort of influence you can have, in two ways, of course. One is, not to put it too bluntly, financial and the other is—I don't know whether to call it emotional or egotistical. It's a mixture of both.

Now, in my opinion, having worked both sides of the fence, there's no such thing as constructive criticism. No artist ever does anything that he or she does not want you to say is absolutely perfect and they are God. If you don't say that, they're unhappy. I've written what I thought were swell reviews that had one bad criticism in them and that's the one everyone remembers. Also, I have heard what all of these people say about each other's productions. So, I tend less to look upon them as tender, little buds that can be eaten by the caterpillar of the critic.

In terms of supporting the institutional theater I found this altogether easier than I had thought it was going to be. I was worried about it. But I'd been in Washington a long time. I'd been watching these places grow and develop anyway. And so they were, all of them, a long ongoing story to me.

And it's sort of like—this is really funny for me to say; I know nothing about sports—but I imagine it's rather like covering a ball team. People who love sports and love ball teams don't go to the game just to see if they win or they lose. You wouldn't have a sports section, would you? You'd have two lines on the front page. They won. They lost. And this tremendous sports page part of the paper full of all this lush, lush, lush writing about these guys and their courage and did they do it this time and the story and all the drama of it—this is what sports writing is about.

To some extent for me covering the institutional theater is about this. On the one hand, you certainly have a product. You have a finished product. People are being asked to pay for this, something that theater people tend to try to not talk about.

On the other hand, you've got the drama of the whole institution. What are they doing? What are they trying? How near are they getting to what they seem to want to do? How are things changing? This is much more interest-

William A. Henry III

Lloyd Rose

Stanley Wojewodski, Jr.

ing than having some idea in your head of whether they're going to do something well or do it badly.

You have to be very frank with your reader. You have to let them know exactly what's going on in there so that they don't get in there and say, well, this is a surprise. You're in a dialogue with the reader.

You're in a dialogue with the theater. And you go into the theater not so much interested in what you want as in what they're going to give you. And you try to figure out what it is that they're giving.

As Mr. Nightingale said last night there's no way to make criticism impersonal. There is no way to escape the self, unfortunately. But you can sort of look at a production through the limitations of your own self two ways, like you're looking through a window.

As you all know, you can look through a window and you can look through the window. You can look out there and there's a tower of some sort. Or you can see the smudges and the scratches and another place where a bird once hit it and didn't quite get cleaned off and you can just see the window pane itself.

I think the trick is just to try to look through it and see what you're looking at that really isn't you or is as far away from you as you can get, considering it's you.

Stanley Wojewodski, Jr.

I have to admit openly that I have never had any difficulty finding intelligent discussion of work that we did in the theater or that other theaters were doing outside of the daily reviewing pages.

But as the leader of an institution I had enormous difficulty making that writing available to people with whom I was meant to be in artistic dialogue—my present and future audiences for the institution as I tried to shape it. It was impossible for me to mail all that stuff around.

Along those lines, I categorically disagree with the comment that all artists simply want positive reinforcement personally for their work. I think that just ain't so. Yes, the artist responds.

Also, another thing that occurred to me as I came in here today is that the critics seem much more comfortable than the artists.

Those of us that have chosen for however long a period of time to fight the institutional fight, which in our culture makes a permanent creative environment, we have wanted intelligent discussion of that work. Unfortunately we have inherited a model in most cases, (at least I know I did until I was able to try to change it) that really was a stepchild of the commercial theater. I'm talking about resident theater situations and also something that was created within the context of a late capitalist economy.

The resident theater movement has never squarely faced the issue of patronage. We are regularly reminded that patronage isn't there but I don't know that we've ever actually squarely faced the issue, particularly when the models were being made.

One of our most important patrons are audience members. By patrons I mean people who just keep the theater going—that's the subscription base. As long as the subscription base is allowed to remain the source of economic lifeblood to the theater, it also has the potential for sounding the artistic death knell.

We are tied into daily writing about the theater because, unfortunately, it becomes the major forum within which our work is discussed with our audience outside of newsletters and things that we try periodically to create to try to write the histories of our theater and discuss what the futures of our theaters might be and communicate those to the audiences.

This question of art and the support of the artist—someone else has always paid for it. I look forward to that Utopian moment when the theater ticket in the resident theater movement, for the most part, or anywhere for that matter, pays roughly for relative climatic comfort and clean toilets and everything else is paid for by someone else. And that simply is probably not going to come for a period of time in this culture.

Maybe it was easier, maybe people would have me believe more democratic, more responsible to go in the room with, oh, I don't know, 25 to 50 board members who are pretty much on the board because they can raise money or they can give money, and negotiate what the identity of a theater is going to be within the context of this daily critical discussion. Maybe that's easier but I'm not convinced that it's easier than, say, going in the room with one Medici or one Pope.

I think somehow when you left those meetings, you pretty much knew where you stood. You got to paint the ceiling or you didn't.

JoAnne Akalaitis

Jeremy Gerard

Todd London

I'm now working in a place at a school where we train critics. This goes back to an idea that Bob [Brustein] had some 25 years ago, which was that the quality of the discussion of the work that was being done throughout the country might be improved if people were trained to do it. Twenty-five years later I see any number of marvelously intelligent, passionate, devoted, insightful people who have trained in that program and I'll leave you just with this question. Why is it that so few of them write for daily newspapers?

JoAnne Akalaitis

I don't know anything about institutions, except I've worked in some and I was a founding member of a very strange institution called Mabou Mines. Strange in that it was quite un-institutional and we led our sort of merry, artistic lives and sat around and complained about not being understood by the critics.

But it didn't matter because we weren't dependent on any kind of box office for our survival because we would do little pieces in these little places and charge $10 and things changed and we charged $20 and had big arguments about that.

Then I went to work in the real world of institutional theaters and they were different because there were more people, they had buildings and there were these people who worked in these institutions who were called press agents. The press agents in these places were often educated and very cheerful. Their job was to get you to do pre-publicity. And I said, "Oh, what's that?" "Oh, you're interviewed." "Well, I'm not very interesting, you know. I've been working with this. Nobody knows who I am. Nobody cares who I am." "Oh, they do. They really care who you are."

So you get this big boost. There's a lot of cheer about your identity even. Then you direct a play and the reviews come out. In these cities, it seems to me, the artistic director either hates the critic of the main newspaper or hangs out and watches football games in the rec room and drinks beer with that critic until that critic betrays her or him. Then they don't talk to one another any more.

So the local papers don't count because the artistic director writes so and so off. "He hates me. He's always hated me. He's hated me for years. He does not understand the work of this theater."

But there would be in these institutions a kind of tremor of real excitement when the possibility that Newsweek or Time or some national magazine was going to come because that really counts and I didn't know whether it counted because it was a loftier or sort of more objective critical ideal or whether it was better publicity. I think it's because it's better publicity and fresh publicity.

Then I worked at the Public Theater as a director for hire for Joe Papp. Until two years ago, there was no subscription at the Public Theater and Joe would keep plays previewing, week after week. So they wouldn't open, right? So that the critics would not come to see them.

In the case of a play like "Julius Caesar" which was an unfortunate production, I think it opened the night before it closed and it had an audience, not because it had great word of mouth but because Al Pacino was in it and it could have been great. It could have been great and I wish it had been great. I wish it had run without the critics anyway.

Then people were not coming to the theater and Joe said, "Okay, we're going to have a subscription campaign." That was only two years ago. Because it was a new thing, people subscribed. Then we had this situation which made some directors, including myself, very miserable because we didn't like the subscription audiences.

Some of us felt they didn't understand the work, that they were essentially dull people, did not appreciate especially what we might call more adventurous theater and we really like these single-ticket buyers.

I feel that being an artistic director of a theater in New York is rather depressing because it feels very much like I am in some kind of commercial venture. There's an awful lot of tension around the theater before those reviews come out, especially from one newspaper, The New York Times, and there's an awful lot of hysteria about it because the unspoken contract that we all have with one another around the public theater is that we want a good review from The New York Times because it's going to sell tickets.

That's not why I got into theater. It's never been a business for me. It's my lifeblood. I can't live without theater. I'm not grateful for that review and I refuse to let anyone at the theater talk to me about it or any actor. Even the press department is not allowed to be happy or smile or say congratulations. Just don't say it because it's like going to Las Vegas. We were lucky this time.

It's this very strange feeling of the day after. Everyone's either beaming or you feel like you're in a room full of oncologists. It's affecting the emotional climate of a place that should be engaged in making theater art. I have to say I don't get it and I also have to say I resent it.

One of the things it seems to me that the so-called institutional theater or the not-for-profit theater should be doing and should be encouraged and nurtured to do is to be a sort of laboratory, to be a place where stuff can happen that is not, obviously not, commercial.

Some of that stuff, the play, a play, or re-interpretations of classic work can be flawed and it seems to me that it is the job or perhaps it should be the mandate or the mission of people who write about theater or call themselves critics to see that. I'm not saying they shouldn't have opinions or they shouldn't like or dislike something but there has to be some space and there is no space. The result of that is the terror that playwrights now have to do a play in New York in the not-for-profit theater. Some playwrights don't ever even want to come to New York any more.

So there's this talk now of the little play. You do a nice little play by a wonderful playwright, very interesting play, she's been working on it, it's got problems. The play has problems and she said, "I can't do it. I just can't face it. I can't do this play in New York."

We did a play that I thought was fabulous a couple of years ago and since it was a historical play, the writer had spent a lot of time working on it. It was a flawed play, but she really had a voice. It was a quite marvelous voice. The play got terrible reviews. That's why it's not going to be done in St. Louis and Minneapolis or South Coast Rep. It's not going to be done at a lot of theaters because, not only are we all worried about what critics are going to say in New York, everybody in St. Louis is worried in the sense that they're not going to do her play.

So, all that work, that three years of work which was fine work and deserved some kind of support, some kind of nourishment is gone. It's gone from her life and she's looking to write a movie script and lot of writers are, too.

The same is true of directors. I see directors whose performance is evaluated as if they were athletes, like, "He had a really great season last year but his rebounding is terrible this season, what happened to him?" This is about someone who's 29 years old. Someone who should be sort of saying, "Hey, well, they hated the last thing; I can't wait to get to the next thing." Instead he's saying, "Well, I'm going to go to L.A. because I could direct an episode of "Wise Guy" and why not?"

Jeremy Gerard

Coming from Variety I sort of feel like I represent the devil here and so I'll start by saying why I went to Variety. When the possibility first came up, I thought that's nuts, that's nothing, what I do as a critic. It's not how I see myself as a writer. I got my theater education much more in places like Cafe Cino and the Performing Garage and the New York Shakespeare Festival and the Guthrie Theater than at the Shubert Theater and the Morosco and as a critic before going to Variety I've had the opportunity to write at length about those institutions, about where they were going, what they were doing and that was obviously a different task than was going to be put before me at the bible of the entertainment industry.

A lot has happened in the years that all of us, the panelists up here, have been covering those institutions. We have places like the Old Globe Theater producing Neil Simon plays. We have the scam of enhancement funds whereby a commercial producer can give money directly to an institutional theater for the development of a specific project with a specific intention of developing it for the commercial theater.

It seems to me that commercial concerns are in the DNA of the institutional theater and, in fact, they go back to the very beginning. Margo Jones gave up her project in Dallas to go be part of Tennessee Williams' commercial productions in Chicago and in New York. Tony Guthrie may have started the Guthrie Theater with an interesting production of Shakespeare but the all-time highest-grossing, biggest ticket-selling production at the Guthrie Theater was a production of that touchstone of the avant garde, "Guys and Dolls." Of course, in some quarters, "Guys and Dolls" was a touchstone of the avant garde this year.

I saw the job at Variety as an opportunity to bring a lot of things together. My experience growing up in those many different kinds of theaters, expanding coverage at the paper to include much more resident theater and I would say that, if I had to take a guess, the preponderance of our coverage is of resident theater productions.

Certainly the great preponderance of our coverage is of resident theater derived productions and I'll finish with one anecdote which is that one of the things I have been trying to change at Variety, is our coverage of the grosses. There's that devil's word. We list the grosses of the Broadway theater, the road touring theater and the resident theater. This struck me as an anomaly. Why are we measuring the success of the nonprofit theater by the same standards we measure the success of commercial productions? And I had decided that I'd like to get rid of those grosses from the resident theaters and maybe turn them over to commercial off-Broadway or something like that.

And I started calling around to the resident theaters around the country saying, you know, we're going to try to find a different way to represent the resident theater in Variety. Without a single exception, the response was one of horror. They wanted those grosses in. They like the place in the ongoing life of this publication and I was a real bastard if I was going to change that.

So it seems to me that we, as critics and artists, have to discern the themes and passions that drive our theater nationwide and the truth is that for better or worse those passions and themes are being played out with less and less regard for the difference between capitalization and underwriting.

It leaves some of us fairly cynical as critics and, JoAnne, I wouldn't mind going back into the laboratory.

Todd London

The golden rule of improvisational theater holds that the improviser must always say yes. No matter how off base or lunatic or cliché your partner's impulse, you must accept it and you must use it. No one stops the scene. It interrupts the flow of active ideas and kills the trust on stage.

For instance, if another actor hands you an imaginary flower, you must take it and make something of it, however much you dislike the sentimentality of the gesture. If you pretend that you haven't seen the flower or respond to the offering as if it were a toilet plunger, since toilet plungers are funnier than flowers, you've betrayed the truth of the moment and nipped the proverbial scene in the bud. Or the scene in the proverbial bud.

Like it or not, the critics are seen by the majority of people working in this country as the folks who say no. You don't understand the work, they think. You don't care about it. You are abusive in your cleverness and inappropriate in your personal remarks, especially in matters of sexuality, appearance and race. Moreover, this thinking goes, you're maddeningly defensive. You refuse to 'fess up to your own faults.

From the critic's point of view, of course, this is ludicrous. No one who hates the theater becomes a critic. At least, initially they don't hate the theater.

When you do say no, it's as a goad to creativity. It's not as an assault on it. Besides theater people take things too personally. They're so melodramatic and anti-intellectual. And theater people are hypocritical, too. They damn criticism but they're horribly dependent on it, both to sell their work through ads and lobby displayed reviews, etc. and to determine their own personal sense of success or failure.

The artistic and critical communities in America are deeply and undeniably divided. They don't think the same. They don't speak the same language. They don't value the same feelings at all and looking at the same image, they don't see the same thing.

Apparently the only thing these two groups share is a responsibility for and a reliance on the theater's survival. Artists and critics alike are involved in an uphill struggle to create better art by creating a better environment for that art in a culture that seems determined to negate all such efforts.

Maybe in the context of this struggle, the two communities can find some common ground.

The American institutional theater is a community in progress. It improvised itself into middle age and now it needs to improvise itself out again.

At its inception the institutional theater set out to revise the insane gambler's rhythm of American commercial theater production. This revolutionary revision emphasized three goals foreign to the commercial theater—the development of a unique body of work, the nurture of a family of artists and the establishment of deep roots in a community over time.

During its three-decades struggle to validate itself to the folks at home, the national press and the theater world at large, the institutional theater has too often undermined its own intended goals. It has imitated its commercial counterpart by hard-selling successes with a two-faced dependence on quotes from critics it disdains. It has replaced the mission of creating homes for artists with the practice of type and star casting and it has sought national identity in place of local identification, a fact evident even in the widespread preference of the resident theater rubric over the more valuable one, regional.

The next necessary phase of the regional theater movement demands, I think, that artists and producers, especially those running the theaters, reconnect with their initial goals. It demands that they reconnect with the same sense of radical purpose, the same revolutionary audacity that fueled this theater's founding and it demands that they bring to this reconnection the business savvy and political agility that the Reagan/Bush era has forced them to acquire.

The difficulty for critics and editors is to find the story in all of this. Journalists write about small perceptual changes in government. But in the theater almost all stories revolve around the product, around opening night, the pre-show preview, the review and the profile of the person most responsible for a hit show.

So, here's my question. Is it possible to envision for the institutional theater a kind of criticism that doesn't even include reviews? What if you had to tell the story of the theater day after day without the use of reviews? How would you do it?

Eve Harrington's star-making triumph is only one kind of story. A Wooster Group piece two years in the making calls for another, maybe a more interesting one. The story of actors who work together year after year to make their theater an integral part of Whitesburg, Kentucky or Douglas, Alaska requires yet another sort of telling altogether.

Amid the negative feelings about most criticism shared by theater people, I've heard occasional choruses of gratitude about specific critics. This gratitude has absolutely nothing to do with prose style or even how positive or glowing the reviews are. Instead there are theater communities that feel a certain critic has helped them grow and survive by looking clearly at where they are as a community that's distinct, say, from Broadway and dealing with them in those terms.

Chicago theater people cite Richard Christiansen as a major force for growth in that theater community. Christiansen saw what they were trying to do, where they were in the process and he told that story to The Tribune's readers.

Similarly, for all the bitching about Frank Rich, the off- and off-off-Broadway community expresses regular gratitude towards Mel Gussow for seeing even the smallest theater's work and for caring about the development of new play writing talent.

So, what I'm suggesting is that just as theater artists need to re-think in light of our own failure to make contact with concerns of the culture, they need to re-think the theater. So, the critical journalistic community needs to re-think its approach to theater, asking even the most basic, naive questions.

Critics and editors can use their considerable influence creatively to encourage readers to re-think the story of a theater that is no longer all about Eve. To do this, they must, in their own corners of the country, re-imagine what that story is and how best to tell it with—or maybe even without—reviews, which I don't mean to mean without critical opinion.

This means thinking outside the conventions of theater reviewing and working harder to attune yourselves to the ideas, spirit and feelings of the American stage in your specific community. You, the critics, are responsible for telling the story of that theater on its own terms.

You are members of a community that includes everyone who reads what you write and all the people whose work you see. Isolating yourselves from either part of that community is artistically and politically negligent. It means saying no to a continuing improvisation that is painfully struggling to go forward. ■

Q & A ON INSTITUTIONAL THEATER

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Theater—The Media

Moderator
THOMAS WINSHIP—Editor, The Boston Globe, 1965-1984
Panelists
CAROLYN CLAY—Theater Editor and Drama Critic, The Boston Phoenix
ROCCO LANDESMAN—President, Jujamcyn Theatres
LINDA WINER—Drama Critic, Newsday
JACK KROLL—Senior Editor and Critic-at-Large, Newsweek

Thomas Winship

I always said that the two biggest pains in the ass that I had as editor of a paper over probably a 25-year span was the real estate lobby and the serious music buffs. They were one hell of a picky lot. And I have to say that the theater and movie impresarios were not very far behind in the bitchiness department.

I want to mention a couple of bromides that have plagued me through the years and I quite agree with Bill Henry that the reality of life is that a critic works for a newspaper and has to observe the rules of reporting. This doesn't necessarily make for the greatest critics in the world but that's it.

Among the critic's frustrations obviously are space limitations and the intolerable deadlines. I must say this idea of delayed reviews seems to be growing. I think it's a wonderful idea, even for the daily newspaper people.

I never worried about critics writing too long on major pieces of work. What bothered me was the resistance of most critics to reviewing minor performances in the space they deserved which is usually about two or three paragraphs. I always thought critics would always wind up writing 10 or 12 inches, just long enough to merit a by-line. [Another] frustration [is] getting critics to do profiles and interviews. You say it's a conflict of interest to leave your critic's perch to do the interview. The editor says the critic is the most knowledgeable guy to do that interview and the editor says the critic is not exactly overworked. It's nice inside work. It seems to me, theoretically, the critic who never does a legitimate interview or profile is operating in a bit of a vacuum but I suppose in the ideal world of overflow staffing, I as a one-time editor would come down on the side of the critic in this argument over purity.

My next beef: I always found too much resistance from critics about covering the infrastructure, the economics, the politics of the cultural institutions, the trends.

Another of my frustrations has been that often critics get too involved in high theater and petty flaws in a performance to a point where they forget who they're writing for. Are they writing for their fellow critics, the artist or the theater goer?

And the compassion factor—are too many critics too critical? I personally would like to think more critics would write about artists the way they'd rather like to have others write about them and I don't mean by that pollyannaish remark that critics should go soft. It does suggest that they should not be rude, nasty, mean or just plain anti-intellectual.

Now for the defense of the much-maligned editor. What a good editor can do is pass judgment on their critic's sense of fairness, arbitrate the disputes between the critic and the people he covers and give them the freedom that they've earned and that they deserve.

Carolyn Clay

Carolyn Clay

In an essay called "Opinions and Convictions" in his 1987 collection "Who Needs Theatre?", Mr. Brustein, bemoaning the demise of the acting company at the Brooklyn Academy of Music, intimated that newspaper and magazine critics should feel in some way beholden to the birthing and survival of theater companies, particularly potentially valuable ones. And that this beholdenness should somehow worm its way into the way we do our jobs.

Now, obviously Bob is not proposing what Mr. Nightingale called the kindly fib. He is, however, wearing his artistic, director and critic hats and as he himself once asked, 'Which of me is correct?'

I don't know exactly how this would work. It seems to me that if the critics said that a particular production is a failure but we should nonetheless go to it to support the company, the muse, the Gipper, this would not sell any

tickets. It would just make the critic look vacillating and strange and possibly even in the pocket of the company. I think that audience members who wish to cast their lot with the company for better or worse have already done so. They're called subscribers.

Still, Mr. Brustein maintains that, "positive and negative judgments are rarely of use to theater people. Their only value is to the audience." Which brings me back, however elliptically, to my basic disagreement with him regarding the responsibility of the drama critic as a journalist.

Our obligation is not to the theaters or to posterity or even to the publisher, whose obligation is the same as ours. It is to the readers—that potential audience that Brustein dismisses as the only folks to whom positive or negative judgments are useful.

I will go this far with him, however. Bowing to the inevitable in the same essay, he writes with great torch-bearing fervor, "If we cannot make judgments, then we can at least try to give those judgments meaning by investing our criticism with reference, learning and a transcendent view of the art we have elected to serve."

Also, I disagree that in saying my responsibility is to my readers, I am therefore saying that my only role is as a consumer guide and a broker of the entertainment dollar. Admittedly, I have had ongoing arguments with senior editors who, assuming this to be the case, see no point in commenting on things that have already closed by time of publication or which are not close at hand.

In the face of their myopia I continue to maintain that there is an audience that reads serious criticism because it wishes to keep up with the state of the art. Some of them, presumably, are even theater people. Granted there are fewer of them than there are the legions of people who buy The Phoenix for our Film Criticism at a Glance column, in which the deathless prose of a dozen local and national reviewers is culled and translated into a series of marching stars and turkeys. But those people already buy the paper. Why not pitch the actual prose a little higher?

And I certainly will go along with Mr. Brustein and the chit he thinks we owe the individual theaters that for a critic to come into a theater and review in a vacuum, to throw out an opinion, say, on a new Robert Wilson work without examining that opinion in relationship to Mr. Wilson's other work and to the critic's ideas about it is just lazy and irresponsible and entirely too common.

As for the growing bugaboo of economics, which in reviewers terms usually translates into space, Jonathan Powell recently quoted Stanley Kauffmann in an article in The Voice. Not one newspaper or magazine, however high minded, he said, would carry criticism one day after the editor became convinced that people had stopped reading it. The truth, he said, is that people do read it and the only sensible argument is over what it should be.

Unfortunately, I think a lot of us are finding lately that the editorial consensus is that it should be brief. Less is more. USA TODAY. So, we start to split hairs about criticism versus reviewing, the implication being that newspapers cannot any longer afford full fledged criticism.

One of the luxuries for me of weekly newspapering has always been the space. The opportunity to augment those ugly positive and negative judgments with a frame of reference and sort of vivid description that you hope gives the reader some idea of what the visceral theater experience was like. And that luxury is increasingly hard to come by.

I think, though, that this is a bad time. The problem facing theater critics as journalists today has two sides, both stamped who cares?

We live in a society where the theater is not important and, therefore, theater criticism is not important. I talked last year with a Bulgarian journalist, to whom such journalistic notions as timeliness and consumer guideism were complete mysteries because she lives in a society where theater is subsidized, ergo, everyone goes. Having gone, they're interested in reading criticism. It's not a consumer guide. It's a spark to argument.

The standard of newspaper criticism is troubling. I can't go along with Mr. Brustein's inference that we critics need somehow to meld high standards with advocacy to the financially imperiled for the sake of institutions in tough times. But I do think that if we can manage to hit our higher ups for enough space in which to think, that we owe our readers and as a side effect the artists we write about more thought than graces the pages of most newspapers.

I can understand how frustrating it must be to be ruled upon by mercurial critics who have not done their homework or seem to have crawled out of a world without context but the answer isn't for the critic to become a combination booster and dramaturge. It's for us to write lively, thoughtful, unprejudiced criticism and for the system by which we are regarded as ambulatory thumb, up or down, to be hung by its thumbs.

Rocco Landesman

I remember very vividly when I first started to read criticism. I started to read Walter Kerr when I was a kid living in St. Louis and growing and starting to get interested in theater. And starting, I guess, with Walter Kerr and then in a kind of straight line and all the way through to the present, I realized that my relationship with each one of these critics is very much like a relationship that you develop with a woman where there's a period of infatuation, seduction, followed by gaining greater knowledge and then, perhaps, some period of—maybe disillusionment is too strong a word but you're attracted to these wonderful qualities at first and you're ecstatic and then as you get to know her better and better you find out there are also other qualities.

This seems to happen to me again and again. I remember reading Walter Kerr at first and finding him the most incredibly vivid writer. He still is. He is the quintessential critic as journalist in terms of giving you a description of what happened last night, painting a picture of the stage with words or of an

actor's performance. He was absolutely brilliant at that and made theater seem so alive and so immediate to me.

As I got older and started to read him more and more, I began to realize that there was a priggish streak in Walter Kerr, that there was a total hostility to most of the great modern, not to mention post-modern, works and there were aspects of his, you know, work that began to increasingly irritate me as I would go along.

Similarly with every other critic that I discovered. I remember when I started to get more seriously interested in dramatic literature and criticism reading Eric Bentley and Bob Brustein and Richard Gilman and Stanley Kauffmann and thinking, my God, how wonderful. Here are drama critics with ideas, who have an aesthetic, who have a purpose, who have a point of view.

Later, I began to react to what I felt was in some of them a kind of relentless high mindedness and righteousness, I began to see that there was a very patronizing attitude toward all aspects of popular culture, you know, willy-nilly. Popular culture to Bob Brustein is like junk food is to real food, I think, in his view. His view of musical theater in general has, in my opinion, very often been a fairly patronizing one. He realizes that there has to be such as thing, just as there has to be dentistry, but dentistry is not really medicine.

I'll try to get away from certain of these personalities, that the problem is deeper than the fact that their particular sensibility is not mine.

No, I'm going to suggest that there's a more fundamental problem, which is that as critics practice on and on, year after year, decade after decade, and develop their careers, I think what happens is they get locked into a particular critical posture, a particular critical personality. It's natural that this happens because they get more and more invested in their own point of view. For whatever reason, they [have] more and more that they have to protect.

Bob, himself, has a tremendous amount invested in the resident theater movement which he helped to create and establish and in the American Repertory Theater but you could point to the same thing in any number of critics where they have an investment in something established.

I think it's an impulse in every critic to want to be proven right. What's wrong with that? What's missing in that?

Well, with most critics I don't have any sense of a truly evolving self. Stan Wojewodski or JoAnne Akalaitis can get this to a great extent by engaging in a new work of art, a new play, a new writer and can, from play to play, have an experience that at least has the potential to have a profound impact, if not on their personality, at least on their view of the world or on their emotional life.

Directors, actors are continually shaped by the work that they do in a way that critics are not. And this is really too bad for the critic. I rarely feel a critic really coming to terms with a new experience or even that much with his own experience as he goes to the theater. But a critic's responsibility to his editor, to his readers is to come up, boom, with a very well thought out, articulated and very ready response.

If he doesn't, it's not really acceptable to editors and, more important than that, it's not really accepted in our culture at large. What is the one thing that is really unforgivable in our society? The one thing that's totally unforgivable is to not know, to be in doubt, to be uncertain about something.

The second most unforgivable thing is to be wrong or to admit that you're wrong. You see this in a thousand examples. I rarely, if ever, see critics helpless before a work of art and I more rarely than that see them go back and say I was wrong. I made a mistake. I'd like to re-think this.

To the critics I'd like to say take a break. Take some time off. Do something else for awhile, please. Have a nervous breakdown. Have an affair. Go to Tibet. Something that's going to change or challenge your tight hold on your own opinion and your own experiences.

That, by the way, is why I think it's so enlightening to read the work of the best and most occasional journalist. When Susan Sontag weighs in or Norman Mailer with something to say, the beauty of it is its unpredictability.

What to do about it. I think JoAnne and Stan and Bob can much more easily deal with the critics in their situations than I can in mine. They do have subscriptions. They do have a kind of continuing recognizable audience. There are things that can be done. In my situation I feel I should at least speak to this since I am presumably here as a representative of the commercial theater.

I'm in a somewhat different situation in that I have to deal perpetually and continually with the chief drama critic of The New York Times and, yes, we might as well name his name. It's Frank Rich. And in the case of the other relationships I've mentioned, the other names I've mentioned, there's always the possibility, as this relationship evolves, of breaking up. You know, there's divorce.

Well, Frank Rich and I are in a kind of marriage and there's no possibility of divorce. You know, we're like stuck in a marriage and there's nothing either of us can do about it. We need each other and we're inextricably bound with each other and there's no getting out of it. Obviously we need Frank Rich in the commercial theater in order to sell our shows. It's essential. It's certainly useful in musical theaters. It's essential in straight plays.

And he needs Broadway, too. In theory he doesn't. He could review off-Broadway and resident theater productions but, in fact, for him to have his prominence in The New York Times and for theater to have that important place there, Broadway is a necessity and he needs Broadway as well. We need his endorsement. He needs our Broadway products.

Obviously a lot of the problem is with the fact of the power of The New York Times but, of course, that's going to be shaped inevitably by the person who occupies that chair and, frankly, we could do a lot worse.

I agree with just about all the things that Benedict said last night about Frank. We could do a lot worse than Frank Rich in that job. In fact, if I were to make up

a list of qualities that I would want in an enlightened drama critic, I would list those qualities that he has in abundance—intelligence, integrity, a sense of responsibility in terms of preparation and seriousness for the work that he undertakes, a stylistic elegance and sharpness, a knowledge of the subject matter. On all of those points, I think Frank qualifies as well or better than anyone.

The problem is that his taste is different from mine and, of course, those of us in any situation in any one-paper town have that problem.

Frank really is a theater buff. I'm not a theater buff. Frank grew up with the theater, you know, from the time he could walk and talk and has that kind of deep feeling and nostalgia for the whole event of going to the theater. Frank loves that thing that is the theater and it's one of the reasons that actually make him a very good critic for Broadway.

It does make him predisposed as any personality to a certain kind of theatricality in the things that he sees. The inevitable result is that you're going to get perhaps higher praise for "Guys and Dolls" and a "Crazy for You," which are perfectly realized works within their own ambition and terms, but those are going to be more celebrated by Frank than, say, a "Jelly's Last Jam," which is an imperfect work.

There are, however, critics that would be more thrilled by the more daring and risky but more imperfect work and this is something that we're going to be up against always in the theater and probably always no matter who the critic is. I would argue that while there's an important place on Broadway for a "Guys and Dolls," for a "Crazy for You," there certainly should be room for other kinds of things as well.

I think some drama critics might give more value to degree of difficulty or level of ambition and daring than others. At some point you want to see a critic say this work is imperfect but I responded to it, I found it thrilling, go out and see it rather than to say, well, in fairness this deserves a seven point three on a scale of one to ten and the second act didn't work.

Well, what do you do in a marriage like the one I have and that other commercial producers have where divorce is not an option?

Well, in the end you hope that you'll both somehow improve over time, you hope that in one way or another, you'll work things out. For my part, it's always the hope that we, as commercial producers, will be somewhat less cynically commercial, less meretricious in terms of what we're doing, what our productions are and my hope, in terms of the critic for The New York Times and other publications that have important commercial repercussions for our work, is that there'll be more recognition of the value of risk, daring, courage in my arena when it occurs.

Just parenthetically, there was a review recently by Frank that I was very encouraged by. It was a review of "The Four Baboons Adoring the Sun." It was a remarkable review, really. What he said was, "I love this." You really felt him responding to the play in a very personal and visceral way and yet he said at the same time, Well, I respond to this, but a lot of other people are liable to say I'm crazy and have a completely different response and that's fine, too.

It was the first time I'd seen that kind of note in a review recently. I remember having a dinner with Bob after another John Guare play, coincidentally, "Six Degrees of Separation," where Bob was not quite sure what he felt toward the play and toward the production and I remember being very buoyed up and encouraged by the fact that he didn't know, that he wasn't sure.

By the time he wrote the review, he'd gotten a little more sure. He had worked it out a little better but I wonder if that little bit of uncertainty or doubt isn't something, that human element, isn't something we could use more of, not only in criticism, but in all of our lives and responses.

Linda Winer

But probably the most disturbing thing that I'm perceiving in the profession, at least in New York, in the last couple of seasons and something I am quite sure is going to filter out and affect everyone who's writing criticism around the country is that I think that we're losing our middle voice. The whole hit-flop mentality, the orgasm-or-die mentality that I see taking over the discourse and the volume has gotten so loud that I find that all of us are raising our voices just to be heard. I know I'm doing it, too, and I know that suddenly there are adjectives that are starting to appear that I would never say in casual conversation. A friend of mine recently said, "Does anyone in real life ever say rollicking?" In fact, critics and maniacs are the only people ever described as raving.

Not only are we talking about the negative reviews but also the positive reviews. Everything just seems to be over the top, now, and I think it's devaluing the theaters and it's devaluing us and it's devaluing the newspapers.

If something is best today, tomorrow it's going to have to be another best and the day after that it's going to be another best and pretty soon we're all screaming at each other about what best things we saw yesterday. There was one review in the mid-eighties that called it the best play of the Eighties. It was on the buses until 1992. This is the best play of the Eighties.

If you walk down Forty-fifth Street and stand outside the theaters there are many, many quotes from many, many critics and not really many from me. I walk down and I say, "Did I work this season?" I think, what, have I got no passion? Do I feel nothing? What's wrong with me?

Linda Winer

When I do see something where I think, okay, I have to scream now in order to be heard—I wrote a column about "Falsettos" because I felt like there had been so much noise about all this singing and dancing and the tap dancing and the feather musicals for so long that I thought that maybe I had to say something else. It was really embarrassing because I basically said it's time to say something really wild about "Falsettos," something that will scream "Kill for a Ticket" from the side of buses and at the end I said, "I laughed, I cried."

Well, of course, you know, they quoted "I laughed, I cried." So I get up in the morning and I feel awful. I believe that it isn't a little thing that we're being targeted up here and used. We all have a conflict of interest in it. Basically, we get more famous if we like more shows.

We are in a newspaper war in New York. I worry. Do my publishers and editors walk down Forty-fifth Street and say, "where's all our free advertising?" I'm horrified that I probably am finding myself slipping into it.

And the theaters, it's a real double-edged sword for them. While they are claiming that they resent the power of the critics, particularly the power of The New York Times, they use it in their reviews. And what you're doing is you're training readers into the hit-flop mentality. You're training them to look for the special event production and, as much as people are always saying that the reason why we've lost the regular theater goer in New York is the price of the tickets, I think it's also just this sense of playing into America's mania for winning and losing, for who's on top.

I sit here a disgrace in America. My training is in music. My training was not in theater. I'm a better theater critic than I was a music critic. So there. But I knew more about music.

Newspapers are in big trouble and critics are in big trouble. If you look at the polls the politicians and us are the people the people hate the most. We write privileged opinion, which is out of step with what a lot of editors believe people distrust us for now. You know, who are you to tell us what you think? So, we're in a bit of a tenuous situation and I think that's true all around the country..

[In] the last two years [no] Pulitzer Prize was given for arts criticism. I cannot believe that in all the newspapers in all the states in this country writing about all the arts, that there wasn't one person who was at least as good as whoever won for spot news photography this year.

So, my worry, my concern, is that the arts don't like us. The readers don't like us and for God's sake I know bosses don't like us because they've decided that we're not important enough to give a prize to and just at a time when government is saying the arts aren't important enough to fund. I think that the message is really very scary.

Jack Kroll

Rocco has talked about a sort of shotgun marriage with Frank Rich. If that's the case, I hope he has a nice mistress salted away somewhere. On the other hand, I was going to mention Frank's review of "Four Baboons." I'm glad you did because it does show that maybe the window has opened up in his sensibility or maybe in some sense he has not been entirely correctly perceived for a long time but that was a case of the all-powerful drama critic of The New York Times engaging with something that he was frank to admit was far from perfect. And yet he had a powerful experience there and he tried to transmit that to the reader.

I think that that's the basic job of a critic. You can never forget that you're just this one guy, one human being, sitting there and what's happening is that you're having an experience, believe it or not. Sometimes, especially when you're talking to your bosses, you get the impression that they think that, well, we're having all these experiences because we know political people and we're out there in the real world and you guys, you're nice guys but you don't have any experiences, you see.

They don't realize that engaging with art can be among the deepest experiences and most fun that any human being can have. I think that the act of criticism starts with acknowledgement that it is a deeply personal experience and it's worth trying to transmit and translate to other people.

I agree with Bob Brustein about opinions. Opinions are not what it's all about. Unfortunately, one's bosses think that opinions are excruciatingly important. Most of them do think that opinions are almost what everything is about.

If I were asked to describe what I think criticism is about, again, you go back to yourself. I ask myself what's the most fun, what's the most excitement that I get from reading critics? Because I do read critics and from time to time I will go back. I've re-read certain critics hundreds, probably thousands, of times. Critics like Bernard Shaw—just sticking to drama criticism—critics like Ken Tynan. I'm always re-reading Kenneth Tynan because you read that stuff and it's a model. You can see him in the cockpit. You can see him on deadline. You can see him out there in the West End, all scruffy and screwed up in so many ways and he's got to write this piece for bosses and he transmits such a sense of humane excitement and the same with Shaw.

You read a piece by Shaw and he's talking about Victorian and Edwardian performers and even plays that you never heard of in the first place and that were instantly forgotten as soon as his piece appeared and yet today, 1992, you are turned on by what you read. You are being changed. Something is

Jack Kroll

happening inside you reading about these long forgotten, never remembered people in the old English theater.

What's going on there? I always ask myself why is this wonderful? Why do I want to be like these guys in my own way? And I think that the short and uncomplicated answer is that these people are setting your mind on fire. I think in that sense the critic is a kind of benevolent arsonist. Your job is to set the mind on fire to the degree that an opinion about something will enter into that, by all means, to the degree that other things enter into it, of course.

Now, I've been very lucky in my career. I came to Newsweek magazine after a checkered life in many different directions just at a point where the people who ran that place had made a decision that they were going to change everything there because the magazine had simply been, let's face it, a kind of secondary image of Time magazine, copying for the most part all of the quite brilliant things that had been invented by Henry Luce and Brittan Hadden back in the Thirties.

Now, among the things that those very clever people had invented back then was the idea of one corporate voice that would speak on every conceivable subject—politics, business, world affairs, culture. One voice would speak to one audience. The audience was envisaged by Henry Luce, creator of the idea of the American Century, as the American people. The idea was that this voice could speak on any conceivable subject to that idealized thing, the American people. Of course, there's no such thing as the American people.

Now, that was a very brilliant idea at that point and Newsweek faithfully imitated it for a long time but enlightened people soon realized that it was an idea that had worn out its welcome; times had changed and the idea of one corporate voice speaking to an idealized audience was no longer a viable idea.

The idea was now that individual human beings would have to take responsibility for what they were writing and so I found myself in the fortunate position of having come to the magazine exactly at that point.

And what happened was that the then enlightened editor got the ridiculous idea that the arts and culture were just as important and significant a part of American life as anything else and that, therefore, what he was going to do would be to take all the cultural departments that had been scattered through the magazine in the back of the book and put them in one department and give them to one editor—that became me and I was very fortunate in being able to do that.

I remember one day accidentally tuning into Channel 13 and at that point, as I seem to recall, Stanley Kauffmann had a regular gig there and there he was saying, "My God, the most amazing thing has happened. You actually find intelligent cultural and theater criticism in a news magazine, Newsweek magazine."

I had been given carte blanche to hire people who would be, in the charming words of my then editor, definitive writers on these subjects. I hired, for example, a man whose name has been mentioned several times, Dick Gilman, as our drama critic. That was a kind of revolutionary idea. Almost like The New York Time hiring Stanley Kauffmann at one point. Of course, Stanley fled screaming after 10 minutes at The New York Times but Dick managed to hang around for a few years.

Dick Gilman—those of you who know his work know that he's a very brilliant guy. Those of you who know the man know that he's a very interesting guy. Dick was no friend of Broadway and so it's a very tricky thing to have a guy like that writing for a mass circulation magazine. If things work out, it could be a wonderful thing and in good part that's what happened with Dick.

But I remember one week he had to review a Broadway musical starring Gwen Verdon. I think it was "Redhead" but I'm not sure. And he performed one of the great virtuoso feats in my time as an editor. He managed to write a review of a major Broadway musical starring a major Broadway star, Gwen Verdon, without once mentioning her name. Now you talk about the editor as a guy who imposes his will in some fashion on a writer. I sat there saying, "Gee, what am I going to do about this because I'm famous for not telling critics how to write?"

"Dick, will you come into my office?" And I said, "Dick, you know, did you forget?" And he said, "No. No, no, Jack, it's just that I can't stand Gwen Verdon." A remarkable feeling in itself. So, I said, "Look. Simply sit down at the typewriter and type out that sentence or some such thing. 'I can't stand Gwen Verdon.' I don't mind. But you cannot write a review without dealing with the most important thing about it."

When I got to the magazine there was a kind of legendary institution in American journalism that went under the dreaded name of group journalism and, without going into why it was dreaded, one of the great things that happened at the magazine at that time was that, in effect, we really did away with that.

It had to start right there in the critical section because who, if not a critic, is an individual sensibility—panic, that's the only word, struck among almost all the editors because if you threw out that idea and if you brought in signed pieces, which was the great revolution, what happens to the whole function of, as I put it to them at the time, hiring second-rate writers and making sure they triple space their stories so that you can re-write the story in the space between the lines, instead of hiring first-rate writers and feeling that somehow the machine has gone wrong, if you have to significantly change the story at all? That's what we did.

The idea that the editor of a major outlet in the mass media would assume that the arts are such an all-fired important part of American life, that day, that moment has passed and I'm not sure it's every going to return and the magazine, I think, reflects that. The news magazines reflect it and all the organs of the mass media increasingly reflect it.

When I was down in Louisville a couple of years ago at the Humana Festival of New American Plays, a remarkable letter appeared in the local Louisville paper. It was an amazing letter. It said in so many words, well, thank God at last we have a president in the White House who's not going to pay

attention to all you cultural snobs out there. All you people who go to the theater, to opera, to the ballet, and so forth, you have had your day and now we've got a guy in the White House—that was President Reagan—who's not going to kowtow to you and who's going to pay attention to the real Americans who watch the movies and television and so forth.

And I thought to myself this is an amazing thing, especially for this letter to appear in, of all places, Louisville where, say what you will about the Actors Theater of Louisville, Jon Jory had done yeoman work in, even if it was only in one yearly festival—actually I think it went beyond that—in foisting new work, at whatever level you might think that new work existed, on the local audience.

That letter really kind of summed up the kind of cultural shift that I've been talking about and that cultural shift is increasingly reflected in the mass media. If you have chosen to work in the mass media, it has become a tremendous problem.

The reason I entered the mass media in the first place after a short teaching career, again, I was passionately excited by the idea of writing about the arts all across the board from Grotowski to Neil Simon. In those early days I was able to do exactly that, writing to a mass audience and setting those minds on fire. That to me was the excitement of being a critic in the mass media rather than being a critic somewhere else. I was lucky enough to be able to do that for a good many years, before this very strange and very problematic and cultural shift occurred.

So, now you have a problem that has become a very situational problem. It's extremely difficult as a critic to keep up any sort of continuity if you don't have physical continuity. Back then, I was able to write about theater, let's say three out of every four weeks. And when you do that, remarkable for a weekly magazine, you develop a continuity of style, of personality, of sensibility. You are able to interact with the art form on the one hand and with your leadership on the other hand. You are able to build up, as the middle man to this dialogue, you were able to build up quite a complex and harmonious kind of dialectical thing that is going on.

It's a wonderful feeling when you're able to do that and under those circumstances, the overimportance of opinion or anything else, sort of automatically gets dissolved into this process.

And so when they have decided almost in a quantifiable sense that you're going to get X percent of the space and somebody else is going to get Z percent of the space, they're acting according to their best interests.

What I'm saying is that continuity is destroyed when week after week you find yourself competing for this space, the shrinkage of space, because of course pictures have gotten in there.

Believe me, when you're in this business, you soon learn that these are the kinds of things that dictate what happens. To give some specific examples of that, three years ago now, when I noticed that JoAnne Akalaitis was going to direct a production of Genet's "The Screen" at the Guthrie Theater.

I was out there like a shot. That would be only the second time that this play had received a full scale professional production in this country. I had to sweat it to get that into the magazine. Sweat, sweat, sweat. Fight, fight, fight. The particular editor that I had to deal with at that moment is no longer with us so I can sort of tell this in a more relaxed frame of mind here.

I started my piece out by saying that it was the most significant event among resident theaters in many years and he called me down and he said, "Oh, Jack, you know, that's hype." And I said, "Well,"—recently we had done about 59 consecutive stories on Tom Cruise, including a cover story in which we used the most extravagant language about this nice guy, Tom Cruise. But that's not hype, you see.

What hype is, if you say in the 11 lines that you're given to discuss this, this is a very significant event. Well, that's hype, Jack. As I say, this particular hype meister is gone, thank goodness.

This is the practical problem of being a critic in the mass media. Now, I think it's very important to be an intelligent and capable critic in the mass media. It's probably today more than it's ever been but a critic needs a forum. The forums are shrinking, are shrinking badly. Now, when you're faced with this problem, what do you do? How do you try to compensate for the lack of continuity by writing these increasingly infrequent pieces?

Every critic will have to make up his own mind about that. But, again, I was so delighted when we sat down here and Tom began to use expressions like pain in the ass and stuff like that and I thought, oh, gee, I can talk in a sort of natural way now. It is a pain in the ass. There's just as much bullshit on the theater's side as there is on the critic's side. Now, my attitude toward that is—great, life is in large part bullshit, let's live it up. Let's not let bullshitter A accuse bullshitter B of being the exclusive dispenser of bullshit.

I once ran into Mandy Patinkin in a theater lobby and Mandy advanced on me, stuck out his hand and said, "I'm so glad to see you because I've been wanting to thank you for a couple of years because when you reviewed me in"—I forget what it was—"you had some critical things to say about me and I read that and I thought, boy, he's right and I can't tell you how much I learned and I was able to adjust my ... and I ... thank you very much."

And I thought to myself, what bullshit. What he really thought when he read that was, "Well, this son of a bitch, the next time I meet him I'm going to beat his brains out." But he turned it around very cleverly and the praise was so fulsome I was so embarrassed by it that I wanted to flee. I wanted to leave.

I'm going to talk about something that is connected in some way with Bob Brustein. Bob produced two plays by Marsha Norman, "'Night Mother" and "Traveler in the Dark." And like most critics I guess who wrote about "'Night Mother," I was very positive about it and so Marsha loved me. Then, somewhat later I reviewed "Traveler in the Dark" and I was not so positive. To put it bluntly, Marsha hated me. I got to admit I was very hurt by this. I was emotionally hurt by it. And I thought to myself, geez, that's not right. It's the opposite side of the Mandy Patinkin coin, you see.

They're both symptomatic of the same, how shall I put it? I hate to say this but it's really true. Kind of false relationship between critics and for the most part the people that they deal with.

One final story about this. Once I was sitting on the aisle at Circle in the Square on Broadway and there was a very well known American actor sitting directly in front of me and down the stairs came one of the best known critics in New York and there was an exchange of greetings between this very — well, I'm going to tell you who the actor was. What the hell. It was Paul Sorvino. And he said, "Oh, hi, Mr. Critic, how are you?"

And there was a very cordial conversation between the two of them and the critic went on and sat down in his chair and the friend who was with Paul Sorvino, as soon as the critic gut out of ear shot, said to him, "How could you be friendly with that son of a bitch bastard?" And Paul said something that I've never forgotten. He said, "As long as he writes well about me, I'm his buddy." Any critic who takes seriously the approbation of those that he's dealing with is in deep doo-doo.

I think there is an attitude that's pretty widespread, even among the people one works for. Every three years it seems as if you have to fend off at the place where you work a growing feeling [of] why don't we do away with reviews altogether. Maybe it's that attitude that has resulted in this sort of ghettoization of reviews. In the redesign of Time magazine the reviews, under the rubric of reviews, have now become a kind of caboose to the big train that is Time magazine.

Who needs critics? This sort of wells up from the culture from time to time and, if you are frank and honest enough to admit, as I have always done, that, well, I'll put it personally. I need critics.

Why do I need critics? I think you need critics because you need thinking. Ideally, that is what a critic does. He should be a professional thinker with all the potential excitement and fruitfulness that that implies.

When I say setting the mind on fire, I'm not talking about some cheesy emotional state that interferes with the propagation of truth. A critic ideally is simply a terrific thinker, looking at something over a distance. He has a perspective on it that hopefully the people inside do not have and he sets your mind on fire by transmitting the power and the energy of his thoughts. ■

Q & A ON THE MEDIA

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Memorable Quotes From Reviews

Complaints by artists and writers at the symposium brought to mind these famous quotations panning Broadway plays.

"Tallulah Bankhead barged down the aisle as Cleopatra and sank."
—John Mason Brown on a 1937 performance of Shakespeare's "Antony and Cleopatra"

"Miss Hepburn played the gamut of emotion from A to B."
—Dorothy Parker on Katharine Hepburn's 1933 appearance in "The Lake"

" 'Abie's Irish Rose' is the kind of play in which a Jewish boy, wanting to marry an Irish girl named Rosemary Murphey, tells his Orthodox father that her name is Rosie Murphesky, and the marriage proceeds. People laugh at this every night, which explains why a democracy can never be a success."—Robert Benchley

"Its hero is caused, by a novel device, to fall asleep and a-dream; and thus he is given yesterday. Me, I should have given him twenty years to life."
—Dorothy Parker on A.A. Milne's "Give Me Yesterday"

"Guido Natzo was natzo guido."
—Brooks Atkinson on a Valentino lookalike named Guido Natzo

"Me no Leica."
—Walter Kerr on a 1954 production of "I am a Camera"

"The play opened at 8:40 sharp and closed at 10:40 dull."
—Heywood Broun on a new comedy

And some observations on the qualifications of critics.

"Good Fielding. No Hit."
—Kyle Crichton on a 1940 adaptation of "Tom Jones"

"Oh no, our critics come by their stupidity quite honestly."
—Harold Clurman, when asked at a Moscow seminar whether American critics took bribes.

"[A drama critic is] a newspaperman whose sweetheart ran off with an actor."
—Walter Winchell

"Dramatic criticism [is] venom from contented rattlesnakes."
—Percy Hammond

Theater—The Artist

Moderator
JOHN CONKLIN—Set and costume designer with a long list of credits in opera, theater and ballet.

Panelists
GORDON ROGOFF—Professor of Dramaturgy and Dramatic Criticism at Yale School of Drama and Critic-at-Large for The Village Voice. He won the 1986 George Jean Nathan Award.
ANNE BOGART—Director of more than 40 productions since 1976. Former artistic director at the Trinity Repertory Theater. Winner of the 1992 Obie Award for production of "The Baltimore Waltz."
ROSS WETZSTEON—Writer and Editor of The Village Voice for 28 years and chairman of the Obie committee.
JULES FEIFFER—Playwright and cartoonist, whose most recent play was "Elliott Loves." Now writing children's books.
LYNNE THIGPEN—Actress. Tony Award nominee and winner of Obie and Drama Desk awards. A regular on the television series L.A. Law.
JOHN SIMON—Drama Critic, New York Magazine, critic on literature and the opera for The New Criterion and Cultural Editor, The New Leader. Winner George Jean Nathan Award.

John Conklin

Your moderator is both excited and slightly terrified. This is a interesting and fascinating subject and terrifying, because the relationship between artists and critics has been, to all of us in the theater, a personal and sometimes a very difficult subject. So I hope that the discussion today will, if not resolved some of those problems, will deal with them in a civilized and thoughtful, lucid, calm way.

Gordon Rogoff

"As for modern journalism," wrote Oscar Wilde, "it is not my business to defend it." You will remember that in the two parts of his neoplatonic dialogue, "The Artist as Critic" Wilde let Gilbert get the better of Earnest. Poor Earnest.

Not surprisingly, Gilbert and Earnest often sound like one voice but it is Gilbert who makes the initial fatal error of insisting that the artist should not, be troubled by the shrill clamor of criticism. Adding, he hopes, some weight to his position, he drops one casual observation, namely that, "The Greeks had no art critics." Thus, launching Gilbert into an extended refutation. The Greeks, he maintains, were, "A nation of art critics."

Since style looms larger for Oscar than accuracy, it's easy to dismiss his various and clashing assertions as mere light entertainment but something is happening here that finally yields substance. Gilbert—or it is Oscar?—is haunted by what he calls the energy of creation and, consequently, he's envisioning the act of criticism, itself, as still another layer in a dialogue of equals, both driven by similar demons.

They're different perspectives, however, the artist, as he says, unable to recognize the beauty of work different from his own, the critic positioned to appreciate all forms and modes, leading inexorably to the customary parting of the ways between artist and critic. I suspect that when Oscar read Shaw's cool dismissal of "The Importance of Being Earnest" in 1895, he was too distracted by Queensberry's nasty provocation to give Shaw's criticism the answer it deserved.

Apart from anything else, he could have exercised the artist's right to prophecy. We shall see, GBS, who's got it right this time. Oscar, the playwright, would have most certainly taken off his Gilbert mask and argued strenuously on Earnest's behalf that the Greeks were, indeed, a nation free of that shrill clamor of criticism.

What the artist wants from the critic, as Oscar should have said and may have, is unflinching admiration. But after years of exchanging hats, mostly wearing the critical and teaching ones, I've learned to take the act of criticism as more a dialogue with history and the future, than as a moment of intimate exchange with the present.

I discovered soon enough that much of what I read about my work that represented unflinching admiration often told me what I already knew. The critic, bless his missionary heart, might be on my side but rarely with an intensity of response matching mine when I was down there in the dark chambers where something was emerging from nothing.

Of course, on all sides, and whether playing one role or another, I would wish it otherwise. My perfect heaven would find critics writing first for artists and artists waiting breathlessly, not for judgment, but for illumination from a mind however distant and flawed, equally at play in the fields of creation.

More common, unfortunately, is an artist like Wagner, so enraged by what he saw as Han Sach's critical pedantries that he turned him into the monstrous, obtuse Beckmesser in "Die Meistersinger"—his only comedy, if it is that—even denying him the best of his musical invention, manipulating the foolish fellow with far less musical and dramatic success than in his rhapsodic treatment of the characters he loves, especially the poet cobbler, Hans Sachs, quite clearly Wagner's image of himself.

The lesson for the artist, I take it, is to keep the critic as far off stage as possible. But, perhaps, not too far. Oscar, after all, might have been justifiably peeved by Shaw's negative review of Earnest. But who is he to argue with that same artist-critic coming to his defense against an audience not taking him seriously enough?

He had been too successful in his pose, too easily targeted as a writer who wasn't, after all, doing anything difficult or unusual but Shaw was the first to know better.

"As far as I can ascertain," he said, "I am the only person in London who cannot sit down and write an Oscar Wilde play at will." That, I submit, is criticism doing its job. Humble assertion in support of assertive distinction, the capacity to make discoveries and describe them accurately in a language that nobody else could sit down and write at will.

Anne Bogart

Rocco Landesman yesterday talked a little bit about the possibility of a vulnerability on the part of the critic and the idea of taking a vacation to Tibet, I think. I suddenly thought, my God, is critical writing an art form, too? I hadn't thought of it on those terms. So, I thought, well, I know something about making art. It's what I think about most of the time and what that is.

So, I wrote down this morning seven little things I know about art as an artist.

The first I know is that art is created in a state of imbalance. As an artist I have to train myself in life to define balance, but in the moment of making something I'm in a state of imbalance, which is a very insecure feeling and a very positive one. I know that I cannot create art in a state of balance. I don't know why. So, we're thinking about this in terms of critical writing.

I know something else which, actually, I didn't think of. There are several books written on the subject of interviews with artists and reflections on artists and scientists throughout history and all of them seem to say that in their greatest moments they are being spoken through, like God is speaking through them or that it's not them talking. That's point number two.

The third point is that, as an artist I know, when I'm working on a play, that the play has to be huge and I have to be tiny; like, a child in front of a huge canvas; that if the play is smaller than I am, then it comes out reductive and it's a huge thing that I can't possibly know in its entirety but that I have the courage to approach it. Another thing is that, within the same category, is that it changes me.

The fourth point that I cannot work without—I'm going to talk about as an artist but there's no English word for it so for the Germanophiles, like Mr. Leverett, I'm going to use the word *auseinandersetzen*, which usually is translated in the dictionary to [mean] argument but argument has such negative connotations in this country and the word *auseinandersetzen*—*auseinander* apart from each other; *setzen*, to set; apart from each other. That in order to create you have to pull yourself apart from each other, to disagree or kind of agree to disagree, that the weakness in American artists is that we agree too much. An actor will say to me, what do you want? You know? Then, there's nothing there. There's no tension and the happiest I ever am as an artist is when someone says to me from stage, fuck you, Anne! Then I know that it really makes me happy because then I feel like we can work. It's true. There's nothing worse than a blank okay. The Germans know how to do it. Terrible. German actors are frightening. So, this sense of *auseinandersetzen*, or positive argumentation, the Germans also understand, and this is under *auseindersetzen*, that art is a form of violence, that when you set anything on the stage, it's a violent act; you set anything on the page, it's a violent act but that violence is a necessary one in order to get further.

The fifth point might contradict the notion that one is being spoken through as an artist, that who you are, what you think, what your politics are, how you treat people, what you read, is there on the stage or on the page or what you believe in, the choices you've made in your life. The tragedy is that you cannot divorce your development as a human being from your development as an artist. I do know that and it's a tragic one because I'd love not to have to worry about that.

The sixth point which sort of emerges out of this last one is this precious word "interest," that I know as an artist that if I don't stay true to what's a real interest that my art will die. I cannot do a play that I'm not interested in or else something inside me dies.

If you have an energy to what you do, which means a true interest that you have this, it feels like news. It doesn't feel like old reportage. It feels like something new. And also as an artist that what you do is news and I know that every time I do anything that isn't true to a very deep interest, that I betray that and that my art suffers.

The last point, number seven, is I've been asking myself recently—and I'm going to extend this to thinking about criticism—is I ask myself when does the art happen? I was watching somebody rehearse and he was rehearsing an actress and he was saying, "Okay, now, you move left and you'll sit down here

Anne Bogart

and then you'll get up and you'll walk over here" and I was thinking when does the art happen? If it's not in the rehearsal, why, obviously, I think, okay, as a writer, a playwright, the art happens in that moment with the page, right?

There is a time to think and there is a time to let things gush out of you. As a director, I have to do a great deal of preliminary work but in the moment in rehearsal, I hope that's where the art happens.

For the director, I believe it happens in rehearsal and I think a lot of actors will disagree with me but I think for the actor it happens in front of the audience. I think that the thinking happens with the actor, believe it or not, in rehearsal but the actual art, the violence of the art or the pressure, that exquisite pressure that one experiences as an artist, happens with an audience.

So, I would wonder about the critic, that certainly the thinking has to happen during the event but what about in the moment of writing about the event?

Those are my seven points. Now, I'm not going to draw any conclusions yet because it's too new. It just was yesterday but I wanted to put those forward and then I'm going to add two personal things.

One is the first time I was ever reviewed. I was a young director in New York City, my first show, and Arthur Sainer wrote a tiny little blurb in The Village Voice. And he said something that I'm still working on. It was one of the best things ever said about my work. He said, "A visual intensity without the inner necessity."

And to this day, you know, when I have some doubts in the middle of the night, I wake up and I go, the visual intensity. He hit it on the mark and it was something I can deal with. It's fantastic. So, I'm going to do the crude and horrible thing of saying that's good criticism. Okay? Speaking personally.

I'm now going to tell you what I think bad criticism is. And I'm speaking personally and this is overly simplistic. I'll give an example. I won't give you the name of a very wonderful actor I've worked with for a long time and this one critic said that he is a bad actor. That was the sentence. "So and so is a bad actor."

I see that a lot and I think it's extremely destructive. What do you do with it? What does an audience do with it? What does anybody do with it?

To close, I think that somewhere between 80 and 90 percent of the criticism that's been written on my work is extremely negative, extremely vicious. I think that the first 10 years of my career was based on revenge against my parents. My parents never thought I could do anything. So I got really angry and it's a great energy—it does many plays. I don't think that it comes across as anger in the plays but it really fueled me.

I think the second half of my career is based on revenge against the critics, which is a low place to go but it's useful. Sometimes you can't judge whether or not something is psychologically advanced or not. I'm not very proud of saying this, that so much of my work is based on revenge against my parents or the critics but there's something in it.

Ross Wetzsteon

Whenever I think about the relationships between artists and critics, it reminds me of a story that actually happened a few years ago at the Lion's Head in New York City.

A bunch of writers were sitting around, playwrights, and they were complaining about critics and one of them finally said, "Look, let's stop complaining. What would be your fantasy of the absolutely perfect first line of a review of your next play in The New York Times?"

One person said, "Not since Beckett has a writer looked so deeply into the human heart." And the next writer, "Once every generation..." They went on like this and finally they came to the last person and he said, "I want to get this straight. The ideal first line of a review in The New York Times?" He said, "I'll never understand why Hollywood paid a million dollars for this piece of shit."

Having been at The Village Voice for 28 years and worked in the downtown theater at a time when it was quite a bit different, I should maybe briefly touch on some of this material. Basically the critic related to the artist in many, many ways at The Village Voice and the downtown theater in the late Fifties and early Sixties. As a matter of fact, right up until probably the early Eighties. One of the primary functions of the critic was merely to inform the theater community what was happening and to document it. Another function was to analyze the aesthetic assumptions of the works that were being presented; to discover the connections between the writer's previous work and discover connections between this writer and other writers; also to place the work within the tradition, either Brecht or Artaud or whatever; to nurture the playwrights and artists of the off-Broadway theater; to educate the audience.

We forget that the things that the audience had to be educated to in those days were accepting non-linear theater, accepting characterization which wasn't based on psychology. Some of the things we also tried to do, as Jack Kroll was so eloquent about yesterday, is setting your mind on fire and also Rocco Landesman's talking about vulnerability. I was very impressed with that.

Far down on this list of functions that we fulfill, almost non-existent as a matter of fact, was the evaluation of the strengths and weaknesses of the artists and the productions, a judgment.

Now this kind of community no longer exists, of course. And community had it's problems as well as it's virtues. A community can be very parochial and it also can be nourishing. We had advantages and disadvantages to this situation but it was quite a bit different than it is today.

We may define ourselves one way and we may talk constantly in these symposiums about the necessity for articulating values rather than evaluating results but basically our function, structural function is to stand in judgment. We really are a critic-driven theater, we're an evaluation-oriented theater and to deny it is preposterous.

The only issue in these symposiums, ultimately, comes down to the power of the critic, as my story about the playwrights at the Lion's Head illustrates.

Basically it seems to me that the uses and abuses of power is the ultimate subject in our present context of criticism.

Now, I want to talk very briefly about the reasons for this and the consequences. Oversimplified, I think it's quite clear that critics are expected by their editors to fulfill only two functions. One, they're to be entertainers and, two, they're to be that much maligned phrase consumer guides.

One of the results of these two roles is, first of all, it encourages an Olympian tone in which subjective taste becomes confused with objective fact and the opinions become truth to our readers. They become the yes or no to everyone except us and we have to realize that. Everyone in this room denies that but everyone outside this room knows it.

Worse than that is the thing that Linda Winer was talking about yesterday,the no middle voice, the hit-or-flop mentality. I know I'm going to be New York centric here for a moment but what does obsess as an editor—as an editor and a writer and a reader—is the tone in the last 10 years in New York criticism has been snide, sneering, supercilious, condescending, full of malice. It's a competition.

Now, Mr. Simon yesterday said that in any other country, this would be recognized as irony, wit and satire. Without being personal in any way—because I think this applies to all of us to some degree or other—in any other profession, it seems to me what he calls irony, wit and satire would be thought of as intellectually scandalous and morally despicable.

I was very much impressed, as was everyone else, with Mr. Rich's review of "Four Baboons." What I am waiting for is a negative review with the same tone, in which he takes the tone [of] it's just me, I responded this way personally, hey, guys, you know, I hated this but you might like it.

Every time you have his kind of talk about the critical climate in New York, there's a fantasy voice in your head that's responding and everybody in my fantasy dialogue always responds, "What about Shaw? Shaw was always negative and hypercritical and knocking everything."

The difference I think is that you never for a moment suspected Shaw's love for the theater. You never, ever felt that there was malice in his negativity. You never felt that there was hostility and contempt for the artist in his writing.

The kind of reviews that Frank Rich wrote about the Polish Musical "Metro." What was appalling about that was the absolute glee, the absolute delight that you could feel in twisting the knife into these poor people. It must have been a disastrous production and I'll grant him that but my main reaction for that was there's a kind of sado-masochistic glee that some of our critics find in skewering these plays.

I do want to sum up very briefly.

There's kind of a triad of the audience, the artist and the critic. It's always a fluid and flexible and shifting relationship and it's gotten completely distorted in the New York theater community in the last five, eight or 10 years. You have the theater experience and interceding right between that and the audience is the critic.

The critic becomes an arbiter, becomes the locus of values, becomes the guardian of culture and doesn't intercede in the spirit of support and encouragement but really in a spirit of suspicion and hostility and it seems to me that turning the relationship between the artist and the critics from one of mutual respect to an adversarial situation is the shame of our profession.

I was at this festival in Siena with Stan last weekend. It was a critic's symposium and there were a bunch of playwrights there and finally we asked the playwrights, what would be your vision of an ideal critic?

The Spanish playwright Jose Finestera said, "I'd like to say that there are three criteria from a point of view of an artist for an ideal critic." The first one was to love the theater and he said, "Love—doesn't all love have passion and respect?" And he went on to talk a bit about how most critics really hate the theater.

He said the second criteria would be knowledge of the theater and the third would be power. And then he paused for a moment and he said, "Renunciation of power."

Jules Feiffer

I was struck by Linda's talking about no middle voice in the theater and then, of course, also by Jack talking about—what is the phrase?—we need thinking, electrical spark fuses, outside thought and inside thought, setting our minds on fire.

It seems to me that that's the kind of criticism that most of us working in the theater or simply as audiences wait for and read. We all, of course, enjoy the pans—when it's not involving ourselves—and all enjoy the wit and vilification but in fact that's what it's all become.

Tynan could be as rough as anybody else on plays and on actors but what one always got was that sense of setting minds on fire. He was interested in thought. He was interested in thought process. He was interested in engaging. He was interested in, God help us, ideas, which is something ofa foreign concept to most working critics writing about theater in America today.

And one of the alarming traits that's come about in the last few years, and it's been coming for a long time, is the distrust of ideas and you certainly see it all the time in mainstream theater.

I think that Frank Rich and others have to resort to these attacks because they don't like ideas. They're unhappy with ideas. Maybe they think their editors don't want ideas. But it seems to me awhile ago that the trade-off in criticism that at one time on its best level was about the work and and the play under review.

That trade-off shifted and turned to the personality, style and ego of the reviewer, of the critic. And we went from a kind of Tynan-driven ethic of criticism at its best to what I have to call a Pauline Kael school of criticism. Well,

Kael did it very well. Basically, Pauline's reviews are about Pauline and they don't set anybody on fire except for readers admiring her approach and style of rhetoric. You don't learn a hell of a lot.

I think that's the school that Frank Rich came out of and I think that's why his work at its worst so devalues theater and at its best can lighten it up. It never sets fire to anything except the play and the playwrights and the union, the theater itself.

At its worst, with his position of power, he can banish writers from the stage. Christopher Durang is one of our best writers. He's no longer writing actively for the theater. His last play has not appeared. He has some doubts about bringing them to New York.

I'm not working in New York anymore. I'm probably not working at all anymore because I have a family. If I don't do plays in New York, I become a gypsy. I don't want to be in Seattle for four weeks or, as much as I like the A.R.T. here, for four or five weeks away from my family.

The business in New York is not conducive to what I do and I love writing plays but I'm out of that business and I can survive in other businesses and that's fine. But I loved working in the theater. I loved the act of putting on plays.

Working here at the A.R.T., for example, one didn't think about what the reviews were going to be. Nobody worried about that. Working in Houston as I did on the first presentation of "Carnal Knowledge" as a play years after it was done as a movie, again, nobody thought about what the Houston critics were going to say.

In New York that's all anybody thinks about in the back of his or her mind, particularly as you get further on in the production. What will they say? What will they say?

It is a critic-driven theater and it makes the New York job of a writer and a production team lose the fun of it. I never wanted to write plays and I backed into it against my will, knowing full well what would happen to me if I wrote what I wanted to write—and it did.

But I didn't realize how much fun it was going to be. The sense of play as play; the writing act itself was more fun than anything I've ever done, including cartooning, which I love. I've had some bad experiences. Everyone has. But, generally, in productions I've worked with some terrific people.

I designed a form of cartoon and went into it primarily, aside from basic talent, primarily for one reason, which was to be left alone. I didn't want anybody bothering me. I didn't want anybody telling me what to do. I didn't want anybody harassing me. I wanted to be alone in a room, do my work, send it out somewhere, get it in print and have everybody tell me how good it was.

I certainly didn't want to compete with other cartoonists so I invented a form that denied competition because nobody had done it before me. I certainly didn't want to get into theater, my God, where I'd have to be compared with other playwrights. I'd have to be set up and I would be criticized. There were no cartoon critics. As a matter of fact when my work began being taken seriously in The Voice in the Fifties in New York, there were so few cartoon critics that when I would meet people at parties, they'd say, "Well, I love what you do. Of course, you're not a cartoonist." Because they took me seriously and they didn't take cartoons seriously, I had to do something else.

I did columns; I did little plays, they said. I said, no, I'm a cartoonist. Those are comic strips. No, they can't be, you're not a cartoonist. It took me years of being recognized as a cartoonist and the way it happened was I went into theater.

I wrote "Little Murders" and it was reviewed as a Feiffer cartoon and by the very people who said these aren't cartoons. By putting my work on the stage in a very different way, I thought; in a very different form, I thought; doing something quite different, I thought, from my cartoons, I was, as it turned out, merely a cartoonist after all. So, to be recognized at doing what my first love was, I had to go into theater.

Now, I didn't start writing plays until 1966, "Little Murders" being the first and I was 37 years old then so it's rather late to get into that game. And I spent a considerable part of my life before then going to theater, reading reviews, having opinions about it and even, God help me, having friends among critics, Brustein being one of them, Jack Kroll I'd known for years, Dick Gilman, John Simon, God help me.

John's a fine fellow socially but he can't help what he does. John Simon speaking at Dwight McDonald's funeral service, giving a eulogy, had to end up because he couldn't help himself doing a critique of Dwight's writings. Where he fell down on the job, where Dwight wasn't good enough. The poor guy was in the ground and John Simon was doing all he had to do, burying Dwight.

Now, the mainstream critics, the ones writing for the dailies, never were of much interest to me even long before I wrote plays and it was a matter of I just took it for granted that what they liked or didn't like didn't have a lot to do or would only have accidently had to do with what I liked.

The exception sometimes being Richard Watts in The New York Post who, even when I disagreed with him, I found really engaging. I liked the way his mind worked. I liked the way he wrote and the sense of humanity that came to his writing. He seemed like a decent human being. It really hurt my feelings when years later he was writing these random notes columns on Fridays as he used to and said he never liked my work or my cartoons and didn't get it at all.

Jules Feiffer

Most of the others had nothing to tell me even when I liked the plays they liked. The exceptions were the critics writing for the weeklies or the quarterlies. Bob Brustein, from the beginning long before I knew him, as with Kenneth Tynan and just one or two others always had something to say that took me outside the play itself and told me something, not just about theater, but about the culture at large.

I still remember a piece Brustein wrote. I think it was in Partisan Review, about the audience, the mainstream audience, the middle brow audience. I forget the title of the piece but it was about a successful, commercial play in New York. The rules are this:the actors, the characters in the play, know less than the audience about the subject at hand, about the problem and at the end, it's a good play when the actors have learned as much as the audience knew when it was taking its seat.

That's comforting theater. That's flattering theater. That's the kind of theater that makes a hit and, for that matter, wins Tonys and that's the kind of play that, long before I started writing plays, I used to walk out on after the first act. It bores the pants off me and because, while I like being charmed and entertained as much as anybody and I like mindless entertainment as much as anybody, I like it in another form.

I don't mind it in TV. I don't mind it in movies. It drives me nuts in theater and it always has because, unlike the mainstream critics, I think thinking is fun. I think thinking is a form of entertainment. I think being challenged and being confronted and being bugged and being bothered is entertaining.

The plays that meant something to me would send me home deeply troubled, deeply upset, not knowing whether I liked the play or not. I would sit up half the night alone drinking.I would wake up hung over the next morning absolutely stunned and startled because suddenly it all made sense to me. I had made the connections. It's too bad to say it taught me something because it didn't teach me something here [pointing to his head]. It meant something to me here [pointing to his heart]. There was gut reaction that seems to me singularly a piece of theater, connected to theater in a way that is not connected to fiction, which I adore, but the results are somewhat different. And almost never to film.

This is what I love and did love about theater and, of course, when I went into theater, I was hoping to do the sort of same thing myself for whatever audience I had. That was to pull them up on stage as characters in the play that I was writing, to make them leave their seats, to make them argue, to confront them, to deal with them directly.

In "Little Murders" I wanted to engage the people who would be most troubled, most threatened and most likely to walk out on it (which, of course, they did). But still, the Broadway production, which only ran a week (which is what I expected) was in some ways far more interesting experience to me than the very successful Alan Arkin production that was done in Circle in the Square two years later, which got terrific reviews and which the audience adored. But two years of history had gone by, two more years of more Vietnam, two more years of the further dissolution of American society.

So, what I had to say wasn't as fresh, wasn't as original, wasn't as challenging. In addition, Arkin, as brilliant as his production was, because of his talents and limits as a director, got across the characters and the relationships, which is what I think made the play a success and kind of plowed under the basic ideas. Which also helped make the play a success because they were missed.

God knows, I needed that play to be successful and I was very happy with the production. I don't quarrel with that but what I missed was the electricity generated by that original lousy production and what was going on between that and the audience. I liked the dialogue. I liked the excitement. I liked the back and forth. I liked the audience murmuring and talking back as they were doing with "Elliott Loves" just a couple of years ago.

What I don't like is how the critics, including some of the rave reviews that I've gotten over the years, never seem or seldom seem—and there are exceptions, Jack Kroll is one here, Ross Wetzsteon is another—but the other mainstream critics, Walter Kerr notably gave a rave review to "Knock, Knock," saying go see this play. It doesn't have a thought in it's silly little head.

It was a wonderfully written review, very readable and was bullshit and what disturbed me about virtually every one I've ever read about "Little Murders"—with the single exception of John—at the time, was that everybody thought it was a play about urban violence, which it wasn't.

It was about about the breakdown of the structures of our society—family, church, police. I mean how everything was slowing beginning to fragment and break apart and no systems had any credibility anymore. That was the play I thought I wrote, where, by the end of the play, the hero could lean out the window, become a serial killer and be accepted back into the family as a hero, one of the team, one of the club. That irony seemed to be totally missed.

But over and over again the frustration as a writer writing for theater has been that with some exceptions, and they've been few, what I thought I was writing, what I still believe I was writing, was themes not dealt with.

What bothered me is they [critics] didn't seem to get at all at what I was writing about and what I meant to be writing about. And what it seemed to me a substantial part of the audience, at least from the personal reactions I got, understood. It's this business of not being understood—that's what drives me nuts.

It's not about money, although in my case partly it is. I can't afford to write for theater anymore. It was a very expensive hobby and I've got a family to support and I'm 63 years old so I've got to go on to other things that will provide a living for me. Mainly it's about the sense of being heard. It drives me nuts not to be heard. The cartoon, as a form, allows me to be heard. I don't feel I've been heard the way I want to be heard in the theater and so there's no reason to be in it anymore for me. It doesn't make me hostile to theater or, other than at a personal level, hostile to critics.

The Times could use an op-theater page. There should be a page every week or every two weeks of people who aren't critics, other kinds of other writers in other forms writing, about their experience in the theater, whether they like this play or not like that play, writing about what they think of theater at the moment. In other words, trying to engage the reader's interest in theater so that people will not depend on what Frank or the rest of you say before they will go to a play.

Lynne Thigpen

Two people have said basically what I want to get to today. And it came from two artists, a playwright and a director, and there's no way to get around the fact that it is personal and it's something that we've talked around and under and over about critics and artists and my first and only important external critic, after myself, of course, because we're all critics, as an artist, as an actor is my director. That's it.

Therefore, at the very top I have to say that critics are irrelevant to the work I do. They are very relevant to the amount of time I have to show you my work.

The power of the critic—since I think it is absolutely personal when he talks about the work of artists—has not been addressed here, what it does to artists and how they work. And the only way I can get to talking about it, because it is emotional, is to tell you the people who have spoken so far who have touched on this.

Linda touched on it when she talked about the escalation of adjectives, not just the middle ground, because a middle ground sounds like we're looking for a median, an average. But the escalation of adjectives to describe or criticize the work and the language of vilification. Those two poles that an artist finds themselves between when they're showing their work are the most damaging to creation.

Actors bring their emotional, physical, vocal vocabulary to work on something—and hopefully intellect also, often ignored by critics. That is what is looked at, dissected sometimes, sometimes reported to the public. I would like to take that same way of dealing with a product and look at the critic's work because we never do.

We talk about the performance of authors in novels. I would like [to talk] about the performance of critics. I don't see why [villification] is necessary, when it's very possible to say this person should not have been cast in this role because I believe the role requires someone of a different stature, a larger stature, a taller stature to command the stage, to say that instead they have cast a gnome. It's not just saying bad actor. The escalation of adjectives, the language of vilification helps no one.

The colder personality is not just in the performers or the actors or the directors or the dancers or the musicians. It's also in the writing of critics.

We talk about it as a personality of the critic coming through in their writing but I think it is also the awareness of those critics that they are entertainers also. When that is talked to directly to them, they realize it is personal.

This may be unfair but yesterday when John [Simon] defended himself from direct criticism and basically a very sweeping indictment of what that person thought his work was, we had a physical and immediate example of what happens when people read reviews that do the same thing.

That is, the hushed silence after the gasp. We all know what I'm talking about. When we read a review that we feel vilifies something, does not give us a full picture or even inform us of what we're going to see, it's the, 'Uh, oh, my God.'

That's entertainment. It can also be informative but it is entertainment. John's response to that was personal because the criticism was personal. It was emotional. It was very direct. And I found it interesting to sit next to him. I'm very seldom sitting next to any of the critics who have critiqued my work. We do not have a venue in which to speak to them about it. It is not even possible for us to speak to them about when we have gotten criticism that we appreciated, as Anne talked about, and said helped us.

That does happen. It's not always that criticism slams what we do. We do not want to be told always that we are gods. We love that but we do not always want that. When there is something wrong and somebody points it out and we hadn't seen it, that doesn't go by us all the time.

I think that basically what I want to come out of the discussion afterwards is for an admission and the recognition of the personal nature of the criticism to the artists. I don't think that's been addressed. I don't that it's been admitted to and there are enough artists here to talk to critics to tell them about how we deal with, as Jules said, performing after laceration.

It must be done.

I wish that there were many, many more of you because if there were many, many more of you, we would have less to worry about, people would realize that it is an opinion from very erudite people, from people who know the theater and everything else but it is an opinion.

It's become law from certain quarters; law from The New York Times, especially, which is what Jules is talking about, the possibility to completely stop a creative force because it's not possible to be done there and then. And looking for other venues, moving your life because of that kind of power, I think, is devastating.

Lynne Thigpen

John Simon

You may have noticed that two critics in the last couple of days have come in for the most praise and they are Bernard Shaw and Kenneth Tynan. If you ask yourself what do these two critics have in common, the obvious thing is that they're both dead which is why, perhaps, I should take off my bulletproof vest. And possibly soon join their ranks.

But this is not a joke. For example, if Mr. Wetzsteon were better informed about the history of the theater, he would know that Bernard Shaw was a much hated person in his day. All kinds of venomous and vituperative things were written and said about him and this was simply because he was sharp and a tough critic.

But not only in his day, within recent human memory I, with these very ears, have heard Tyrone Guthrie give a long lecture in which he excoriated Bernard Shaw for being such a vicious, nasty critic, citing chapter and verse and this was, believe me, well after the man was dead.

Kenneth Tynan was so hated in England that he had to come to America. Not only that but he lost his job in England. Not only that but he was truly a despised and detested figure in all but a select circle.

I'm not particularly proud of many things that I've done, although I am of some and among those is the fact that when I wrote an obituary for Kenneth Tynan, both his wives, the present one and the past one, wrote me letters saying that mine was the best obituary.

I admire him enormously. I did then. I always will. But, as I say, I was always, in those days, very shocked how many times at parties I had to defend him (not that he needed my defense but I am hyperactive and I do those things).

For that very reason, I will now do something that's equally unnecessary and defend Frank Rich who has been attacked here and who, unfortunately, is not here to very ably defend himself.

I think, for whatever it's worth, that Frank Rich is the finest critic The New York Times has ever had and that includes Walter [Kerr]. He is as good a writer now at a very young age and I have often said that before 40 you cannot be a critic really. He, however, had to do that and did it extremely well but he's still not very far from 40, on the other side, and at the rate he's going and he's growing all the time and it's not just that he will say something relatively unimportant such as, "Oh, well, I loved "Four Baboons." Other people around didn't and maybe you're entitled not to."

What is important is that if you read his criticism carefully, you will see that it keeps improving and what's most important, you will see that the margin of reference keeps broadening and widening. He has in recent years brought to bear on his criticism a much greater knowledge of the other arts.

You will see references to the fine arts as in his review of Mitzhak Elias's latest venture in which he was able to bring in a lot of interesting art references and so on and so forth.

His musical knowledge seems to be increasing enormously. I've seen him at Tower [record store] and I'm very impressed with the records he was buying. All of this is relevant because theater critic or any kind of critic is much better if he knows other kinds of criticism and, indeed, if he knows other kinds of anything.

The greatest trouble and the greatest danger for a critic is to be blinkered and have tunnel vision and know only his field.

I have heard it said here by several people that the critic makes a terrible mistake if he becomes an entertainer. This may be true. But he makes an even more terrible mistake if he's not an entertainer. I think there's nothing worse than boring criticism. There have been some very decent critics who had perfectly good ideas and stood for wonderful values but who were so boring to read that nobody paid any attention to them. I will not name names.

This has never been the fault with our good critics. If you look at, not only the Tynans and the Shaws, but if you look at people like Brustein, who I think has always been a tough critic when he didn't wear too many hats, and who was very witty and very cutting and very devastating and very admirable. I was very proud to model myself from him.

This has also been true of Dwight MacDonald. By the way, I'm also a film critic for The National Review and you'll have to excuse me if I sometimes stray into film but I think one of the great mistakes we make is to separate film and theater. It would be a great step forward if the film world and the theater world could come closer together rather than pulling apart as they do.

Anyway, Dwight MacDonald, who was also one of my teachers and of whom it has been said that he was maligned by me in his funeral oration. I don't remember doing that but, if I did, I was merely in a friendly way paying him back for debt, which is when he very kindly introduced my first collection of criticism and he agreed to do the introduction. He wrote a wonderful introduction but through most of it, he was taking me to task for this fault, that fault and the other fault.

I think that's a great way to write an introduction and I think it's a great way to say a eulogy in which you also recall things that you perhaps disagree with. I think that's what keeps the spirit of criticism alive, even in funeral orations, or introductions to books.

Anyway. I think it is very important for the critic to be entertaining. I think it is a great mistake to be only entertaining and, if one is only entertaining, I think then one is at fault.

Let me give you an example from my own experience. Let me take one sentence, for example, that I wrote and that I'm sure some people objected to. Many years ago, I wrote about Morris Carnovsky when he was playing Lear in Stratford, Connecticut. I said, "Morris Carnovsky gives us a Lear who is both inches a king." I could have said that in many different ways. I could have said Mr. Carnovsky's too short, he is too stocky, he is too un-royal, he is too undignified. He lacks various kinds of stature, physical, spiritual, whatnot. And if I'd said that, perhaps, some of the people would not have objected. Who knows? They might have. They're good at finding fault.

On the other hand, I said it in what might be called an epigrammatic or a witty or, Lord help us, a nasty way. Well, maybe it was nasty but it made people sit up when they read it, even to the extent of resenting it but some, perhaps, to the extent of thinking about what this really meant.

I think it is by that kind of stimulating, yes, entertaining, yes, amusing, way of writing that a critic makes himself heard. That doesn't mean that he's right. That doesn't mean that even he necessarily believes in his divine right. But what he does believe in is that he has—or she—to be heard and that, alas or not alas, is the way of being heard. That was certainly the way of Shaw and that was certainly the way of Tyoan and that, many notches below, is my way, too, and I don't apologize for it.

I think the critic has many responsibilities but I think the one for the artist is, of all of them, the smallest and I will explain to you why I think so. Because it would be God damned arrogant on the part of the critic to tell the artist what to do. We have often heard at these meetings and everywhere else that criticism be two things that it isn't. It should be objective and it should be constructive. To which I say there are many, many kinds of critical mansions, there are many ways of writing criticism but the only two kinds that do not exist, have never existed are the objective and the constructive.

In most cases objective criticism means that someone whom you have slammed wishes that you hadn't slammed them and says John should be more objective. That's what it usually means. But if it means anything else, it is also nonsensical because the only thing that can be objective is a machine and we know now that even computers can't be objective. Nevertheless, in theory the machine at least might be able to be objective.

A human being cannot be. If he were he would be a robot, he would be a monster and I think he would drum himself out of humanity thereby. Of course, one must try to control one's subjectivity and one must try not to let it run away with one and I'm sure that I am often guilty of not succeeding in this control and I apologize for that. But I'm somewhat heartened by the fact that other people run away with their subjectivity, too, because part of being subjective is precisely that you cannot fully control that subjectivity because the moment you would fully control it, you would be objective and that is precisely what you cannot be, q.e.d.

As to being constructive, that I think is the supreme delusion and the supreme arrogance of all because what that would mean is that you would be telling the playwright or the director or the actor or the set designer or the composer or the costume designer or the lighting designer what he should have done. You really can't do that because if you could, you would be a lighting designer or a set designer or a composer or a writer or an actor or a playwright.

At best you can tell this person what you liked about the work or what you didn't and, more often, you end up saying what you didn't because such is the nature of criticism that you develop a critical habit, a critical stance and that, I'm afraid, is, grosso modo, a faultfinding stance because that's what you're being paid to do, that's what you're expected to do, that's what so much that you see calls for and you end up probably being overcritical.

I think that's bad but I think it's less bad than being undercritical and there are a great many reviewers and critics who for fear of being overcritical or for inability to be critical, end up being undercritical and I think that's a grievous error indeed.

I think, therefore, that the best you can do for the artist is to say what you see there, try to say the good things, try to say the bad things but not tell him constructively—if only you had made your third act the second act, if only you had eliminated this boring character over here and written a more interesting character over there.

That is supreme arrogance. No critic who is a mere critic and not a supreme playwright has any business doing that. That would be damned cheek and I, for one, refuse to do it and if I've sometimes done it, I truly apologize.

I think the critic does have other responsibilities which have not been brought out sufficiently. And above all, before I even go into this, I want to say two general things.

One—many people have said here and I couldn't agree with them more—that the one thing a critic truly must have is love for the theater and I will do what Hamlet does with Laertes. I will jump into the theater's tomb into which it is rapidly digging itself and I will say no man has loved this Ophelia or this theater more than I did. Forty brothers, 40,000 brothers, couldn't have loved it more.

This, I think, is true of every critic because no one, believe me— those of you who are will know it and those of you who aren't should know it—no one could go to the theater day after day, night after night, century after century without suffering agonies of bad plays, of bad everything.

That's not all there is but that's what there is most of. If you look at histories of theater, which too few people do, and if you do mathematics, which too few us can do (that includes me) you can nevertheless figure out that of the thousands and thousands of plays—let's say I'm using plays but I could also use performances, directions, anything you like—that have opened in the world since theater began, maybe one percent a year comes anywhere near surviving. Maybe one tenth of a percent really survives.

Therefore, there must be something terribly wrong with the kind of reviews for which I don't have any talent. But since Rex Reed has all the talent in the world for it, I leave it to him to say this is the greatest thing I've seen in years and the next day he writes this is the best play I've seen in months and the next day he writes this is the best play of the year without a doubt, even though it's February and so. This I cannot do but luckily others have the talent.

Anyway, Pauline Kael once upbraided me for taking this Olympian stance for writing criticism for some vague future instead of writing about the present and describing the thing as it is.

However, I've just heard people say today that Pauline didn't do any such thing and yet the dear woman prides herself on precisely that, describing things as they are at the moment. I said that along with Hans Magnus Enzensberger, a critic I admire enormously, I believe that posthumous reputation is more important than present reputation, that what people think of me today, whether they hate me or love me, and one has to be skeptical of love just as much as of hate, and [what] I try to do is unimportant. What is important is what remains of your work once you're gone and then something very different obtains.

You see, the Barbra Streisand, about whom you said that she was an albino aardvark, is no longer alive and neither are you alive and it doesn't matter, it doesn't hurt anybody's feelings anymore. But people coming in later years and seeing Barbra Streisand's movies, looking at them, say, "My God, she does look like an albino aardvark." And perhaps you said something useful.

There are other things. For example, if everybody raves about Peter Sellars, let's say, as a great director and you say, "I'm sorry, I think Peter Sellars is a total and utter phony and has no talent whatsoever," I think it will be encouraging for future generations who will also recognize, I think, this to be so to say, well, gee, there was someone around who did think Peters Sellars was a total and utter untalented phoney as we now hold true. How nice.

What is it I'm willing to take the brickbats and the potshots and the bullets and the whatever [for]? In the perhaps very deluded hope that the future will bear me out. If it doesn't, I gambled wrong and Pascal will be angry at me but what I can do?

I want to say just one more thing: Whom is the critic obligated to if not to his editors (which I think he's not) if not to the artist, which would be presumptuous, although I think he can be useful to the artist? For example, Jules Feiffer once in an interview to a newspaper said, "I read every critic, all of them. The one critic I never read is John Simon." Well, I figure this means one of two things. Either Jules Feiffer is one of those unserious people who allows his friends, who do read me, to make up his mind for him. I don't think he's such a namby-pamby fellow. I refuse to believe that. I think this must mean that he used to read me at some point and he didn't like what I said and then he stopped reading me. I think that is perfectly justified. Fine. If I have nothing to say to him, he should stop reading me. Unfortunately, I don't have that same privilege. When he writes a play, I have to see it.

Anyway, to get back to whom the critic is responsible, I say he's responsible to himself because if he's any kind of a critic, he is his own toughest critic possible, with the only possible exception of his wife, which I'm glad to say I have one of. With this kind of toughness he can criticize himself far better than his worst enemies can and if he's at all a critic, he will exercise that privilege.

I think his other responsibility is to a public, but not to *the* public, because every critic writes for a certain constituency and I don't feel that I can reach all readers. I'm happy to reach those that I can reach and to whom I'm useful, which does not include Jules Feiffer, but it's fine. Those people need it, want it, appreciate it and they write me letters from time to time and tell me so and that makes me very happy.

I do think it's the critic's further responsibility to be a discoverer which is sort of like the responsibility of the artist but not quite. The things that I'm proudest of are the cases where an artist has said to me either you have discovered me and helped make me, and this has happened a few times and I'm very grateful. Lina Wettmuller is a case in point. Or when an artist like Michael Frayn in an interview says, "John Simon taught me things about "Benefactors" that I didn't know myself." That is very touching and very encouraging and very invigorating and I'm grateful for it.

I think the critic is further obligated to his teachers. I think it very important that a critic should remember his teachers. I have had the privilege here at Harvard, both as a graduate and as an undergraduate, to have some marvelous teachers. Teachers like Harry Levine, Renata Pagiolli, Carl Vietor, Albert Guerard and a few others. And I learned heaps and heaps and heaps from them and it has always been one of my hopes and endeavors to be worthy of these teachers and to continue their work and perhaps pass it on to students either in a classroom or students who simply are students because they read you. I think a critic is first and foremost a teacher. That's what I used to be and that's what I think I still am in a different form.

Finally I think the critic does have a responsibility to the future. I do think the critic is an artist. I'm sorry that Ms. Bogart is only today beginning to consider this as a possibility but some of us have considered it as a possibility for a long time. We don't necessarily think that we're artists in the sense that Michaelangelo or Shakespeare or Stravinsky was an artist.

But we may think that we're artists in a humbler way, the way of a potter or, if I may be pretentious, a ceramicist. In that way I think we are artists. As such, I think we must, like all artists, worry about the future. We must leave something behind us, something that will be useful to the future even if it's decried in the present. In, however, an imperfect way, that has been one of my attempts. ■

Q & A ON THE ARTIST

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The Theater—Shifting Public

Moderator

TOM REGAN—Columnist, The Daily News, Halifax, Nova Scotia. 1992 Nieman Fellow. Former manager of a theater company in Canada.

Panelists

WILLIAM HONAN—Chief Cultural Correspondent, The New York Times

OYAMO—Playwright and teacher at the University of Michigan. Commissioned to write a play for the Working Theater Company of New York. Serves on the professional, nonprofit panel of the National Endowment for the Arts.

SYLVIE DRAKE—Chief theater critic of The Los Angeles Times since March 1991. Studied at directing at the Pasadena Playhouse.

RENE BUCH—A founder of Repertorio Espanole with Gilberto Faldivar in New York. Company has won three Obies. Guest director at The Actors Place, Folger Shakespeare Festival, the Milwaukee Repertory and Juilliard.

Tom Regan

It was intriguing for me today to read John Frohnmayer's piece in The New York Times, where he was sort of replying to Dan Quayle and the whole family values question and where he pointed out that there are 170 ethnic groups in the United States, each with its own traditions and cultures and beliefs and that it's time for dialogue, not time for ideology.

That for me is part of the issue of the shifting public and part of what people in the theater and that critics have to deal with. Part of the way that we can overcome the isolation between communities is through theater.

William Honan

Bill Kovach posed a most provocative question for us to deal with: Should the critic treat new voices in theater differently from the way they treat the establishment? That question is just about as loaded as General Schwarzkopf and his staff seated in a jeep. We do not live in a static society. We live in a society of great change and so one wants to answer that question in the affirmative. Yes.

Our media today should not be governed by the sensibilities and the intellect of a Washington Irving or a Benjamin Franklin. Our society has matured and gone on many generations beyond those voices and mentalities and, of course, we have a right to expect that from our media, which, of course, includes every aspect of journalism and that's criticism, too. We should have every right to expect that they would represent a modern sensibility.

I would say my first inclination is to answer yes, we should have new voices in criticism, new voices in journalism and the media in general which we hope would be more attuned to the new voices in the theater and the other arts.

On the other hand, I am constrained to say no, emphatically no. If what is meant by the question is a kind of aesthetic affirmative action. Now, I'll try to give you an example, a specific example, of what I mean which comes from my own experience.

Five or six years ago I happened to be writing a series of critical essays about the theater for the Sunday Arts and Leisure section of The New York Times.

At that time, I was greatly stimulated to see that something called the Woza Africa! Festival was going to perform at Lincoln Center and this was to be a festival of four plays written by black South Africans. Well, at that point, we had heard, of course, from Athol Fugard in the theater, we had heard from Nadine Gordimer as an essayist and a novelist, we'd heard from a number of white South Africans but this was to be the first opportunity for American audiences to come face to face with black sensibility in the theater.

And, so, I was quite thrilled by what seemed to be coming our way. I felt that it could be as important as when—I think back in 1964, if that's the year when Fugard's "The Blood Knot" was first performed before American audiences. It could perhaps be even as important as the first appearance of the Irish Abbey Theatre Players in1911.

So, I was prepared for a very, very important theatrical and cultural experience. When I saw the plays, unfortunately, I found that they had not come anywhere near the standards of Fugard or the Abbey Players. They were presented with great gusto, with infectious good humor, with some extraordinary tribal chanting and dancing and singing, all of which was interesting. But, unfortunately, all of the characters and the situations and the themes of the plays were obviously contrived to prove a didactic point. They were calculated to serve a political agenda rather than to satisfy a craving to know more of life, which I take to be the business of the arts.

Now, God knows, I was in favor of that political agenda. I thought that the minority rule in South Africa was a mon-

strous regime. It appeared at that time there was going to be a violent clash, there were going to be rivers of blood and the horrifying thing at that time was that all of the weapons of mass destruction were in the hands of this small devilish minority.

Yet, here we had voices from what looked like the side that was going to take the greatest beating in what was to come. One of the essays that I wrote at that time was about that festival and I compared the plays with the 1911 arrival of the Abbey Theatre to New York City.

There, if you recall, one of the plays presented was John Millington Synge's, "The Playboy of the Western World." I know you're all familiar with it but essentially what it told was the story of a young boy who comes to an isolated village in Ireland and brags that he has murdered his father. Well, far from being put in prison or turned over to the authorities or treated as an outcast, he is lionized, he's accepted, he's championed by the community.

Now, the Irish nationalist critics of the play at that time said that Synge had simply done an illustration of the British propaganda line, which was that the Irish were murderous hooligans incapable of self-rule and, if you didn't know it, that play proved it.

Well, you can understand how they took that point of view but, although Synge himself was a passionate nationalist at that time, he was guided by an artistic rather than a political sensibility. That was what moved him.

I want to read the last paragraph of the essay that I wrote at that time because it summarizes what I felt then and what I feel very strongly today. Having made the comparison, I said:

> Is the comparison fair? In scrutinizing the Woza! Africa Festival in the light of plays written 70 or 80 years earlier, in different political circumstances, are we being precious, small minded aesthetes so preoccupied with narrow, artistic concerns that we miss the wonder of being able to witness a whole festival of plays by a rarely heard from and brutally suppressed group of writers? After all, the present plays have not come to us from a society that has had the leisure or the peace of mind to cultivate the arts.
>
> These plays are hastily scratched out battle reports born by messengers who have run a fiery gauntlet between harsh censors and heavily armed police on the one side and militant and frequently blood thirsty insurgents on the other.
>
> Should we not temper our criticism with this knowledge and approach the Festival as did a critic for another publication with the conviction that it was, "bound to be compelling regardless of what was on stage?"
>
> There is one and only one honest answer to that question. No matter how moving or plausible a case may be made for excusing these works from rigorous examination and measurement against the standards of art, it would be a monstrous insult to judge them that way.
>
> The oppressed have never been relieved, chains have never been parted, by holding men and women to lesser account. If any attitude plays into the hands of Pretoria, it is not fair minded criticism of the culture of the oppressed but the liberal chic of condescendingly celebrating inferior work.
>
> Criticism is an exchange between equals. Indeed, the right and the responsibility to criticize is the chivalric code of free men and women everywhere and it is with this courtesy that we welcome the South African players to these shores.

OyamO

People, the public, move about the earth constantly. We're all either full- or part-time refugees of some sort, some voluntarily, some involuntarily, some rich, some wretchedly poor. What we each bring with us is universal. We bring our fundamental human needs.

We each need reasonably adequate food, clothing, shelter and caring, as in love. We each need some means of material support. We each need simple justice and dignity and we each need to be accepted as a member of a human community. We each need a faith or a moral principle or some belief system that sustains a common respect for the fundamental needs of all human beings because any of us could be in dire need at any time.

So, if shifting means to change or move from one position to another, the public, a.k.a. humanity, does not move from its position of fundamental human need. The fundamental human needs never seem to shift but social, political, economic and cultural circumstances do shift and I think that's what we're supposed to be talking about today.

How do we, as artists and critics, deal with fundamental human needs in a shifting social equation? I was never very good at equations so I promise not to come up with a correct answer.

Truthfully, I'd much rather be home working on my next play, which is about the Memphis sanitation strike in 1968 which culminated in MLK's [Martin Luther King's] assassination. The play isn't about MLK, however. His murder overshadowed the story of the men who actually collected the garbage under inhuman conditions and who finally initiated the strike that ultimately affected the history of our country.

I won't tell you what it is going to be because I don't know yet but there is a character named Jones who has a problem with language. Jones was the original organizer and leader of those garbage collectors. He was a poor Southern born black man and poorly educated in the formal sense. His articulation was generally ridiculed by all the more educated Negroes and white people who were involved in the event of the strike.

But Jones's non-standard language rituals were not acceptable to others and, therefore, Jones was pushed further and further into the background and he eventually lost the leadership of the strike and the union to those others. He perished in obscurity.

I sometimes feel like a fugitive from someone else's fears. There are still some powerful people who try to control language and not just the language of today's less enslaved Africans, but anyone's language that does not conform to the wishes of those who selfishly desire to control language, language in the larger sense, as culture, not mere words but the body of collective mists that form the basis of universal human civilization.

The Irish playwright, Brian Friel, knows what I mean. He and others found it necessary to take the English language and make it speak Irish, speak to their fundamental human needs.

I once refused to speak to a conference of critics at the O'Neill Center in the mid-Eighties because I had not yet gotten over how two or three years earlier a New York critic, who hated one of my plays, attacked my very name, OyamO. The critic felt I had no right to name myself, to define myself in a language of my own invention. Maybe that has something to do with criticism and the shifting public but maybe not.

I can accept the fact that the critic hated the play and was excessively vicious in her attack. Some people like to use night sticks. Critics are known to do nasty things sometimes and such nastiness is understandable given the nature of the profession and I hasten to add that I say that with all due compassion.

But, ultimately, critics just can't have their way with our bodies of work and we must not allow them to have their way with the language of the theater, the culture of the evolving theater. It's not theirs to control. It belongs to us, the artists who offer it to everyone.

It's our job as artists to control the culture of the theater and to endure critical observations. I don't care to say what is good art and what is bad art because I know there is a difference and the difference presents itself to me in the doing of the art. But both good and bad do exist. Can't have one without the other.

And I would rather see more good than bad. I would simply hope that the definitions of good and bad can be disassociated from those people who wish to enforce a language that advances an exclusive social and political agenda under the guise of learned, aesthetic analysis and judgment. Language has something to do with freedom.

I don't know what ethnic minority means. I don't know what affirmative action means. I don't know what nontraditional casting means. I don't know what multicultural participation means. I'm still at a loss on what political correctness means.

Like Jones in Memphis we all seem to improvise upon the language. My ignorance of the above sound bites surely has something to do with criticism and the shifting public or perhaps not. But I have one final thing to say anyway.

The arts in America are under nuclear attack by forces who intend their self interest to prevail, and I don't mean critics who I hope will close ranks with us and use their considerable power in defense of the theater and of arts and freedom in general.

We need to buy more pencils and brushes and move against the enemy. Why should we behave like ancient Christians in these modern media arenas? Why, indeed, shouldn't we simply shatter the genitals of those who wish to both exterminate art and do away with the First Amendment?

But we also better take a good look at our own betrayals in this censorship business. We complain about restraints recently put upon the NEA but there is plenty of existing censorship in the American theater establishment.

TCG's yearly survey of the seasons and theaters across America shows that all theaters tend to look alike with few exceptions. They could almost trade seasons like so many baseball cards. Theaters reflect, interpret and represent the cultural and political society in which they exist. The American theater looks like the rest of America, problematic. All kinds of artists are largely excluded from the American theater, Native Americans, white males who are politically inspired. Asians, Latinos, blacks, women of all races and colors especially those over 35, gay activists and any others who have a theatrical language that is different, that refuses to be controlled by the controllers.

Is it coming down to a choice between centralized and decentralized censorship? If we'd been doing ourselves in, should we complain so loudly when others do us in?

Sylvie Drake

I want to register some amazement at the New-York-center tenor of this conference and the fact that I am the only critic on any panel who comes from west of the East Coast. Theater has been decentralized in this country for some time now and I think some of its problems originate from the fact that this is not widely recognized. If you had wanted to see "Millennium Approaches," which is part of "Angels in America," it was seen on the West Coast, both in San Francisco and Los Angeles, in its early form.

A lot of you could have come and seen "The Kentucky Cycle," which took I think many New Yorkers and East Coasters by surprise by winning the Pulitzer. I think we have Richard Christiansen who came and Bill Henry who came to see the show and it was an astonishing experience, which I wish more of you would have shared.

Having said this, I want to address two points that Jules Feiffer brought up this morning. I felt somewhat hermetically sealed in a very New York centric series of discussions.

One of the things that he brought up is the disappearing audience. I think the thing that we failed to mention in the disappearing audience is the cost of theater tickets and we can lay that, not only at the feet of the recession, but also at the feet of greedy landlords, certainly on Broadway and a lot of other places.

The other point that I want to bring up, at the cost of being a little parochial myself, is that coming from another town that is known as a one-newspaper town, my newspaper did try to initiate something to create a little bit more of a debate. When this was first brought up, I think we critics all fought it quite strongly but in retrospect I don't think it was such a bad idea and that is a forum in the Monday paper where a critic's review can be counterpunched. They call it that and it is in a way an opportunity for the artists or the supporters of the artists to air a different point of view. I have learned to like it quite a lot when it is used intelligently and well.

I'm going to try to deal with something that has not really been defined, which is the issue of the shifting public. I'm not sure what that means. But coming from LA, which is certainly the capital of shift, I suspect it may have something to do with that very suspect multiculturalism, which is an oddly amorphous idea, and after the Los Angeles riots I think that what we have seen is that we don't have

multiculturalism in a city like Los Angeles in spite of its great diversification of cultures.

We have mono-cultures in search of identity, in search of a way to function in the American society, whatever that is. It has provoked in me anyway a great deal of thinking about what this is all going to mean in terms of the arts, certainly, and in terms of the theater.

I want to talk a little bit about the one theater we had in Los Angeles where I do believe a multicultural audience in the best sense of that word was being developed and was beginning to happen. Unfortunately, the theater no longer exists.

It was the Los Angeles Theater Center and it lasted for six very interesting, crazy, exciting years and the energy that you could feel in that audience, in the lobby of what was essentially a four-theater complex, was unmatched by that of any other theater in town and for that matter not many other theaters that I've been in.

Bill Bushnell, who was the artistic director of that theater, was probably more of a gambler than a visionary but he gambled well. He took the right chances and he took chances on giving people a place to create.

We had in that theater an Asian-American lab—mind you, all of these are entirely mono-cultural—an Asian-American lab, an African-American lab, women's workshop, Latino lab, which is probably the most prominent.

These developed pieces and put them on. They attracted other artists. We had theater that was new and different mixing with productions of plays by Tennessee Williams, new American plays by Caucasian writers. It was a jumble but it was a very healthy jumble.

The city of Los Angeles plunked a great deal of money into their plays with the idea of redeveloping Spring Street and making that the centerpiece. It was a very good idea. The community redevelopment agency was supposed to follow through. They never did. As a result the city kept pumping more money into the theater but nothing ever happened around it. We still had a lot of drug addicts and criminal elements and homeless people and an unsavory atmosphere around the theater which never kept audiences from coming.

But one day the city decided that it was tired of pumping money into this place, even though it was clearly the only place in Los Angeles where these cultures did come together and the audience that had started to come there was beginning to feel comfortable and safe among other cultures, not just its own.

If a black person or a brown person or a white person came to that theater to see something of particular interest to them, they eventually started spilling over into the other theaters and this is what I thought was so healthy and such a hopeful sign. It's that they were not coming any more just to see what might be of interest to them but really mingling and creating a subscription audience that was very mixed and very interesting and very exciting.

It also transcended economic barriers and it transcended generational barriers. You had older people, younger people mixing. It was just a wonderful place to be and when the city pulled out, after pouring $27 million into that theater, because it refused to put in about a million a year into maintaining the building and decided that the theater company had to foot that bill, the place collapsed. I'm oversimplifying to a degree but certainly that was the principal factor that destroyed the theater.

I had never seen that kind of an audience anywhere else in Los Angeles. What made me so hopeful about the Los Angeles Theater Center is that it was the one place where the audience seemed to keep coming and feel good about it. When it folded, the artists, we knew, would find other places to work eventually. That audience will never feel comfortable somewhere else again and that was a great loss.

What has been happening, at least in my neck of the woods, is that we are seeing more and more performance art which seems to be in some respects a substitute for new theater or theater that will allow people of different cultures to express themselves.

But it is fraught with uncertainty and with very shifting standards and it prompts many more questions than I have answers for. We know less and less what standards to apply in terms of evaluating the work. I think that it is always easy to see when there is discipline behind it and when there isn't. It is less easy to see how nourishing that kind of theater will be or if it even has a real future.

Is this a step in the evolution towards another form of theater? For a long time I thought Los Angeles was our best hope for a perhaps interesting new hybrid that might be influenced and inspired by some of the Pacific rim cultures, acknowledging I think the egocentric tradition of theater that we have in this country because we certainly cannot throw away the baby with the bathwater. We need to preserve what we have and go on to new forms.

William Honan

OyamO

Sylvie Drake

As Louis Revere said, "there is no golden rule. There is room for everything." What it has to be, ultimately, is compelling. It has to not only bring the audience in but keep the audience coming back and that's where I am not so sure that I see any kind of a pattern yet.

Rene Buch

The New York Times, which usually gives us a good review, can give us a very bad review and it doesn't interfere at all with the audience that is visiting us. We only gained audiences with The New York Times in the last play that we've been doing, a Garcia Marquez play. That play has sent us 30 percent of the house, of Americans who don't speak Spanish, and because our plays are all in Spanish we don't play Americans. Thanks to the generosity of the Wallace Foundation, we have now assistance of infra-red simultaneous transmission for certain plays. We hope to do it for all the plays and that has helped with the American audiences.

Everybody has been talking about a monolithic animal, which is the American theater, as if it were one thing and I don't agree with that. I feel that the conception that I've heard here [is that] through critics and through artists [you] are taking an attitude toward the theater which is, in a sense, similar to the family values of Mr. Quayle.

I've been in Los Angeles and I know Mr. Bushnell and I knew the job he was doing and I know Luis Valdez and we've had meetings of all the Hispanic theaters in this country and there are about 164 of them in the whole country and that is a minority that is totally unknown, the same way that our repertory is totally unknown. Mr. Simon has reminded me of a magnificent play under the same foreign disdain of "Moreto" which I don't think has ever been done here and that he likes.

Rene Buch

Going back to the critics, I think that if you take an attitude and you do a public thing, if you put yourself on a platform, you can expect anything and I think it should be so. I think the critic has every right to tell us, to insult us, to do anything. At the same time you must have not the arrogance, but the interest to keep on doing what you're doing. That, to me, is being an artist.

I don't like ghettos. I don't like to be cobbled. I don't like that, "Oh, here comes the poor little Spic, let's be generous to him". That I won't buy. We have to be who we are and when we accept who we are, the whole country will have to accept us. I've been so moved by the speech that I can hardly speak.

I come from Cuba and the black influence in Cuba has been part of all my life. The first time that I saw theater that really got me was when I saw Vinette Carroll playing at Yale in 1950. I had never seen the power of an actress on the stage. It was a physical emotion that she carried through and it has happened with many black actors that they are an inspiration for my company.

When I go guesting and I work with American actors, I suddenly see the differences. I suddenly see that what I've been working for has very little to do with the way American theater is done. It's not that I do anything different. It's just that we think different. We move different. Space is different.

And the festival that you saw and that you said wasn't perfect in the sense of structure—probably there was more structure in those dances than there was in the whole play. That to me is where the thing is. Theater is everything. It is not a well-made play.

At the same time, I don't want to throw the baby out with the bathwater. I think that the European tradition is enormous and rich and it's mine. When I played in Spain and I played Calderon in a Seventeenth Century corral, it was like playing at the Globe. At the end there was a roundtable and [a professor] came to me and said, "How do you dare do Calderon without the Castillian accent?" I said, "You might have invented the language but you gave it to me. It's mine".

I'm terrified about the political situation and arts in this country at the moment—the repulse of culture, the idea of the melting pot seen through the eyes of MacDonald's. I hope that we can find a way in which we can be ourselves and that I can have the freedom to be myself. I don't like ethnicity. Everybody is ethnic. When they say you are ethnic, I say, "And what are you?" Ugh.

I have actors who have worked with me 20, 17, 15, even one year. It is the greatest thing in the world. I don't believe that an actor is good in one role and not so good in the second and very bad in the third.

For that you have to have an idea of who is the director and how to achieve [what] that actor doesn't give you today that he gave you last week. If you are aware and you demand of yourself as much as you demand of your actors or your technicians or your designers, you're going to get different things and they're going to be different actors.

During the fall of France, Jouvet and his company were playing in Havana and they couldn't get out. They played in Havana for about six months. I went to see everything that they did. That is the model for my company. All the actors played every role and that's one of the reasons why, in my company, small roles are well played. Usually when you job in, you don't get a good actor for a small part. In my company, because they are paid and they are there the whole year, they take the part and besides there is a high moral attitude that we're doing something that nobody else is doing.

That, I think, is our shifting public as we're getting more American. ■

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Institutional Theater

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Q & A

Brustein—I think the argument is joined. Now I'd like to call upon [the panelists] to question each other.

Henry—It seems to me there are two core problems.

One is to address Todd London most directly. The process is certainly very important to the creation of art but the process is meaningless without the product. If you're doing it for yourself, it is not art. It's therapy. And if you're doing it for the public, it is done through the medium of the product.

In the end one cannot expect that journalists serving large audiences are going to be ignorant of or de-emphasize the product which is really what the record, the chronicle of artistic development over the centuries, is about.

The other core problem for every theater, institutional or commercial, is that the public doesn't like what most theater is doing most of the time. Now, the real problem is getting bigger audiences. And the more the work represents a kind of artistic or creative departure, the harder it is usually to find that audience. Occasionally there is something that is wildly innovative that also manages to resonate. More often, people see only the strangeness and it takes them quite a while, if ever, to get to the pleasure principle.

Critics are, I think, understandably a little resentful that they are deep down expected to be the largest part of the marketing mechanism for theaters. This is especially true in the commercial theater where straight plays arrive on Broadway dead on arrival, not because they're bad, although most of them are, but because there is no underlying audience for any straight play unless it's by Neil Simon or starring a movie star.

Producers bring these shows in and expect critics, by responding to them positively, to create an audience where there isn't any and similarly in the institutional theater the subscribers basically are, a lot of them, people who are civic minded and they go to the theater because it's good for you.

But they don't necessarily, all of them, go because they love the particular theater's work. You get some subscribers who do but I admit in too many institutional theaters listening to the conversation around me to believe that all of those people are there every time because they actually are admiring what's going on. They think this is wholesome and constructive. It's like going to church or voting.

The single-ticket buyers are gotten there by and large by word of mouth and printed publicity and the printed publicity is mostly the reviews and, in effect, those single-ticket buyers are the difference between survival and disappearance for the vast majority of these theaters.

And the theater has turned to the critics and expect them to create an audience by finding the good. That would be a noble goal but it is not the way we cover anything else. We don't have that kind of yoked-and-tandem approach to any of the other institutions we cover. Maybe that is what American journalism should be about but it's not. It's about a feisty, peevish independence.

It may be that part of the reason why you haven't found the sorts of critics you most admire writing for daily newspapers is because what they do comes out of a tradition other than the journalistic tradition and no newspaper is going to hire a theater critic whom it cannot eventually reassign to cover fires and obituaries.

Brustein—I'm the moderator so I reallyshouldn't say anything but at the risk of sounding like the Umpire Strikes Back here, let me simply pose a question.

Bill is clearly representing the public, primarily, almost exclusively in the way he talks about reviewing. He has not really said very much about art. I'm sure he has, perhaps, strong ideas about the artists that he criticizes, analyzes and evaluates but mostly we've heard about the public and its right to spend its dollars, as it were, in ways that are thrifty and satisfying.

This brings up the question. Does the critic lead or does he or she follow the public? That's a question I think that probably has been leveled at Todd.

London—I think there are ways the public can be led and that's in this idea of recontextualizing what the theater does. I mean, you can say that theater is not about process, it's about product and you can make that —

Henry—That isn't quite what I said. I said the process is meaningless without the product.

London: That's right. But the product is also part of a larger context. It's part of a larger process and it's the sort of story that gets told about numerous enterprises in this society. We follow training in baseball. That's a story, training. The trade. We don't cover casting in the theater, right? But we cover the trades in sports and so on.

So, it's because we see it as either or, we see it as product or process. It isn't such a radical idea for journalists to just tell the story in a different way that leads or asks the audience to re-envision it.

I just want to say one other thing, though. This idea that process equals therapy is outlandish to me. I mean it's a big leap from talking about the sociology or the culture of an institution or an art form and talking about it as therapy.

Henry—I'm not saying that being aware of one's process is mere therapy. I am saying that putting all of this emphasis internally, in essence saying that the product either is not the most important thing or is not to be judged by anyone outside the process meaningfully, that the true judges of the product are the people in the process and only the people in the process, that is a therapeutic approach to art.

Akalaitis—But no one's saying that. No one has said that here.

Henry—No one has said that here.

Wojewodski— First of all, I try not to make a distinction between the artists and the audience. I think what an institutional theater is there to do and, in fact, what justifies an institutional theater is that it delivers resources directly to the artists who are members of the community. The artistic impulse rises up out of the community and is delivered back to the community in rather explicit theatrical terms.

I think that an institution's success is, first of all, measured by its ability to deliver resources to the artistic community. Otherwise, it is merely a producing organization, rather than something that is centered around creative impulse.

As far as the public not liking it, you know, I've spent about half of my life producing—I mean, half of my life now and yes, half of that time—producing and directing plays that the public hasn't liked for centuries. When I would do a production, say, of "Lady from the Sea" by Henrik Ibsen in Baltimore in 1985, by the time our 15,000 subscribers or whatever the number was at that point, and another 5,000 or 7,000 people had seen the play, more

Baltimoreans saw that production than did Norwegians in Ibsen's lifetime.

The relative success or failure of that play should not have to do with its ability to renew the subscriber or to allow the subscriber by word of mouth to tell his or her friends that they might come to see that play.

Gerard—But doesn't that underscore the very point that we're making—that things tend to go on in spite of criticism. You can say it's in spite of criticism or as an adjunct to criticism. I think the point we're making as journalists is that in many ways we are out there doing something different. We're not part of your community. We have different responsibilities, different people pay our bills and the very fact that you're putting on plays that people over centuries have hated, simply, it seems to me, underscores the value or the lack of value of what we do and the continuation of the art form.

Let me ask one question of the two of you, though. You said that the art that your institutions create comes out of the artistic impulse of the community. I'm not going to put JoAnne on the spot because of that because she's in a different situation from the two of you but in terms of two non-profit institutions that are constituencies of universities, I wonder if you might address which communities and which artistic impulses you're pointing out there.

Brustein —Let me try to answer that and at the same time address JoAnne's point about subscription audiences, a point that for years I supported and no longer do.

I think subscription audiences or some form of subscription might be the answer to the question that we are addressing here, which is how to liberate ourselves from the thrall of good-or-bad criticism.

In the same way, the difficult works of theaters can reach the audiences and can reach that subscription audience, which becomes not just such a civic-minded supporter of your work in order to feel good as if they're going to church, but rather someone who comes to your productions with excitement, prepared to be challenged by them, not necessarily to like them, but to argue with them, to be provoked by them and engage in dialogue with you from play to play, which is exactly the way your productions should be viewed and not as single hits or flops.

Henry—The issue is not whether it's difficult or not. That is sometimes the problem in getting the audience. But the issue for critics is more often whether it's any good in the execution or not. Very often it's an interesting undertaking that in some way falls short. Sometimes it's un-interesting undertaking that falls short.

Akalaitis—I really believe in subscription and I believe in it the way Bob talks about it. Subscribers, ideally, are a part of a community. They are part of the community of the theater and I have been in theaters where I've been inspired by the response of a subscription audience.

I went to see Robert Woodruff's production of "The Skin of Our Teeth" at the Guthrie and I thought it was brilliant. I thought it was a wonderful production. And I was sitting next to a couple of ladies who were clearly disturbed by it, clearly didn't like it. But they said, "Well, we don't like this but the last play was really terrific." They will come back. They will come back because they support the Guthrie and they're not there for sort of churchgoing. I think more people go to Broadway out of a sort of duty to be entertained. It's called church entertainment and they have to spend a lot of money and they have to get baby-sitters and the car gets broken into.

It's harder to do all that than it is to go, you know, to take the subway to institutional theater, parking privileges, restaurants, newsletters.

Rose—It seems to me that to some extent we're talking about the theater community or who the theater serves. JoAnne's remark that she thought a subscription audience, she thought these people were dull. I'm not out of sympathy with that. I mean, having worked in the theater, every time you work on something difficult in particular, you think, who are the morons out there who aren't going to understand this? Why are we doing this? Why don't they get it? Why don't they this and that?

And, you have Stan's remark about Ibsen. People today, people working in the theater, not just critics, will speak blithely and with some contempt of Ibsen and this is because they've seen bad Ibsen productions. The guy's a genius. Let's not blame it on Ibsen.

But a lot of people don't have any idea of this and I guess what I'm trying to say is there seems to be—and I'm not saying this about anybody on this panel in particular, I'm speaking of conversations I've heard in the theater - the theater artistic directors that I know and the directors, playwrights, etc. seem to feel the need to believe that they are really speaking to The Community. Now, they don't exactly say what that is.

Theater is not a popular art like the movies. It's not a popular entertainment mode like television. Most people that I know in it, not everyone seems to be trying to justify their interest in it by saying that the culture needs it. This country should support the arts because the arts are a vital part of this culture.

Vital part of this culture in what way? Do we feed anybody? I think, what I believe and the reason I care about the theater—and I care about the theater—is not because it does some good things for people but because it is a human expression that has been manifesting for thousands of years. It says something mysterious to us. It continues to try to say something to us about human life and human nature. I find this fascinating and valid.

In every production I go to—and I see productions that are bad by any objective criteria—I feel some responsibility to an audience. I don't want to say, well, don't go see this one because it's bad.

I saw a production of "The Love of Don Perlimplin" by people who by any objective standards had no business doing it and I sat there all the way through it and I thought, "My God. This play is a masterpiece. My God. What a great play." And I came out thinking, "Well, if I thought it was a masterpiece watching that production, the production had something to do with it."

I saw "Electra," again a small theater who don't have the people trained to do classical theater vocally or stylistically and it was berserk. It was nuts. It was like "Electra" done by clowns. It sort of beckoned "Electra." And I sort of sat there going, "I must be crazy. I really like this. I must be nuts."

And I walked out and a woman behind me who had been sitting with another critic, I heard her say, "That was the worst thing I ever saw." And I thought, Oh, God. Oh, God. And I'm going to tell people to go see this and they're going to all hate me. But there was life in it. There was something going on in it. I thought it was amazing. I thought it was amazing. It's out of the bag. Now you all know. It was an astonishing production and the mess of it was part of its astonishness.

That's why I go to the theater and that's what I presume the audience will want from the theater. I mean the most arrogant thing you do when you're a critic is you assume that people are going to think what you think. You assume that you represent other people. It's just your opinion. Who gives a damn?

You have to presume that what you are seeing and reacting to is something other

people will see and react to. And my feeling is there's always something that's kind of amazing going on, something enjoyable, something to learn and I basically want to run up to my audience of readers like I would run out to friends and say, "Look. This is really interesting. This is really amazing. It's kind of strange but it's amazing." Or, "this is great." Or, "well, it doesn't quite work but there are interesting things going on in it."

And the only thing critics have to say is "no"? This is the thing that I disagree with Todd about. At a point you have to say no. If you can't say no, your yeses are no good. They are without meaning and I think what they have to say no to is something that Bob touched on.

A theater has a philosophy of what they're trying to do. They have principles. They have standards. They have a message. It is not my business to try and pass judgment on what they are or are not trying to do and whether they should or should not be trying to do that.

It is my business to try and understand it and say, well, I don't think they did what they meant to do. In their contract with the audience, I don't believe they quite fulfilled it. And this is why and if they meant to fulfill, why are they doing X, Y and Z?

Then I think you have to say, look, if you're in the game, you have to be in the game. You've made a contract with your audience. Here we are. Be square with us. And that's about the only place I feel like I can actually legitimately say no.

London—I just want to bring up something that I've been thinking about because I saw part of this PBS series on creativity and then I looked at the book and one of the sections was on creativity in children. There was one episode that talked about the creativity killers and they were surveillance, evaluation, competition, rewards and overcontrol. I think there's one other one that I'm missing.

I'm really moved by what JoAnne said about this idea of finding the space to do this work and take these risks and create new things and there needs to be some way either of eliminating the critical no or the critical voice or the critical mind from this space or of re-thinking what criticism means in terms of reviewing to allow for a world in which this kind of over surveillance and evaluation and competition and rewarding doesn't happen.

So, I don't really think it's about disliking something and I happen to disagree with you, too, Lloyd. I think a lot of artists really do want criticism. They don't just want to be gods.

Rose—Okay. Fine. I have met artists who are like this but they still always remember the smallest thing. No, obviously the most moving thing that can be said to a critic is an artist saying, well, I read your review and you really got it. There is no higher praise to a critic than hearing that.

Q.—What can you do about the fact that you need to have the reviews, I suppose, by the most important critic and you don't like that idea and then you have to take ads quoting the most important critics and others? Recently, Paramount Pictures, I think it was, pulled ads, from a newspaper because they didn't like something about the way the critic handled that particular film. What do you think about the possibilities of this?

Akalaitis—One thing is to be creative about advertising. There was a policy at the Public Theater that we do not advertise in The Village Voice because it doesn't bring anybody to the theater. I said, well, how do you know that? How do we know? We don't know that. So, we figured out that there's certain work that happens at the theater that really people who read the Village Voice would be very responsive to and, indeed, there seems to be a relationship to that kind of advertising.

Another thing that we have started to doing is advertising in Afro-American newspapers, not just for plays that are about a so-called black experience or, you know, so-called multicultural experience. It seemed sort of zany. It seemed sort of ghettoizing an audience and work and also in the Spanish speaking newspapers also, that just because we're doing a Lorca play, so we'll put, in that ad, we'll put a picture of Gloria Foster and then in The New York Times ad there's a picture of a white person.

Brustein—Can I speak about an experiment that we've tried this year? What we did this year was to find ways for us to provide materials about our plays through an expanded version of our newsletter, dramaturgical materials by experts in the field and also by people who were invited to talk about the background of the plays and to criticize.

And we published the criticism, good or bad, in the newsletter. It appeared after the play's run, so it had no impact on the box office but it was just another view from people outside of the local community. And we disseminated something like 150,000 copies of this magazine. That has been a very successful experiment.

Kroll—How could you be surprised that the box office champ at the Guthrie Theater was "Guys and Dolls?" It would be astonishing if that were not the case. And how could you imply that there's something wrong with that?

Now, "Guys and Dolls" was included by no less a critic than Eric Bentley in his wide ranging anthology of classic theater and he left out a lot of very distinguished American playwrights. As long as so-called theater intellectuals—not that I'm accusing you of being such—are going to be snobbish about things like "Guys and Dolls," that's just as bad as some hack journalist being snobbish or not understanding about Beckett. I'll ask myself this in the form of a question—how do you see the job of critic in the theater? I see that job as trying to persuade Joe Zilch that Beckett and Genet are really part of his life and he should appreciate this. He may not realize it but it's true. At the same time persuading Bob Brustein that he should appreciate "Guys and Dolls." I think that's what writing in the mass media is all about.

Brustein—I didn't mean to imply that that was wrong. I simply meant to point out that the lines between what constitutes mass appeal productions and the more esoteric or arcane work of the developmental theaters gets fuzzier and fuzzier. In fact, I saw that production of "Guys and Dolls" and it was wonderful and I thought the Guthrie should be doing it.

Q.—I hear, "create an environment together." Now, I'm one of those daily newspaper critics and it is very, very difficult to do. I've tried to do it and you just can't get into it. How can we do it?

London—I wish I knew. It's hard. You have to generate so much copy. You have to write all the time. You have to see so much theater. It's hard to sit down with your editors. So, what I'm saying is you sit down with them and you talk to them and let's talk about what other stories there are here.

Rose—Why is [writing for a daily newspaper] more of a problem?

Akalaitis—It's the power. This is what corrupts all relationships between the critic and the people they're criticizing and what makes the theater so justifiably angry. And people say, " who will criticize the critics." Well, I mean, the fact is the critics can say pffft and they always have the last word, good or bad. There's nothing to be done about it. A letter to the editor doesn't matter.

Rose—I came out of the Washington theater community and my feeling is that I avoid hanging out with them, not because, you know, I don't like them or this or that or I feel it would corrupt my precious integrity, but because I feel it puts them in a terribly artificial position.

They are scared— not of me. I was in that town for 12 years and you would just be amazed at all the friends and admirers I suddenly got when I got this job on The Post. It's quite wonderful how brilliant I became and how much my personality improved.

So, it's not about me. It's about the fact that I have this power over them and they are on guard around me and they have to be careful around me and, no matter how well they mean and no matter how much they try to keep up their end of it by saying, well, come on, I'm just going to act normal, then they're thinking about acting normal.

London—This seems to me such a limited idea of community, though. That the only way to see ourselves in the same room is if we have drinks together. I mean, it's ridiculous. Pieces of a community work together in all sorts of different ways and to share a similar goal and to be working in your own corner towards that goal doesn't mean that you have to be best buddies. Everyone in this community shares certain goals and we work toward it in very different ways. So, I don't know why it comes down to this, like being friends or having drinks.

You have to bear in mind that critics are journalists. Lloyd might be a slightly special case, Bob is another in coming primarily out of the theater but most critics are journalists. They were trained as journalists. They were hired as journalists and, if they don't retire as critics—now, Doug Watts is 80 and he's still doing it and my predecessor died in his boots—but, if you don't retire at that, you're going to go on to do something else in journalism.

Journalists are not supposed to be parts of communities. Journalists who start to think of themselves as part of the sports world or part of the political world or, for that matter, part of the theater world, are extremely suspect with their editors.

It is precisely when you start to wish to advance the goals of the community that you are considered to have retired ethically in our business. Exactly what you are urging us to do is considered immoral from our side.

Henry—Even the idea of speaking to advance some particular interest or goal or aesthetic within the community is considered suspect by most editors. You are not supposed to have an agenda. When you have an agenda, you are considered to be a player and not an observer. And the role of the journalist is to be an observer.

And however much you may wish it were different, the rules of that game are fairly well defined and they're defined by the American Society of Newspaper Editors and Columbia Journalism School and other institutions run largely by people who are not all that interested in aesthetics. Critics are expected to play by the same basic rules as every other kind of specialist on the paper.

I will admit one of the things I really like about being at Time is that at least I am not in a position of being town scold. I don't close any shows. I sometimes can help keep shows going. I can help generate sales for certain kinds of shows.

But I don't have a big negative influence on anything and I am relieved not to have that kind of impact.

Q.—Well, Bill, how can you say there's no agenda when you're in a position every week of determining what kinds of shows will get the imprimatur of Time magazine, a situation we who work in national publications are faced with all the time?

Of course, there's an agenda. It may not be articulated as such but in much the same way that a theater has a personality by virtue of the kinds of productions it mounts and the kinds of personnel it engages, so too, I think, we need to concede that the overall picture of our publications represents our view of theater.

Henry—That may be true for you. You have more power than I do. I answer to editors who make the ultimate decision. I can make the case we ought to cover this, that or the other and they're pretty good about saying, well, you can get on the airplane. But they're not going to relinquish the authority about saying you can get that into the magazine.

Rose—As a daily reviewer with no newspaper experience until I came to The Post, I can speak to this on two levels. One, of course, the editors do have an idea in their head and you're not going to get around that idea. I find this more of a problem with features on local theater. They simply don't think that smaller theaters are news. My feeling is that we follow the Kennedy Center around slavishly writing about anything they do and their feeling is that we report the news because the Kennedy Center is the Kennedy Center. We are never going to meet on this.

But the other thing is that I think—and possibly this is simply a vocabulary difference—you cannot be a critic without an agenda. I mean, whether you know what it is or admit what it is, you're writing with one. It's happening.

So, you have to sort of figure out, well, what it is and how do you define it since you are doing it. It's happening. And how are you going to do it so that the editors don't think that you're simply going over and being a booster for the theater and how are you going to do it so that the theater doesn't say, well, you know, she doesn't get it or, you know, it's just the usual junk from The Post?

And what is it and I, of course, haven't actually been able to figure out very well what it is because I sort of hate thinking on those levels because they seem to me so pretentious, but basically my feeling is that stuff that is good ought to survive and I found that a very flexible agenda.

I'm going to disagree with theater people about what is good and I'm going to disagree with my editors. But it's about the best I can do considering that I'm going to be working towards a purpose and I'm going to have influence no matter what, just by acting.

You're stuck with it. The agenda is just dictated by being in the world, I think, some way or another and this is with all due respect to what you're talking about with ethics and the needs of editors and the needs of journalists. I understand that.

Q.—I was wondering if Mr. Gerard would care to comment on what came up before, about Paramount's withdrawing ads from the daily Variety and the editor of Variety apologizing to Paramount and then instructing his motion picture critic about the nature of the reviews here and is that, as reported, true and what is your opinion on it?

Gerard—I have the great good fortune to be totally insulated from what went on specifically between the editor and that critic. I certainly think that it's fair to say that many eyebrows were raised over all of those interactions within our newsroom and without and that's all I'll say.

Q.—Do you think it could happen to you?

Gerard—Sure, it can happen to any of us who write for editors and publishers. I would just add that ax grinding and ox goring are not the province solely of Variety.

Q.—I just got my first job on a daily newspaper. I've been writing about theater for 15 years. People keep these jobs forever because there's no alternative, usually, and also it's like preparing to become a millhand when all the mills are closing. You know, we're losing daily newspapers at an astonishing rate in this country.

But there are those of us who have come up through the theater, through working for theaters or service organizations, which is my case, and we are trying to infuse something of our experience and perhaps re-frame things. That gets to the agenda issue. I can't believe that there's no agenda present when my predecessor would no more go review "Mob of the Lions" or The Wooster Group. He did not review The Wooster Group when they came to Seattle. He sent a stringer and had absolutely no interest, no feature about them.

One of my primary interests is experimental theater. Or you can look to my hometown, San Francisco, where Bernard Weiner was in a job for 20 years and helped Bill Irwin get some attention and many other experimental artists. Now Gerald Nachman, who loves musicals before 1955, is in that job and is covering completely different things. So, I can't buy this no agenda business. I think it's impossible.

Henry—But there's a big difference between having an agenda, which is to say, advancing a set of political and institutional causes, and having no taste. A critic who has no taste, no aesthetic, no preferences, will have great difficulty writing even one review, let alone enough to get a check at the end of the week. And I'm not sure that it's a terrible thing that you have a critic with one aesthetic replaced by a critic with another or that a critic who is not going to be able to respond to Mabou Mines chooses to send another reviewer to it. Frankly, if you know going in that you're a bad audience for something, why go?

Gerard—If you know going in that you're a bad audience, you shouldn't be a critic. I mean, that seems to me to presume the worst kind of prejudice.

Henry—Everybody is a bad audience for something. Every critic has some actors he can't abide, some playwrights who do not speak to him, some directors whose work he just doesn't comprehend and you can either go and write the 20th bad review of the same person or you can say, all right, here's an opportunity for me to let someone else from this institution go and give this person a fair shake. I don't think that's a bad thing.

Brustein—I once was in Chicago with Alvin Epstein and we went to see a movie called "Young Frankenstein" and both of us sat there without cracking a smile. Then I went to see it about two weeks later, the same movie, with my son and I thought it was one of the funniest things I'd ever seen. And that humbled me, that experience. What, am I so feeble minded that, you know, I have this reaction according to who I'm with? Or is it possible that you can have one or two or many opinions about a work of art and maybe the opinions are not the most important to have about it? Maybe the important thing is to try to analyze what the thing's about.

Q.— But, Bob, if you had written a piece about "Young Frankenstein" on the first occasion and then written another piece on the second occasion, what you wrote in each instance would have been colored by your opinion in each of those cases.

Brustein—Absolutely.

Q.—So, opinions really matter in that sense.

Brustein—They matter but I would do my best to make the opinion subservient to the analysis for that reason. The opinion is the thing that everyone wants to see. We run to find out what Frank Rich said about JoAnne's show and the fact is that it's the most temporary, the most evanescent, the most ephemeral thing that a critic can offer.

Gerard—So, let's assume that you wrote about "Young Frankenstein" after that first time and you just beat the shit out of it. And then you went back and you enjoyed it. Would you have made a case that a second review should be forthcoming?

Brustein: I would have admitted failure. I would have admitted my own lapses as a critic, that I put forth an opinion that was hasty and not thought out.

Akalaitis—Do you think that there is work that is gender specific and race specific that simply cannot be dealt with by what is pretty much the critical establishment, white men?

Brustein—In a word? No. That is really to carve off and separate specific sexes, races and what have you from the human race. I don't believe in it.

Simon—Bob, isn't it rather utopian to say you must put analysis ahead of opinion and we must emphasize analysis at the expense of opinion? Because how can one tell them apart? There is a way of writing analysis that seems like analysis but is really opinion and there is a way of writing opinion that seems like opinion but is really analysis. In theory one could say, okay, I will write a review in which the analytical sentences will be in red ink and the opinion sentences will be in blue so people can ignore the blue immediately. But it doesn't work.

Brustein—No, I don't think you can keep opinion out of your reviews. I think it is an important part of the review. I'm just trying to say that it's not the most important part, as it has to be with a lot of journalistic criticism and, if Bernard Shaw had to survive on the basis of the fact that he hated "The Importance of Being Earnest" when it first appeared, he wouldn't have survive. But he gave a very powerful and witty analysis of a play he didn't like. That's why he survived.

Q.—I'm just curious what your opinion is as to how we can change the attitude of editors and critics to come a little closer to that idea of not being only on the side of the audience but being in that middle area?

Wojewodski—Along those lines, Bill, you said you didn't know whether it was so terrible, I think, if there was a man in San Francisco who only liked musical written before 1955. It is terrible. It's terrible for the people who aren't producing or acting or directing or designing musicals written before 1955 and, if that man were writing for any other pages in his paper, if he were writing on the financial pages, and he just decided that corporate mergers didn't interest him at a certain period in our history, he would be brought into his editor's office and he would be relieved of his responsibilities because there is something happening in the community that was of vital importance to its life and that he had chosen whimsically to ignore.

Henry—There is a tremendous potential for unhealthy compromise in journalists who are trying to advance their own careers looking to the people they cover to, in effect, intercede with their editors or otherwise lobby their editors in order to enhance the status of the job the journalists are performing.

Wojewodski—You make reference to this thing called the real world in your earlier comments and living in the real world and things that must be enjoined in the real world. Well, I think that if as a theater person I'm behaving in a way that's roughly akin to someone who's maybe running a

corporation by lobbying an editor for a certain kind of coverage or a certain sort of intelligent perspective that I would like to see brought to bear upon my enterprise. If my enterprise is the theater, God help us, why is that any different?

Henry—There's nothing wrong with you're doing that. It's your making common cause with the people who cover you to do that to your mutual advantage that takes you into a gray area because it tends to make you collaborators and to close what I think ought to be some degree of distance to enable them to feel that they are not simply part of your enterprise.

Wojewodski—Yeah, but if I can bring to bear the power of my persuasion on an editor in the same way that someone who has a lot of advertising dollars brings something to bear upon an editor, why am I in a gray area because I'm talking about artistic enterprise as opposed to someone who's discussing the financial pages?

Henry—If you are bringing in the business reporters and you were the largest employer in town, it would be exactly the same problem. It's not because they're critics and you're an artist. It's because you're a news source, a subject of coverage and they are reporters. Critics are reporters and they perform that function at most newspapers in that they write non-review pieces as well. And even when they are reviewing, it is a piece of reportage. It contains assertions of fact and, indeed, libel courts have held that reviews can be actionable.

Q.—Everybody's talking about theater process but there's an interesting other side and that's the newspaper process. I've got a city where there are two newspapers fighting. The city is Denver. Someone's going to drop out of the newspaper business. It's either The Denver Post or The Rocky Mountain News that I work for. Every day there's a roomful of people very much like a theater rehearsal. People impassioned about what they are writing about, putting out a paper every single day with very little time to discuss the aesthetics of it and this is going to end up with one paper predominant. Therefore, my job as theater critic, I don't have much time for aesthetics but, believe me, I'm here instead of reviewing four plays in Denver this weekend because I care a lot. But I will never be able to write anything that has the word recontextualizing in it.

Q.—Does the politics of the paper have anything to do with the opinion of the reviewer? I think of England. I think of Italy, of the broad political spectrum of some of the independent parties of the newspapers.

Gerard—It might be more accurate to say that writers tend to gravitate to places that will be home to them in much the same way theater artists gravitate to the institutions that they feel will be homes to them.

Q.—I feel as I listen to you that there's assumption on both sides (insofar as there are sides) and that is that these folks, these suckers, these robots are waiting to be programmed to look at process, to look at results, to look at both. Are American readers and audiences really so passive and lacking in initiative as you seem to assume? Aren't there ways in which they bypass their critics? And I'm not only talking here about subscription audiences.

Wojewodski—You know, along those lines, we had in Baltimore two daily, two principal papers. One was The Morning Sun, the other The Evening Sun and the man with whom I had most difficulty was the reviewer for the afternoon paper and it was obvious to me that he was, I think, doing something for this editor, that the editor enjoyed, that actually worked against the possibility of my creating a more dynamic and diverse audience for work that we were doing.

That paper had the larger circulation but his editor had, I think, decided that as an afternoon paper it was read by the Baltimore working class and that editor had further made certain assumptions about the kind of theater I did and what they could be interested in and he very much, I think, served that editor's purpose. I don't think that the theater that I was doing was for everybody or that there were thousands of people just waiting to be told that the show was good, but I think there were lots of people in all sorts of classes who might have been attracted just by some intelligent discussion of what was actually going on as opposed to being you won't like this.

Brustein—I have to say that the idea of a serious American theater culture is only about 70 years old now. It started with O'Neil in the early Twenties. The idea of a serious American institutional theater culture is about 30 years old. That means that it is not yet a popular expression and that's why we talk about audience development. We're not always talking about getting money out of the audience.

Q.—And the critic is absolutely essential and vital in that enterprise.

Brustein—He's helpful, God knows.

Gerard—Part of the thing we all have to grapple with is that people are getting their information from more and more different ways and more frequently bypassing the newspapers we work for altogether and that's a serious problem.

Q.—I remember the chastening experience I had at an early time of becoming a critic. I went to the Seattle Rep in 1965 and I saw "The Cherry Orchard." The end of the second act I was just wandering around in the lobby in the intermission when I overheard a young couple talking to each other and she said to him, "Do you think they'll sell the orchard?" And I was really renewed by that and I've never forgotten it.

Wojewodski—What I was trying to get at if those people had been told by the reviewer of the afternoon paper that because of their class, sex or education that they were not interested in Chekhov, the theater and those individuals would be the poorer.

Q.—How about the economics? I have to provide for my family. How much money do I have left over to really see that theater? Your theater has always spoken to the common man. I think we're producing a very elitist grouping of people. What are we going to do about that, Ms. Akalaitis?

Akalaitis—Well, this is a terrifying country. We just did an audience survey at the public theater and part of me was very pleased to find that in comparison to other New York theaters we have a very young, well-educated audience. We don't have a so-called multicultural, uneducated audience.

The charter members are the classiest subscribers. They have subscribed to the entire Shakespeare marathon. Their median income was $90,000 a year. That's a lot of money. I was very, very surprised and the median income of the single ticket younger folks was $50,000 a year. I think that's a lot of money.

So, where are all these people that I see walking the streets of New York who don't make anywhere near $50,000 a year? The answer is the government, the country, the nation. Theater has to be subsidized. Culture is part of the fabric of our national life and we have to believe in it and we have to have a government that believes in it. ■

The Media

Continued from page 28

Q & A

Winship—One thing I'd like to weigh in on. Linda mentioned the fact that they didn't give a Pulitzer for criticism. I sat on that board for 12 long years and I just find it the height of arrogance to have a group of 12 or 13 big-name editors, who spend their time worrying about what's on the front page and what's on the editorial page, sitting in judgment on all of the arts. Sure, they don't pick the finalists but this group of general assignment, know-nothing editors, when it comes to culture are the final judges who say that we're not going to give anything on criticism, we're not going to give a drama award, which they haven't done for a couple of years. It seems to me it's something that your community can do something about.

Landesman—With all the pressure I get from The New York Times, they went and got another critic [David Richards] and they found really another theater critic when, in fact, it would have been maybe more interesting if they had found someone who was not used to being in the theater day to day, who came to it from a different perspective, perhaps someone who wrote about some other art form to take a look. I would have found that very refreshing because instead of getting a kind of, you know, pandering to the popular taste or bowing to the needs of the commercial producers, because we have now someone who will like more things or tell you that "Will Rogers" is not a girlie show but a great musical.

Winer—In defense, though, I do think the whole point was to have more than one voice. At the beginning I thought, oh, David, cause it seemed like he was going to say the same thing Frank did all the time. I think that now he really has pulled away and you may not agree with what he has to say but there are two voices there and he's a very, very separate sensibility.

Kroll—I think there is a point kicking around here. I think it's no longer possible for a critic of any of the arts to write about that art form in isolation from all the others. There are so many critics who don't really know almost anything about other art forms and it comes through the work. You have to know about the movies and visual arts and music and so forth. I mean, it's hard cheese, it's tough.

I think of younger critics whom I admire greatly, like Jim Hoberman at The Voice and some others, who have a very broad, wide ranging passionate involvement, interest and, indeed, expertise with these things and they bring all this to bear when they write.

But don't you have that fear? You read these theater critics and you feel these steel doors clanging down. There's this tunnel vision. They have no clue to what's going on outside that particular discipline. Which is, indeed, feeding into the very work that they're trying to deal with.

What it comes down to for me is that these problems are so mundane, they are so boringly practical, problems of space, problems of being cherished by your editor, problems of group journalism or, as I've come to call it, gang bang editing, and that's really what it is. You have to realize in the news magazine business, this is unique in American journalism. I envy you characters at newspapers who only have to deal with one person, a Winship or whoever it is.

It is so dispiriting because the institution itself—and this has nothing to do with the individuals themselves—but when editor A says, well, Jack, you don't really need to make this point. Why don't we just drop this. And I say, okay, I'm a nice guy, that's fine. And that goes to editor B and he says, Jack, don't you think we could make—and of course that's the very point that editor A had disposed of so I put it back. Nice guy number two, right? And then editor A says, Jack, you put back the thing that I—it's funny, it's hilarious, but it's a pain in the ass. It's a pain in the critic's ass and, therefore, ultimately, a pain in the ass of the theater and a pain in the ass of the culture. I really mean that. And I don't know what you can do about that.

Q.—My name is Jeff Horowitz from Theater for a New Audience and this is for Ms. Winer. You were talking about, you know, the problems of having a middle ground, that everything's hyped. Do you feel there's any hope of getting to your editors, your publishers to enable criticism to be written that discusses doubt, that discusses work that has difficulty in it, that's not just a success?

Winer—Actually, I wasn't blaming my editors at all for this. I was saying that I sort of presume that they must be looking at The Times on Friday and Sunday and saying where's our free advertising, you know? But nobody has ever said a word to me about it. I just have antenna, and think how much they feel that their critic isn't writing boffo.

But, in fact, passionate writing is interesting writing and the easiest passionate writing is loving and hating and the readers find it easier to understand and the editors find it easier to understand and people will respond to you a lot more simply. But unfortunately most of the arts, like most of life, fall somewhere in between and the hard part of the job is finding out where it is.

Landesman—Expressing doubt—how will that affect the box office and the response of the audience? I suppose it doesn't help, although I think it's important to note that there are all kinds of ways to express reservations about a work and still be enthusiastic and, in fact, endorsing. Frank's review of "The Four Baboons" was a good example of how that can happen.

I just want to feel some genuineness in the responses of the critic which, after I think you've written 4,000 reviews, is hard to get. I mean, again, not to personalize it, but, you know, you read John Simon. Those are pieces wholly, totally and completely without an iota of vulnerability. There is none. It is absolutely a worked out, definitively stated, aggressively stated point of view. I'm just suggesting that's not human. That's not real. It's not even honest.

Q.— I'm Margaret Croyden. Do you think that you, as a major producer and new in the field, do you think you have some responsibility yourself to take a new view of how you run your business? For example, the huge ads that you put in, even after you get the Tony and all that, the hype that goes into the Tonys, the vulgarization of these ads and some of the things that you have lent yourself to and not only you but your other producers. You happen to be the only producer here, otherwise we could go on about naming names about the producers and the hypocrisy of the producers and how they deal with the press and, particularly, with one leading newspaper, the way they accommodate themselves and scream on the one hand about it and kiss the behind on the other hand.

Landesman—I agree with you, it's a kind of madness. Of course, the ultimate irony is the worse the review the more money we have to spend in The New York Times. If the show gets something less than a rave review from Frank Rich, then we have to take out not a one full-page ad, but two full-page ads to try to establish the show. In fairness to the producers, I think marketing

a show is a commercial responsibility. I think you market a show with whatever means are at your disposal in a commercial theater.

Croyden—I was interested in your evaluation of critics in the past and I thought it was really an original kind of statement about being locked into a position. But what about you being locked into your marriage? You seem to not be disillusioned about your particular marriage with a current critic so have you not become disillusioned or do you feel perfectly satisfied?

Landesman—Well, I think as in any marriage, you know, you make the best of it. Once you realize you can't get divorced, you try to emphasize the positive and go on from there. By the way, I don't think I ever said that producers shouldn't use quotes from critics promoting their shows. I don't know why that isn't a natural function of marketing a show so I'm not sure there's a different position that's involved there.

But, no, and Frank Rich is the drama critic at The Times. As I said, as critics go, he's one of the best I think we could have. Yes, I wish his sensibility were a little like mine. I mean, he saw "La Bête" and found it incredibly irritating, had no use for it. To me, that was, with all its flaws and imperfections, an exciting piece of theater. I wish he'd been encouraging or was the kind of person who would be encouraging to that kind of venture. He's not. We have to live with that.

Clay— Could I respond to something that you said ages ago about critics that I thought was very significant? You said that making art changes people but that writing about art does not.

Landesman—It doesn't seem to.

Clay—It seems to me a sort of blowing away statement. I have nothing against entertainment for entertainment's sake. That's wonderful. But it seems to me I could name a dozen art works that across the years have definitely changed me. What are you doing it for if it doesn't change the members of the audience, including the critics who are just reacting, really, as members of the audience to the experience?

Landesman—I don't have that sense that often but I'm sure it happens. I'm sure it happens more with some critics than others, too.

Simon— John Simon—Profession, dishonest critic. I will perhaps be excused if I don't put this in form of a question, though I may question Rocco's sanity. But I have to defend myself, I'm sorry.

About having no vulnerability, I very publicly during a conference at Trinity College recanted my position on Stephen Sondheim and said I was totally wrong in having been against him and I'm from now on going to be much more, though not totally, for him.

However, I did not say that in The New York Times and the great deal of vulnerability that is published in other forums, other media, is not noticed by Mr. Landesman and, therefore, one is a dishonest son of a bitch who is lacking in humanity, lacking in vulnerability merely because one does not publish one's vulnerability in The New York Times.

I suggest that people who say things about other critics, whom they read spottily, should bear in mind that it's only The Times that they read with religious fervor and that it is entirely possible that a number of other critics are just as vulnerable and just as honest and just as willing to admit mistakes but that, unfortunately, because they publish them in other places, this will not be noticed.

The second thing I want to say is that just because you happen to have a polished style, just because what you write is witty, just because what you write has irony and sarcasm and satire in it, in any other country this would be recognized as a perfectly valid way of expressing oneself.

Unfortunately, this unhappy country does not understand satire, does not understand irony, does not understand wit and, consequently, anyone who's cursed with those things is called dishonest by Rocco Landesman.

Landesman—Well, without necessarily agreeing with what John said, I should say that I, too, have been an admirer of his work for many, many years and still to this day look forward to his review, especially when I find a work that has been, I feel, disproportionately praised or where there's been a bandwagon of support for something I feel doesn't warrant it. I was dying to see his review of "Falsettos." I couldn't wait. I just knew what it was going to be. I couldn't wait until it came out, with apologies to Linda Winer.

Q.— My name is Alan Green. I'm a non-professional subscriber to the A.R.T. for about 15 years. In the long history of the theater going back to Shakespeare and the Greeks, what was the role of critics at that time? I'm wondering if there were critics as such and I wonder whether what you're all speaking about today is a cult of personality that you have created rather than critique of the theater. I think perhaps this symposium could have been better named Critics and Critique rather than Criticism as such. I'd rather see some analysis of what's presented and let the audience reach their own conclusions.

Kroll— I think he's right and I thought that in a different language that is what I was trying to say. As for the role played by personality in this whole shebang, it's unavoidable. Human beings have personalities, even critics. Poets have personalities, dramatists have personalities. Your personality enters as soon as you open your mouth and language comes out, there's a personality and the best critics, like the best artists, are an extraordinary synthesis of personality and other things and that's the package that enables any kind of writing, certainly, to survive.

That's what I was trying to say about going back and re-reading Shaw and Ken Tynan and others I could name. To read, for example, a review by Stark Young of the first Tennessee Williams play, "The Glass Menagerie," and to see with historical hindsight how he was not only able to appreciate that play, but in a sense to project almost the entire career that Williams was going to have. It is very thrilling. It's very exciting.

So, I would say, the thing to watch out for and to suspect is false personality, is gerry-built personality, is a kind of Hollywoodized sham or imitation personality. You have to have just as much taste in detecting true personalities from false as you have to have in detecting good art from bad art.

And I see no conflict between projecting a personality and projecting a thoughtful, insightful and fruitful analysis of works of art. The two things go together in my book.

Todd London—I'm curious about this mini-golden age at Newsday because other people have talked about it, too.

Winer—Well, Newsday is a writer's paper and there aren't many of those left right now. You know, they're less concerned with packaging and they also love it when I make trouble.

Unfortunately not enough people read it. Something that's extremely horrifying about working for Newsday is that I frequently have to read about the news of the theater in The New York Times because the producers, rather than issue a press release about something as basic as what their season is

next year, will hold a press conference for one newspaper, have it printed in there and then complain that it's a one newspaper town.

I respect a scoop probably as much as anyone. But for run of the mill, what stars are performing in Shakespeare in the Park this summer, and I say that quite specifically, I have to read it in a paper that has been extremely hostile to that theater.

Q.—My name is Kermit Dunkelberg and I'm a theater professional in Boston and I'll address this to Carolyn Clay, although maybe other people will have a response as well. It seems to me that both the critics and the artists who have spoken have kind of talked about a common enemy, which to use a metaphor from your profession is a kind of USA TODAY mentality, which is the belief that there's a kind of homogeneous audience out there who will respond best to a certain range of work and that those are the people who we should look to sell subscriptions to, both to the newspapers and to the theater.

It seems like there's a lot of pressure on the critics and also on the editors for space to cover things which are slightly marginal and I don't just mean this sort of catch phrase multicultural perspective but things which are new, things which haven't been seen out of town. I know with the other large paper in town what I'm going to see in the Sunday arts section. There's going to be a big spread on the new movie opening and a big spread on what's coming in from out of town.

I did read a review a couple of weeks ago in your paper. It was a very short, very small and honest piece. A writer was talking about a very small theater company whom I've never seen and I do read critics often to keep up with what's going on in the area and he was saying, basically, in this review, this theater seemed to be speaking to this audience and this audience is not very big but these people are very dedicated and these people who are coming seem to have a need.

That seems to be the kind of thing that's being pushed off the arts pages and pushed out of general awareness and how do you see your newspaper's role in covering this minor group, minor pockets of things that are going on, not just the big picture which you did get from USA TODAY or something?

Clay—I think you're very right that there isn't one. We had been talking about this big enormous thing called the audience and there are, of course, a million pocket audiences and I think that is a big dilemma in our paper. The space gets smaller and smaller and do you stop covering the smaller groups that I know we're the only people who will cover. If we don't, no one else will.

Or do you try to continue to cover them in things like our aisle-hopping column with cameos which is then going to encroach on the space that I like to have to write more than a thousand words about Hedda Gabler or Robert Wilson. It's a real question. I mean, the ideal answer for me is to go back to giving the theater section at The Phoenix the space we had, you know, two years ago.

Winer—Why don't you have the space any more?

Clay—They re-designed the paper. We no longer have junk so things have to fit in specific things. Suddenly we got all these big headlines, white space, big pictures. They think it graphically looks better and suddenly what used to be, even if you get a full page, oh, my gosh, you're so lucky. That used to be 60 inches of copy, now it's 40 inches.

Q.—I'm Matthew Sandel and I'm a writer and performer and this is sort of a specific question but it occurs to me that it sort of addresses one of the classic tensions between the critics and the play producers. I wondered what your opinions were about this fairly recent controversy a couple of years ago about the musical version of "Kiss of the Spider Woman," which Hal Prince did out of the city in New York state with this new musical program and they didn't want any critics and they said this is like out of town tryouts. This isn't even out of town tryouts. It's a workshop.

Frank Rich at The New York Times came and they specifically requested that it not get reviewed and he slammed it pretty much and they were furious and one of his arguments was that, well, it was a full-scale show. It was not a workshop production. It was not really out of town, although it was physically. They were charging $45. They were charging full price so, therefore, they had the right to review it. And I just wondered if anybody had any reaction to that.

Kroll—Well, I did a quote feature story. And to be perfectly honest about it, although my piece technically was not a review, I can understand any critic who would read that piece and say, hey, what the heck is going on here. You know, this is so close to being a review that I'm going to go up there and—not that I'm saying Frank did this thing because I wrote what I wrote—but these areas are very shady indeed.

I have a lot of sympathy for the people involved in that production because they were trying very hard to create an alternative to the whole Broadway mechanism as they saw it and I suppose that to a certain degree that effort was helped to be aborted by what The Times did.

But on the other hand I can understand it. If I remember correctly, before Frank wrote his review of "Kiss of the Spider Woman," The Times had actually done a feature story on it, didn't they?

Q.—They ran a news article twinned with the review.

Kroll—Maybe they would have been better advised to do another kind of piece but not by their chief drama critic. It might have also been the same kind of piece but the very fact that it would not have been by Frank and would not have had the force that a Rich review automatically has would have been a more civilized way of approaching this problem without any damage or injuries to The Times' journalistic cachet at all.

Winer—We didn't cover it because I really felt that it was a tryout and we don't review tryouts. It opens up a whole other issue about how long can something run charging full fare, you know, before it's good enough to call open.

Landesman—Can I just sign off with one summary? It's interesting for me listening to both symposiums, the one this morning, the one this afternoon. It seems to me that there's a single theme that seems to be developing here and I'm curious to see how that this goes forward in the other panels. It's this whole question of to whom is the critic ultimately answerable and to whom is he really responsible. Almost every critic who has been on the panel this morning or this afternoon— Lloyd Rose was very explicit about this; so was Bill Henry; Linda was; Benedict referred to this last night—they've all said my responsibility is twofold only and solely. It is to my readers and to my own responses and I think those of us on the other side are saying, well, isn't there also something else and don't you really think if you're a caring, feeling, passionate person about the theater and if you're committed to it and if you're a thinking person, isn't there really something else as well?

And the tension between these two impulses, I think, has been what has informed our discussion so far and I'm very curious to see where it will go. ■

The Artist

Continued from page 38

Q & A

John Conklin—John Simon has been to me the person who, when I know there's going to be a review in New York Magazine and I go to the mailbox , my hand is trembling because I think, what is he going to say, how is he going to hurt me? I will be perfectly frank and say that. It is to artists what Lynne was saying. It's personal. We are egotistical children who need to only be told that we're great. That is unfortunately really part of me. The number of shows I've done, the number of situations I've been in, I still always want to be praised. I still always want to be told that whatever I do is great. Even when I know I have done bad work, I still want it to get good reviews. I'm always furious when it turns out that the critic has actually seen my failures and have written about it. Being a creative person in the theater is a hard, difficult, somewhat infantile thing.

John was saying that he felt it was presumptuous for him to give constructive criticism or to tell an artist what to do, I think to a certain extent that is true of us. We feel that criticism doesn't help us in that sense. Reviews don't help us in that sense.

John wrote a review of "The Ghost of Versailles," an opera that I did at the Met in the New Criterion, where he was given a lot of space. It was the only thoughtful, intelligent review of the view because he simply had time. I felt I could hear him discussing it with me. I didn't hear him just making statements or saying yes or no. He was discussing it using examples and it was an extremely valuable experience for me. I think that theater artists need people to look at their work but what happens is that it becomes too quick, it becomes too settled, it becomes too written, it becomes too taken by the theater artist and everyone else as a quick judgment and, therefore, it becomes not useful and it become wounding and it becomes painful also because, strangely enough, it's in print.

Thigpen—It must be true.

Conklin—It must be true and even if you don't believe it's true and you don't like the critic, you worry about what other people are reading about it just because you know that when you read other people's bad reviews, you slightly enjoy it. It has to be clear to critics that this does go on.

Then, as soon as you meet the person, often, and talk to them it becomes completely different. The situation, even though they are as critical, as condemning of your work or whatever, it becomes an entirely different situation and suddenly it's useful, it's helpful, you see the body language of the person who's talking to you, you hear the tone of voice, you see what his face is doing. Just as there's much more to theater than the narrative and the surface level, there is to dialogue something that is completely missing just in simple, critical, written criticism.

Thigpen—I have something to be cleared up for myself, if anybody wants to address it. It comes from something that John has said and other people have said. The critical stance, the way of viewing the world, in general, not just what is being viewed as a piece of work. I think as a critic you have a critical stance that covers almost everything that surrounds you in your life. That is, you're reviewing theater all the time. You're going to see things all the time. You're discussing it with everybody you know. That it is your life's work and that critical stance, I think, is something that's very hard to break out of sometimes. What I want to know is how that critical stance goes with the critic as teacher. It's the first time I've heard that term used in the conference, the critic as teacher and John used that. What do you mean by that?

Simon—Well, I mean that I always thought that the main reason I stopped teaching—and I used to teach at a certain number of colleges and universities—is that you reached too few people. Students, whether they're good or bad, are few in number and they're not necessarily the people that you want to address. The people that you want to address are somewhere else.

If you put your teaching, instead of into a classroom with four walls, into a classroom with no walls, which is what I think a review is, then you can still not have any control over whom you reach but at least potentially you can reach all the people who feel that they can learn something from you. If they think that you're full of shit and they can't learn anything from you, then they'll read another critic and that's fine. I think teachers and students have to find one another. They have to form their constituencies and this is the way they do, in that they can seek out the congenial and the useful critic and bypass the one whom they consider useless.

Karlo Hesser says in one of his poems that whatever happens to you in the rest of your life, when you're dying you are alone. I think another case when you are alone is when you, as a critic, see a play. You are totally alone. You may have read other reviews before. You may read other reviews after. You may be with a person you enormously respect and whose judgment will be of importance to you.

But, as you sit there taking in that play or opera or symphony or whatever it is, you are totally alone, as if you were dying and you have to face this task by yourself. No one can help you. No one can succor you. No one can hold your hand and say, "As good deeds do to every man, I'll go with you." You are alone.

Out of this aloneness you have to develop a very strong critical stance. You have to develop confidence in yourself. You have to develop a certain arrogance. I think the best playwrights I've known were arrogant, the best directors I've known were arrogant, the best actors I've known were arrogant.

It is this arrogance that helps you survive. It's this arrogance that helps you to be alone in this terrifying situation when you have to evaluate the work of art or the work of non-art or the work, worst yet, of phony art.

This critical stance, however, has an obverse, a dark side, to it which means you are so often put into this position where you have to have this enormous confidence in yourself and only yourself. It does make you arrogant and it does make you critical of things even other than the thing that you're criticizing to the extent where people are afraid of inviting me to parties because they think I'm going to criticize them as if they were actors or playwrights or directors. I don't do that.

Feiffer—John, until this moment I didn't know that your entire style is just a coverup for this self-pity. What courage you have. What soul you have. I mean, my goodness, you leave me breathless.

I must say that I think "both inches a king" is not really your best line. I don't know why you should have quoted it. It's not really a good epigram. I think that the self-consciousness of the role for both the critic and the writer misses what is a major point here and that is that, folks, the audience has disappeared, that there is nobody out there any more. The audience, for whatever the reasons, has fragmented, has splintered. The only people who are really interested in it are the people here or the people professionally connected.

One gets a sense, as America fragments, its art forms fragment. I don't think we can

seriously be called the United States of America any more. It's really the Fragmented State of America. Theater audiences have been divided and fractured and fragmented and the only thing to gather around, the only thing common to our culture any longer, is television.

The Sixties [were] in some ways a golden period of criticism and a very bad period for other things. Some extraordinary criticism came forth in the Sixties and some extraordinary art work and the payoff has been a society that, rather than improving, has fragmented in all sorts of ways, has put people at each other's throats so that we no longer have a left, we no longer have dissent. What we have is incoherence. We have a people left and right, basically, who no longer believes there are answers to problems.

Basically it's all show business and let's have a good time or let's have no time at all. There shouldn't be a theater audience that is waiting to hear and artists waiting to address and critics waiting to write about, this problem in our dissolution is not just a crisis but a shame and I think that's where we have to start focusing some attention.

Conklin—I think it's interesting to pursue in connection with this how much the critic needs to be, should be, can be involved in the artistic process. Is it appropriate for the critic, is it necessary for the critic to have access, to have dialogue, as was suggested yesterday, to be involved in the process so that he or she knows what has gone into a production, what happens in a production, what actors do, what designers do, what directors do?

It's connected again with the dichotomy that came up yesterday, with tension very strongly, about process and product and I think we in the theater feel that in that sense there is no product. Each performance is a process and to say that we are all working towards a goal that is completely understandable and logical and arrives at a certain time is simply not true.

BRUSTEIN— It's a very interesting and important question and I think it may be phrased another way, which is, shall the critic have had some experience of theater process before he or she become a critic, not that he or she becomes involved in the process while they're criticizing necessarily, but at some point in their career they have had experience of the process?

It relates to this issue of the critic as artist, which John has mentioned and Anne brought up. I don't happen to believe that the critic is an artist, although there are certain artistic things the critic does if he does them well.

There's something the artist does that is very important for the critic to know. Lynne mentioned that her most important critic is the director.

One thing directors know if they know anything at all is, they never tell an actor what he did was good or what you did was bad or what he did made you look like a gnome or made you look 10 feet tall or whatever. It may be infantile. It may be childish, but people in the theater emotionally do demand continual praise or some form of reinforcement.

Even the slightest direction has to be preceded by reinforcement of some kind and you don't invent this reinforcement. You find it. It's always there. There is some quality, some positive quality that the actor or the playwright, for example, has in the play that can be enhanced or even reversed if you at first give the reinforcement.

What passes for criticism these days is the simple dismissive statement without the reinforcement and it seems to be of no use whatever to the artist or even to the public no matter how wittily that dismissive statement is expressed.

If you don't like a performance, say, of minor parts in a play, you don't mention them. You don't gain anything by saying these are bad, it seems to me. It doesn't help the performance. It doesn't inform the readers. It just, as it were, expresses your spleen. If you have a major artist, a major actor who, say, has been over-praised by every other critic and you didn't agree, then I think maybe there is a reason for addressing the quality of that performance. Not to dismiss it, but just perhaps to say where it fell short of the interpretation of the role as you, a critic, saw it.

The point I'm really trying to make is—if the critic is going to be an artist, the critic must know what is known by all artists, that sheer dismissiveness, vituperation and faultfinding is one the most counter-productive things in art and does not help an artist to advance. It squelches the artist and stops the artist short in his tracks.

Rogoff—I do think that this has been one of the better events in recent years and I hope we can repeat it. However, there is one aspect of this that—or two, perhaps they're part of the same thing—that doesn't quite work because that's the nature of these meetings.

One is that there are people here who have been referred to, perhaps moderately vilified, who are not here and Mr. Rich is the most obvious candidate for that. The one I want to come to the aid of and conflict of interest notwithstanding is my colleague, Richard Gilman. Now, of course, since I postponed my thoughts about this from yesterday to today, Rocco Landesman is not here, as far as I can make out.

And what I wanted to take note of is that remark that Dick finally, as a teacher I suspect, he left him because he found the work hermetically sealed. That's an astounding diminution of Dick's powers and his strengths and what he has to offer and perhaps inadvertently a confession of what Rocco has chosen to leave behind him in a way that I have to say I utterly deplore.

What he's missing is that this hermetically sealed intelligence is sealed in the worlds of Buechner, Beckett, Brecht, Chekhov, Ibsen, Strindberg, Kroetz and that that is not a bad place to live. That's really what we go to the drama for, for the nourishment that those writers and those who bring those writers to the best light possibly have to offer us.

I suddenly remembered this morning the great story and it marks the difference, the great gulf between us and the British. Evidently Tynan was some kind of a pariah. I didn't know that. I never thought he was but there's a marvelous episode that after a Tynan review of a play by Noel Coward, Noel Coward came up to him and he said, "Tynan, you are a terrible dandy and a shit. Now, let me buy you dinner."

Yes, the theater has been disappointing often, year after year, and certainly as much this year as any other time. Nevertheless, I've had some of the most wonderful times in the last year, not often in America or New York.

But one of the great ironies is that the best time I've had is seeing what I think, and here I will have to descend to hyperbole, one of the best plays, American plays, I have ever seen in my life is Tony Kushner's, the first part of his play "Angels in America." I had to go to the Royal National Theater in London to see this in a superb production by Declan Donnellan, whose work I haven't actually admired that much before. For some miraculous reason, these English actors under an English director's tutelage are giving the performance of their lives of a great play.

Q.—We have daily reviewers who judge you and, you know, attack you and do this. But what about a true critic like John Simon who is intelligent and who does have standards that are based on centuries of writing and theater and his criticisms are accurate but as a contemporary artist, maybe everything that's done in this period

is terrible. We don't know that because we have to do our own work.

Bogart—I've had an odd reaction today which is that Mr. Simon's been fairly mean to me a couple of times and it doesn't feel very good, as we heard about taking it personally. But I oddly come to kind of love him today because—. The same reason I love Bob Brustein; you'll say what you think and there is thought behind it and values behind it and I guess I feel really tired at this point of people who don't speak from some source. And I mean speak in every sense of the word.

So, I guess I would prefer John Simon to review my work than a lot of other people, oddly enough, because at least, you know, it has legs and feet in it, it stands up, it does things.

Q.—John, somebody said the other day, I think it was then about compassion in the theater, then somebody said about self, Rocco, about evolving self and all that and you spoke about the main source as arrogance which you equated with self-confidence. They're two different things. I'm sure you understand that. Now, how do you, in this worship of arrogance, what happens to what somebody called vulnerability? What happens to compassion? And what happens to the so-called transcendent experience that you sometimes have spoken about when you go to the theater? If you're going to worship arrogance, does that shut you off from any kind of compassion?

Simon—Well, I don't worship arrogance. I merely accept it as a necessary component for, not just critics, for every kind of creative artist and as I say the best ones I know all have had it and I admire them for it, which is what makes them impermeable to all criticism, really, both the justified and the unjustified and I admire that, too.

One of my favorite directors, and I'm also happy to say a good friend, is Bruce Beresford. Bruce Beresford, who I think has made three absolute masterpieces in the cinema, one of them you probably all know, "Breaker Morant," and two other you may or may not know, "Black Robe" and "Mister Johnson", is totally impervious to all kinds of beastly things that have been said about it, including the fact that his own actors like Robert Duvall, in their supreme arrogance when they get an Academy Award which Bruce should be getting, do not thank him at all, don't mention him.

But Bruce lives with these things in a wonderful, humorous, witty way because he has this necessary arrogance. I would say that if you look at Bob's criticism, which is very good criticism, I'm afraid you will have a hard time finding that introductory or concluding positive thing about the people or things that he tore apart. He may repudiate all that criticism. I don't know but I submit that if you went through his books and looked for that little grace note that says the good thing about the actor, the good about the play, and then zaps him or her, you will often, in fact, in most cases, not be able to find it because, alas, in some cases this good thing doesn't exist and in other cases the space of the review and the thrust of the review does not allow for that kind of expatiation.

I think what Bob and some of you have suggested would be ideal criticism which involves knowing the process and doing this and finding all the positive is very much like the people whom you keep hearing as they say, what The New York Times really needs is two entirely different critics on a daily basis whereby there would be one review from, say, Rich and one review from, say, Richards side by side and they'd be very different and that would be a wonderful thing.

That is pure and utter utopia. No one in America cares about the theater that much, except those who live by it, who want that much space given to the theater in a daily paper. And if it were, immediately all kinds of other venues would present themselves and say we want the same approach to our work and by that time, The Times would have no room for news, no room for anything else except these reviews, one way and the other way from two different critics.

So, I think ideally I sympathize with everyone who says let the critic know the process and follow the process and let there be this, let there be that but the hard factual facts are that those of us who are involved in theater are in the minority and the great big audience out there and even that small audience which likes one critic and follows him is, I'm afraid, bigger than the entire theatrical constituency. ■

The Shifting Public

Continued from page 43

Q & A

OyamO—Just one slight response to what Mr. Honan said, most of which I agree with. You know, you look to the right, you look to the left, you really don't know who's black. James Baldwin said it very well a long time ago. He said you just don't know who's black in America any more. There are thousands of black people who pass for white all the time. I mean, sometimes I look at John Simon and I want to say Brother John. I don't know.

But there is something very interesting I think about the township theater you saw on the Woza Afrika! Festival. You ask, should we apply the same standards of criticism and so forth? And I think the answer is basically yes, you should.

And then, of course, you're going to come up with different answers but then we have to look at the kind of theater that it is, too and anyone who knows the condition of the township, I mean the township theater itself. It's usually done in big noisy halls. There are a lot of people running around drinking and causing fights and so forth which is one of the reasons why they use a lot of music and a lot of tribal chants and jumping around and shouting and so forth. It's the only way to hold the attention of the people.

It's very much like Elizabethan theater, where you had the bears running around and the prostitutes selling their wares in the audience and the dandies sitting on the wings. So there are a lot of similarities but I think it pretty much stopped there.

What's so fascinating, though, I found about that after the big festival that they did at the Lincoln Center was that it seemed to me that people were more willing to accept the anger and the didacticism and so forth expressed by the South Africans about their condition in South Africa than they were willing to accept the same kinds of feelings from among blacks here in the United States.

We have a lot of good political didacticists. We have a lot of people who do those same kinds of things who get enraged and they write their plays. Of course it always easier to deal with that kind of political theater coming from another land about another

people, just like it was very easy for us to praise Vaclav Havel a very great playwright who didn't mind going to prison for his views. I think the Vaclav Havels here in America are basically peripheralized, marginalized, pushed off to the side.

Unfortunately, we don't have a black theater in America. I think a definition of black theater would probably involve a group of people who really do know themselves and who operate out of that. For instance, we have black music, we have jazz. Okay? That's black music, identifiably black music. It may have been put together out of French quadrilles, Irish ditties, Afro-Haitian and Afro-Cuban religious music and chants, African rhythms, delta blues and the list goes on. They put it together and it became jazz. It became one thing and it became the American music. That is, created right here, not anywhere else. And that is, to me, a powerful, cultural statement. That's about people who know who they are.

Theater, black theater, still, unfortunately, worships at the feet of Aristotle. You know, my attitude and I don't mean this to be insulting. As I tell young black writers, please, you know, tell Aristotle—well, I won't say it. I won't be vulgar. I cannot worship at the feet of a culture or a civilization that says I'm nothing, that I've never done anything.

Honan—Well, I don't really disagree with anything OyamO just said except perhaps I'll respond by saying this. I felt very much the same way about Rene's remarks but I do want to repeat that I was not finding fault with this particular festival of plays that I described because they were not well-made plays. I didn't say that at all. I found fault with them because they did not pursue the business that I believe an artist should pursue.

I'm not saying you can't have political ideas in the theater. Of course you can. And I welcome them. Odets gave them to us. Shaw gave them to us but I think those writers also were marching to a different drummer essentially and that was they were telling us about life in the world and putting that ahead of any political agenda they may have had. That's what I want from an artist, not a well-made play, not any of those other ideas.

Buch—I did not imply a well-made play was what you were trying to do.

Honan—Then I beg your pardon.

Buch—I agree with you wholeheartedly. I think Brecht is great because he's a great writer, not because he's a great communist.

Honan—Right. And the same with O'Casey, who in his later work, when he became a devout and impassioned communist and felt he had to had to espouse that in all his plays, his art collapsed.

Buch—I made a note when you mentioned the Irish nationalists and how they were attacked. We have a play in my repertory that was written by a New Yorker, Cuban-American, Gloria Gonzalez. It's a play called "Cafe Con Leche." It's been in repertory with us and it's been playing for the last eight years in my company. When we opened it, a reviewer said that we were insulting the Cuban family and that he was not going to show up at the theater again until we took that play out of rep. I said you're going to be waiting for awhile because it's a big success and it's been there and it has changed casts. Now, the children of that play are old people now and it's a big, big play that we did the world premier so I know what it is. But it's our own little ghetto that we have to fight.

Kroll—When you apply the wrong aesthetic, any kind of standards to work, you screw up your job at the very beginning. I'm thinking of an analogy. If you look, for example, in the visual arts, if you look at the abstract painting of an Eastern culture and it's been that way for hundreds, thousands of years, you sound like a damn fool if you say, well, what are these guys doing? Haven't they ever heard of Rembrandt? These fellows aren't pursuing the right aesthetic tract at all. Whatever possessed them to create art that looks like this?

And America demands and insists, perhaps out of a rising fear of what the potential multicultural society may portend, that Asians and blacks and Hispanics and everybody else learn the American way, whatever that is, learn to assimilate themselves to the tenets of American culture, whatever that is, and we don't bother to learn the tenets of their culture. Now, how are you going to have a multicultural society by anybody's lights, whatever your point of view might be, if there isn't an interchange on that level? Now, these playwrights came in. I remember that festival very well because I was very turned on about it.

I don't want the impression to go abroad that Bill Honan's reaction to it is the definitive one, The New York Times reaction to it was the definitive one because I had a totally opposite reaction to it. I found that festival very exciting. It said things and did things that I wanted to learn about. That was my attitude. What the hell was going on here? I think I see what's happening here and I think it's important for us to find out what it is and I managed to learn about it.

I learned about the tradition of the township theaters that you were talking about. I interviewed all those playwrights and others connected with the festival. I learned a hell of a lot and I wrote a piece in which I tried to transmit some of the stuff that I had learned to readers. I think this is one of the tremendously important qualities that —I don't know what the heck you might call it—critical journalism, cultural journalism. That's your job, I think, not merely to sit passively and say, well, gee, you know, I don't get what's happening here because it doesn't correlate with anything I've been brought up to accept as theater or as the right aesthetic or anything.

I mean, I must admit it does give me the creeps because The New York Times constantly comes up as the whipping boy here and it does bother me because, let's face it, it is the most important and possibly the best newspaper in this country and I hate to see it made a whipping boy but this is why. This is why.

Bill's an awful nice guy and I was thinking if I were the editor of The New York Times and this festival was coming to New York, here's how I would handle it. I'd have a drama critic and he would see these plays and he would do his job by giving critical reaction to these plays. Fine. Whatever that might be. But I would also want to find someone to do another piece with intimate, with what this culture, this theatrical culture, brand new to our eyes and ears, never seen before in this country, someone tell us what's going on here. So my critics would do their job and, as the paper of record, you'd also have another point of view.

That's why The New York Times becomes the whipping boy, because much too often it doesn't do that sort of thing and it just had damn well better do it. That's its job, its responsibility. It has a public trust, for God's sake. And it can't just sit back on its haunches—you thought I was going to say something else—and just do business in the normal way. Meanwhile, the tremendous cultural upheavals are going on all over the world, new aesthetics are cropping up all over the world. Many of them are coming here. It's our job to understand what the hell they're all about, you know? And if that's not obvious, I don't know what is.

Q.—My question to Sylvie is, in light of what you've said, I'd like to ask you because

I really don't know what the impact and the reaction to and the fallout from Peter Sellar's Pacific Rim Festival was in the Los Angeles community

Drake—Well, there was very little theater connected with it. There was a great deal of dance and music and a certain amount of graphic arts, sculpture arts and things like that.

I think that the best festival Los Angeles every had in terms of an international festival remains the 1984 Olympic Arts Festival which was extraordinary and which was largely Euro-centric, very much in the tradition that we're all accustomed to.

What Peter tried to do is something entirely different and as much for the critics, I think, as for the public, it was a question of becoming acquainted with other forms.

What was interesting about it was that it did draw out audiences but, again, on a one-shot basis. I mean, they came out, saw these pieces, were happy to see them and then withdrew within their communities. It did not have a lasting impact in terms of bringing people together.

Q.—Should an older white man critique—just to use an example—a play written by a 30-old black woman?

Drake—Yes.

Q.—I would like to know why and do you perceive any problems with this and, if there are problems, why is the answer yes?

Drake—I don't perceive any particular problems with it. You get into areas that have been argued over and over and over again. Jack Jackson, who runs the Inner City Cultural Center in Los Angeles, did a production of Macbeth that was pretty off the wall many years ago. And we had a discussion. I've known Jack for a long time because actually my master's thesis at the [Pasadena] Playhouse was about the Inner City Cultural Center. We would have a discussion and then he would stop it by saying, "Well, you don't understand because you're not black."

I think that's a very dangerous argument. It would be just as dangerous if I said you're not doing the right kind of theater because it doesn't conform to my norms or to my understanding of what the culture should be. What I was objecting, at the time, to was not so much a concept as an inability to deliver the concept, which is an entirely separate thing and that I think is a justifiable argument.

I don't think that you can disqualify yourself from judging something if you know that you go in without any axes to grind and with a very open mind about what the possibilities of the event can be.

Honan—The New York Times was taken to task and I'm not here officially so I don't want to respond to all of these questions but I would like to say, in answer to the young lady in the back there, that The New York Times does a very vigorous job, as all of you who read the Sunday newspaper know, of trying to get expert voices into the paper when arts works are about to be presented of a type that may be unfamiliar to our readers or even if the art works are familiar if we can find some writer that can bring a special insights into the work, we work very, very hard at that.

If I may just respond to Jack. Jack is also a nice fellow but I do disagree with what he said. The New York Times did devote more space to that festival we've been talking about I think than any other publication in the country. Mine was certainly not the only voice and we did endeavor to interview the writers, the director I think and find out what was in their minds.

It was also equally important to take a critical look at it and that difficult job I assigned to myself at that time. I felt that that was equally important to do. Both things are important and I'm glad to hear that you did both also, Jack, and the fact that we came out on different sides of it shows that it is not only artists and critics who disagree. Critics disagree here. That's healthy also.

Kroll—It's very important for critics of one culture to engage with the works of another culture. I suggested a supplementary approach to this kind of work. When it's impossible for space reasons for a news magazine to do this, it falls to one guy to do it.

But one final point about that. One service—service is a weak word to describe this—it's your job as a critic. If there's something that comes along that is foreign to you because it's foreign to you, because there are things that are foreign to every human being, it's your job to find out about it, to learn about it. You're learning for the reader, for the reader. The reader doesn't know. If you don't find out, then he doesn't know and you don't know and nobody knows. You must find out.

OyamO—Yeah. I was going to say cause someone did say something about a critic or critics being teachers and there is a lot that critics can teach us about new theater, about new writers. They can teach us but it doesn't necessarily mean that they should promote us, okay? And it has something to do with what Jack was saying, finding out information to provide some kind of context in which to say whatever it is you're going to say about the work.

I think it really depends very much on the individual critic. Some critics will say I should teach about it or I should promote it and others will say no and I think that's fine. I mean, they're as individual as artists are.

I do think that critics should spend a little more time breaking the rules that they admire us for breaking boldly. I don't think that they should follow the rules necessarily of the editors and publishers and so forth. When critics don't break the rules, I'm a little bit disturbed about that.

As for white people reviewing black people or Hispanic people or whatever, I don't see any kind of problem with that as long as you just approach it with an open kind of mind. I mean, almost every student that I have or have had as a matter fact in the last several years has been white. They like me better than they like their white teachers. There's a reason for that. I'm very, very, very open and I like the students. I like my students and even though I have my problems with Western civilization, I have no problem with helping them to try to understand it and to try to be honest and to express themselves and I enjoy attempting to inspire them because you can't teach writing and so forth and you can't teach talent.

All the important things about writing are the things that you cannot teach but you can try to inspire them and be open enough to these students. Sometimes I get plays that are just downright racist as they're read in class and you have all the rest of the class members looking over at you, seeing how you're going to respond. I tell them, be honest and let's look at this, question it, think about it, provoke them, so forth and so on and you'd be surprised at the results that they come about.

We have not been utilizing the resources that are available to us to help this theater, American theater, stand up and move on.

There's a great deal of fear in American theater and I know everyone wants to earn a living and so forth. I think we're just going to have to disabuse ourselves of that notion cause if you stand up for anything chances are your salary is going to be threatened and that's just the way it is so you just have to accept that, if you're going to be great artists and be courageous and be bold. Just do it.

Jerry Horton—Those of you who followed the Los Angeles experience, it was not the critics that killed LATC and we're talking about new audiences. Your view, Sylvie, and your crowd really tried to develop that audience and thank you a lot.

I wish that the theater critics were more like the literary critics. They say this is the worst novel he ever wrote but he doesn't say at the bottom and for Christ's sake don't buy it. They just say of all of his work this is one that you're not going to like as much as the rest of them but it's never the don't go see it.

Q.—Jeff Horowitz, Theater for a New Audience. When a theater is producing classics from the European tradition, how do you feel when those classics are cast with actors of varying ethnic backgrounds and those actors keep their ethnicity in accent and behavior? How do you feel about that? Do you feel that there has to be a neutrality or then can preserve their ethnicity?

Drake—It's fine with me as long as they make it compelling theater. I mean, I have only one standard and that is make me want to stay in that seat and make me want to watch the play. I've seen it go either way. It's a very simple thing really.

Honan—I fully agree with that. You have to take it on a case-by-case basis. Does it work or doesn't it?

I would like to respond to Jerry's point about critics who say don't buy it. I'm just going to try to compress this into a few sentences but a subject that we have not discussed today is the editing of critics which is something that I've had a good deal to do with over the years.

We have developed standards at The New York Times and I think some of these standards are shared by other publications but they involved such things as this. I can recall dealing with one very fine New York Times critic who got very worked up, very passionate, about denouncing a particular theatrical production and went on to mention the advertisers in the program and said they shouldn't advertise to support such nonsense and went on to say that they had received, evidently, in the program it said they had received a grant from the National Endowment for the Arts and they didn't deserve one.

Well, we got together and we cut that out. I can tell you at The New York Times there is a very tough standard that we hold our critics to and we say yes, tell them. We'll come back to them and say if their judgment of that work is not clear, make it clear, but, on the other hand, don't go beyond that and try to attack their financial underpinnings or say that they don't have a certain grant. Or don't say the only reason the playwright could have written that is because he hopes to make a million dollars in Hollywood. We don't know that and unless the playwright has come out and said that, that's an unfair remark.

Linda Winer—I'd like to talk a little bit more to the woman who wanted, a 30-year old black woman to review the 30-year old black woman play because I don't think it needs to be dismissed. The problem is that we can't have vulcanization of critics and we can't have a gay critic to review all the gay plays and a woman to do all the woman plays and we wouldn't even want it. But the problem is that because it is so monolithic, because through no fault of the white 50-year old men, it happens to be a job that is basically controlled by white 50-year old men. They got that way by accident and because there's so little diversity in the complexion, I mean in the largest possible sense, of critics of America, we're in a bind because I go to a play with all good intentions and trying to believe I am a reasonably sensitive person and still have to deal with the shifting sensitivities of the shifting public.

If I can be New-York centric for a moment, just talk about big shows, the big New York commercial shows. There was a production, a black production, of "Okay" a few years ago. It was middle-class fluff when it was a white play and it was middle-class fluff when it was a black play but I thought that it was entertaining. Frank thought that it was a minstrel show and I got up the next morning and thought, oh, shit, did I miss this? I thought I was a sensitive person.

I have gay friends that believe that "Six Degrees of Separation" is homophobic and black friends that thing that "Six Degrees of Separation" is racist and I have gay friends who think that "Falsettos" is homophobic and Jewish friends who think it's anti-Semitic. I didn't take a poll, I wasn't in New York at the time of the opening of "Will Rogers Follies" but I believe I'm the only one who noticed that it was the return of the tits-and-ass show, that is, the return of the tired-businessman show at a time when I don't think anybody really cares that much about the tired businessman any more. In fact it may be just a coincidence but the only two women who reviewed "Dancing at Lughnasa" in New York this season, Mimi Kramer and me, were the only two people who thought five horny women with no lives for two hours and 45 minutes was boring.

But, we can't have affirmative action on who's going to do criticism and we can't have quota systems but it would be real nice if there were more different kinds of people because even I know there's lots of stuff I don't get even if I do my homework and learn all about another culture as much as I can.

OyamO—I was going to say to that young lady, having someone who's the same as you doesn't necessarily guarantee that they're going to see the play the way it's supposed to be seen. I recently was attacked by a black critic from a black press in New York for all the wrong reasons. It's because there was a lot of cursing in the play and she didn't understand that and it was about some black guy who organized a union in 1932, someplace in Georgia. She called my play brilliant garbage and at the same time just about all the, white critics either gave it a very good review or a very mixed review. So, you know, you can't really tell.

Q.—When I used those two examples, in particular, I didn't specifically mean that black women should be critics for black women's plays and just to add to part of what Linda was saying, personally, I think if indeed the traditional critic is going to review anything, I think it's everybody's responsibility to believe what a certain culture is telling them about something.

You talked about how half your friends thought "Falsettos" was anti-Semitic—no, no, your Jewish friends. Some. Okay. They're complicated but I personally find a very lack of listening and connection and communication in general. That's why I used the traditional critic in that comparison because if there's a significant amount of gay people who think that it's gay-bashing, not necessarily in your situation, Linda, but if that is the case, then it up to the heterosexual community to believe them.

Winer—Well, first of all, "Falsettos" was written by a gay Jewish man so, it gets confusing and I think that it's sort of my point. It's a mush out there right now and people are raw and there are so many conflicting sensitivities. I sit there and say, well, I'm not insulted. Should I be insulted? Will someone else be insulted?

I don't want to have those thoughts and yet it's impossible not to because it is a very, very tricky world out there right now and we can't escape it because we're writing about something that's changing all the time on the

stage and we're talking to a public that's changing. So, I'm just saying it's hard.

Honan—I think it's been made clear that we hope that the critics that we employ are going to be capable of reaching beyond their origins and appreciating new culture as it evolves. We're not always successful. Critics wear out.

I'm not going to mention any names but I'll tell you about one critic who's initials were Bosley Crowther. He wrote a rave review of a movie called Cleopatra with a nine or $10-million budget in which Elizabeth Taylor played the title role and he thought that was the greatest thing since sliced bread. A few months later he dumped on Bonnie and Clyde, saying it had no relevance to American society and was just really obnoxious. Within a very short period of time he was no longer the chief film critic of The New York Times. Critics do wear out. They do get beyond their usefulness and it's up to editors and managers at publications that are on their toes to recognize when that comes about and to take the hard and difficult steps of replacing them.

Q.—The panel on the shifting public is a little bit of an undercurrent to this conference on the shrinking public and there's been acknowledgement of the shrinking space in most media. I'd like to say there's a correlation between the shrinking space and the shrinking public and also I think that the attitude we've heard from critics and from editors is that that's a fait accompli. I'd like to know why we're not screaming bloody hell about this.

Drake—I would love to reclaim the space. I think that it has a lot to do with the shifting editorial policies of most newspapers and the importance that is being placed on entertainment as opposed to art coverage. More and more in our own paper we have box office reports. We deal with the business of art instead of dealing with the art of art and I think that it's a reflection or again it's an interaction with what we see happening in Washington, the attitude towards the arts there.

It seems to be prevalent and how to change a publisher or an editor's mind, I wish I knew. Don't think we don't scream. We do. But it doesn't seem to do us much good.

Brustein—I'd like to do a little summing up. There are two points I'd like to make.

One about my friend Frank Rich. I think there was a lot of feeling that The New York Times, willy-nilly, has become an extremely important, dominating creature in regard to the life of the theater in this country and anyone who fills that position would be in the odd position of really functioning something as a bully in regard to the activity that's going on throughout the country and the theater and we've all been putting our minds together as to how this problem can be alleviated but it is a condition, rather than a man. That's the problem here.

The second point I'd like to make is to express regret that nobody from The Boston Globe felt obliged to show up at the conference.

Finally, I think we've had a sense, and almost everyone has testified to this, about the fact that America seems to be in fragments, that the theme is disintegration rather than integration, that there's a separatism going on, a great number of myriad units that don't seem to be having much communication with each other.

And I think one of the functions of this particular conference was to find a way to try to, if not unite two warring facts, at least to establish some forms of communication between them, namely journalism as represented by theater critics and the artists.

Although I don't think we've done that, I think we have clarified a lot of the issues that are dividing us and I think there are also some ways have been suggested whereby bridges can be created.

One of them is this question of having the critic know a little more about the process of theater and, again, there are many ways to do it. If critics could just spend two days sitting around a table with actors and directors and designers when they are doing their table sit and penetrating plays, I think those that don't know about this process will recognize it is probably one of the most profound, scholarly experiences they will every have, where every single moment of that particular play is explored from every point of view, decisions are made, rejected, others are made and rejected and what you eventually see on the stage, if you've been really dealing with a company that has paid this kind of attention to the text, is a very considered decision.

Let me simply make the point that company work, repertory work, does create a critic-proof theater because it keeps productions in the repertory that may not have been liked at all by the critics when they first appeared. They are given a life. They are not subject to a critic's particular prejudices, whims or even his proper opinions. If they're any good, they'll stay in the repertory and the public gets a chance to make up their mind over a period of time.

Now, the other bridge I think that might join the critic and the artist was suggested by OyamO and that is we share a common problem. Some weeks or months ago Cokie Roberts of PBS really shocked those of us in the cultural community by suggesting that maybe it was time for the National Endowment for the Arts to fold up its tent and go away. Within weeks of that statement the conservative elements of Congress turned around, wheeled around, as is their want, and started looking at Public Broadcasting, of which Cokie Roberts is a part-time member. What that demonstrated to all of us is we're all in the same boat.

The journalists have to recognize that artists also have First Amendment rights that have to be protected and they have to help us protect them. You start taking away the rights of artists for whatever reason and the journalist rights will begin to go as well. The First Amendment is under attack today and it's under attack by a number of people and under a number of disguises but, nevertheless, it is under attack and I think one thing that can unify us is the recognition that we will not be functioning in the arts and journalists will not be functioning very well in journalism if we don't recognize that fact, join together and fight it.■

Books

Lack of Sufficient Space, Time and Resources Limits Newspapers Ability to Cover Field

By Constance Casey

The point of newspaper book reviews? The point is pretty simple—to tell people whether a book is any good. Newspaper book reviews aren't the first rough draft of literary criticism; they really are a consumer guide, pragmatic and unintellectual as that sounds. But they're a kind of consumer guide written by the intelligent and curious writer for the intelligent and curious reader.

The state of newspaper book reviews? There aren't enough of them. There aren't enough of them that are sharp and informative and engaging. The shortage springs in part from the limitations of newspaper life, and in part from the limitations of human nature, including the difficulty of writing well.

Sticking to the point of saying whether a book is good or not doesn't mean you're going to be unduly stern with the author. When people ask how to start thinking about a book review, I suggest asking just two questions. First, what were the author's intentions? Then, does he or she succeed or fail? These questions make you stick to what's actually on the pages and keeps you from complaining that the author didn't write the book you think he or she should have. Having done your duty to the author, you're then free to leap on stage and assert what you think about the subject. The best book reviews usually linger to identify and appreciate some essential quality in the book.

The limitations of newspaper life (no time, no space, no money) loom large these days. Like many other ambitions, editors' dreams of a freestanding Sunday book section, with full-page ads from bookstores and publishers, are on hold. In fact, most newspapers have trimmed the space given to book reviews and cut the budget for freelance reviewers.

Tough guy Nelson Algren once described a critic as "someone who has turned assessing the failures of better men into a comfortable livelihood." Any reasonably humane book editor hates to pay a good reviewer less than $200. That pay hardly constitutes a comfortable livelihood, figuring at least a couple of days for reading and a minimum of six hours for writing.

When the budget is halved, the editor may choose to run some wire-service reviews, for which the paper has already paid, rather than cut any freelancer's rate. Prepackaged reviews make the editor's job easier, but running a wire review reduces the number of opinions abroad in the world and lessens a book's chances of finding an appreciative reviewer. Wire-service stars Jonathan Yardley and Richard Eder are good, but they're not infallible.

Going by placement in the paper, it's clear that book sections are not seen as sexy or glamorous, or even moderately attractive. Only the The New York Times, The Washington Post and The Los Angeles Times have separate Sunday book sections. The San Francisco Chronicle's reviews get the cover and first pages of a Sunday section including art and music, while The Chicago Tribune, Boston Globe and Miami Herald tuck books into a Sunday arts section. The Philadelphia Inquirer once had a separate tabloid book section, albeit shared with gardening and numismatics. Now The Inquirer's book reviews are folded into a broadsheet with architecture, art, and music—what editors consider the less appealing arts.

Instead of being treated as something dusty, dry and good for you, book reviews should share space with reviews of movies, popular music and theater. Why is it we don't think this way: Reading—another fun thing to do over the weekend. The bookstore—an alternative to the multiplex cinema. Books—an important expression of our culture and the most important part of entertainment coverage for the intellectually curious.

The eternal pressure to stay on top of the news sometimes turns book reviewing into a grind and mitigates against good writing. This is not merely a matter of having to cover the Hot Book fast so you don't look dead in the water because your paper's review appears a month after The Times's opinion has

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been quoted in ads. There's a practical factor to consider—the review has to be published near the book's publication date, so the book will be on sale when the newspaper reader goes looking .

As in other newspaper realms, the pressure to be timely makes it hard for a book editor to stop and step back and look at the big picture. When editors make the effort to get some perspective into the book pages, the results can be wonderful. Michael Dirda, Washington Post Book World assistant editor, recently reviewed the Bible, answering the question: Is the Good Book any good?

A 4,000-Word Review Of Alexander Pope

At The San Jose Mercury News, I ran a ruminative and witty 4,000-word review of a biography of Alexander Pope. The piece stretched across four tabloid pages, and it was not easy to get graphically thrilling art to break up the blocks of print. The review was the result not of my editing genius, but of the admirable stubborness of the reviewer, Pulitzer Prize-winning poet Carolyn Kizer. (A friend at the paper suggested I could get anything by Kizer into the section, no matter what length, as long as the signature line read, "Carolyn Kizer, like The San Jose Mercury News, has won a Pulitzer Prize.") My knuckles were sharply rapped by three tiers of editors, until an unprecedentedly large number of uniformly appreciative letters rolled in.

Whatever the innovations of other papers, the overwhelming reality of the newspaper book world is the predominance of The New York Times Book Review. The Times Book Review is bigger, better staffed and more important to the publishing industry than any other book section. It has nine full-time editors, six copy editors and two part-time editors compared to The Washington Post's staff of six editors and The Los Angeles Times Book Review's four (including two part-time) and most mid-sized papers staff of one. There are nearly 50,000 books published every year. (Compare this to about 100 major movies. Few movies go unreviewed; four-fifths of the books published are ignored.)The editor of the one-person section can't do more than skim the book, get an impression as to whether it's worth reviewing, and make a fast judgment about which reviewer is going to click.

For any book editor, it's tempting to take the path of least resistance. It's always easier not to push yourself to assign and edit imaginatively, though that might result in a great review.

Some Times Reviews Sound the Same

This seems to happen at The New York Times as well as at the one-person sections. People have stopped reading Michiko Kakutani, The Times's undeniably talented daily reviewer, because she seems to be reviewing the same book over and over. Someone keeps giving her sensitive 214-page novels that she almost invariably describes as "luminous" and "spare." Meanwhile Times workhorse Herbert Mitgang keeps getting all the 897-page biographies of World War II generals or New Deal cabinet members. The third member of The Times daily reviewing team, Christopher Lehmann-Haupt, plays utility infield, covering Elmore Leonard, computer books, atlases, biographies of quarterbacks. No Times editor ever seems to say to Mitgang, "How about something lean and spare and sensitive, Herb?" And, apparently no editor ever says, "Kakutani, don't you think you've done a few too many luminous novels in a row? Next week, how about a history of the American League and the new Harry Crews?"

There are some false ideas abroad about the effect of human nature on book reviews. Book editors aren't out to destroy authors. The book editor's greatest dream is to discover the next Amy Tan or Louise Erdrich, the new Philip Roth. A good book is news. Despite the popular view of critics as ogres, reviews run about four favorable to one negative. Most novelists will return a book rather than write a negative review of another novelist's work. Reviewers err on the side of kindness, especially when dealing with local authors or publishers.

In 1985 the Los Angeles Times media critic, David Shaw, tracked down and effectively dispelled some conspiracy theories about bad reviews. Book editors, if anything, are more sensitive now to producing a fair review. Every editor asks a potential reviewer, "are you a friend or enemy of the author?" Still, the publicity director, the publishing house editor and, above all, the author have a tendency not to be able to see a bad review as simply a bad review. For reasons of self-protection that are understandable, they're very willing to interpret a negative opinion in a conspiratorial way.

Negative can have its uses. Identifying the bad books is a way of honoring the good ones. Sometimes a bad book can elicit a wonderful review. The best review of the last decade was Carolyn See's reaction to Kitty Kelley's Nancy Reagan biography. It was humane, forgiving and funny. Sometimes The New York Times or The Wall Street Journal gives Spy editor Joe Queenan a Robin Cook medical thriller or a Gary Jennings historical novel and the result is extremely funny. The New York Review of Books produced the mother of all brilliantly negative reviews by assigning Gore Vidal to write a review covering every book on the fiction bestseller list.

Newspaper critics have a special problem that literary critics don't have. What do you do when someone who works for your paper writes a book? The review is compromised from the start. Run a negative review and, no matter how fair it is, some colleague will snub you in the cafeteria. Imagine being the book editor at The Washington Post and seeing in the fall publishing catalogs news of books by Bob Woodward, Carl Bernstein, David Ignatius and Sally Quinn. (Meanwhile, you know that Katharine Graham is at work on an autobiography.)

One solution is to print a neutral announcement that this book by a staffer is about to appear and here's what it's about. A fair solution, but it doesn't make for fascinating reading.

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Films

Somewhere There's a Place for Critical Thought About Movies —And It's Not Thumbs-up or Thumbs-down

BY JANET MASLIN

FILM REVIEWING IS PLAGUED by one-digit criticism, the offending digit being the thumb. Thumbs up: I loved it, go see it, I laughed, I cried. Thumbs down: I hated it, so you will, too. The full alphabet was once required for communicating a useful opinion about a film, but these days a wave of the hand has become a ready substitute. When even the high sign becomes too taxing, there are stars or numbers or exclamation points to do the trick.

How did this brand of critical shorthand become so respectable, and even so welcome? The reasons are easy to see. First there is the influence of television, itself an even more accessible art form than film. As it happens, television isn't generally subjected to the same one-note critical approach. Television programming is too overpowering and too self-evident to excite much instant opinion-making of this kind.

But when television addresses itself to other cultural realms, it promotes quick verdicts and easy answers. These days, television favors entertainment-minded programs that make yes-no criticism look legitimate, or at least look easy. And television encourages thinking geared to the quiz show or the sound bite, instant assessments no matter what the subject. In that context, awarding some film three stars or a 7 rating begins to seem a reasonable thing to do.

The speedier and more widespread availability of new films has also been a factor in reducing criticism to the level of snap judgment. When the average film was made and marketed less extravagantly, it was possible to unveil it at a few well-chosen theaters and wait while word of mouth began to spread. Few film distributors can afford that luxury anymore, and so the 2,000-screen opening has become commonplace. ("Batman Returns" arrived at nearly 3,000 theaters simultaneously last June.) Unlike even a sure-to-be-popular novel, which will take at least a week or two to become widely exposed, a new film can be ubiquitous literally overnight. That kind of assault invites a critical response that is obvious and blunt. When the most talked-about new film hits the neighborhood theater and the neighbors themselves haven't had time to go see it, the critic's function becomes leaping into the breach.

That would not happen so easily if the films themselves did not so often warrant one-note opinions. But the age of high-concept filmmaking from the big studios has brought about a similarly high-concept approach to critical thought. Let us say, for instance, that a studio thinks it's wise to film a story about a lounge singer pretending to be a nun. Someone must have summarized "Sister Act" that way at some stage of its genesis. And the finished product, not surprisingly, remains prone to capsule description. So the role of the critic can be reduced to describing whether Whoopi is good, whether the premise is funny and whether the whole thing looks like a winner.

That winner mentality, encouraged by the brand of entertainment journalism that keeps its eye firmly focused on the bottom line, is another factor behind so much of today's quick-fix film criticism. Deciding who would or would not reign as a major star, or which project was destined for hit status, used to be the province of the fan magazines. Today one is virtually a film illiterate unless one knows how much such-and-such cost to make, what it grossed on its first weekend and where it stands on the box office charts.

Such phenomena are by no means uninteresting. They often reveal a lot about the film-going public. (The quick falloff of "Batman Returns," for instance, said something about the shallow appeal of comic-book confections and the way in which a whirlwind marketing campaign could eclipse an actual movie.) But when the big numbers are allowed to come first, then the little numbers—"All told, I give it a three"—are sure to follow.

Many years ago, I reviewed films for a teenage girls' magazine that awarded hearts to romantic films, hatchets to violent ones, and so on. I did this terribly, and I know how lucky I am not to have to do it today. Happily, there are still many newspapers that afford their critics the space and format for developing complicated opinions. Those newspapers understand that extracting

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Classical Music

Critic Should Help Listeners Think for Themselves Rather Than Give Advice on What to Buy

By Lesley Valdes

Service has always been an important aspect of journalism but as a music critic the role of consumer advocate is one I deeply resist. It strikes me as a dangerous way to blur the increasingly fuzzy boundaries between art and commerce—an encouragement of the materialism that has so long infected our society.

The critic ought to be wary of becoming a roving shopper for an arts-style Consumer Reports; a sonata or symphony hardly being something to price-shop the way you look for a VCR or toaster oven. Art is not a commodity no matter how much the international recording industry or American marketers or newspapers' Home Entertainment sections try to convince us otherwise.

Yes, we pay a price most evenings to enter Carnegie Hall but in the best of all possible worlds—or in just a more enlightened society—the ticket would be understood as a service charge for using the space—not for the experience of Beethoven's Pathetique sonata.

Art in any form is an extremely personal phenomenon, a communication between one spirit and another. It's hard to put a price on that let alone the stars editors bid us apply to record reviews.

More important than advising readers where to put their money regarding Beethoven's philosophical late quartets or Mozart's incomparably human operas, is advising them how to think for themselves when assessing music. And how to trust their feelings in the presence of familiar and unfamiliar works.

No, I don't see my role as an advocate for the arts consumer because I deplore the notion of the arts being consumed rather than experienced, reflected upon and wrestled with. I would also resist recommending a favorite recording for purchase, I'm enough of a maverick to urge anyone to attend a live performance of an opera rather than listen to a critically acclaimed recording of the same. But distaste for the spliced-to-infinitude state-of-the-art recording industry is another story.

"How do I know you're qualified to tell me which are the definitive performances?" a woman asked at a panel discussion involving music reviewers several years ago. Whereupon I confessed to not believing in definitive performances and to wishing readers could stop wanting them.

Emotions in Music Difficult to Verbalize

Is it in our nature or our civilization that we require a specialist in every field and a state-of-the-art certificate on every possible endeavor?

Composers express emotions and aspirations in music that they cannot express in words. These feelings are difficult to pin down and define; their meanings and certainly their nuances alter every time they enter a different interpreter's bloodstream. Then along comes the critic, another human filter, and tells you how she perceived the artistic experience, what it suggested to her, could have suggested to you, might have meant to Beethoven.

We are dealing in elusivities here. No matter how fine or extensive her credentials, the critic is not the final arbiter on the performance in question. If you were there, you, the listener, are.

Nobody believes me when I say this. And it certainly isn't said to diminish some of my colleagues' considerable expertise or my own hard-won credentials as a musician and teacher and, over the last 12 years, a journalist.

A good critic will fairly soon—say, within the first half-dozen reviews—demonstrate her criteria for assessing music, musicians and their events. Whether you see in toto this list of standards is irrelevant. (Correction: maybe newspapers should routinely print such a list. While they're at it, I'd also like to append, Surgeon General style, the following to reviews: WARNING: The commentary that follow has not been written to dissuade you from attending this concert. Music matters, No matter what she writes: Please Go.)

When criteria are present and solid they foster this favorable posture: The critic as liason between performer and listener/reader. I give you, in random

Lesley Valdes was a scholarship student at the Peabody Conservatory in Baltimore. From 1966 to 1975 she performed and taught piano. In 1978 she created a freelance column on Latin food for The Miami News. Its popularity won her a full-time job as arts reporter, dance critic and Kitchen Calle Ocho columnist. Moving to New York, she was a staff reporter and music critic for Women's Wear Daily and W. For the last five years she has been music critic of The Philadelphia Inquirer.

order, qualities nearly always present in fine performanes, and urge you to name your own:

Finesse.

Playing with style, regardless of whether it is appropriate to the musical epoch in question.

Proportion.

Expressivity that coheres, gives music its shape and form. You should not have the sense of any section being overcooked or underdone.

Security.

A gymnast who keeps slipping off the bar is worrisome; so is a pianist suffering memory lapses or unable to accommodate treacherous runs.

Conviction.

The interpretor really has an interpretation, a meaning and direction for the work.

Projection.

The player communes not only with Schubert but is sending sigals to you.

Enjoyment.

Yes, the performer ought to be enjoying Haydn's humor and Mahler's angst, although she doesn't have to go to Bernsteinian lengths to prove it.

Intensity.

All great art shares the quality of intensity, John Keats, wrote. Were you, note-by-note, compelled?

"How much responsibility do you have to the performer?" the director of a graduate-level singing school asked recently. He was speaking for a singer, one in a sizably cast opera, who was disapointed when the review came out and he was only named. The director, a former singer, said that now that he was an administrator he had more compassion for the critic's trying to balance a review so that it included a production's musical and theatrical values. When he was a singer he also would have been downtrodden to be so briefly mentioned.

Had his singer-friend sung very well I would have been remiss in neglecting to say so. But he'd done a mediocre job in a minor role; so that it was more sensible (and kinder) to save my space for the stronger portrayals as well as the quite correctable problems of the orchestra pit.

A good critic is always juggling issues worth discussing with the individual performances of the same work. How could this Queen of the Night improve her portrayal; Why doesn't Sarastro need to? Why is filmmaker Ingmar Bergman's vision of "The Magic Flute" so compelling? What makes Stravinsky's "The Soldier's Tale" seminal chamber work?

Many spatial decisions are obvious. A world premiere demands that more paragraphs be used describing the new work and putting its composer in perspective than on its concert-partner, say, a Brahms symphony.

A famous soloist who hasn't been in Philadelphia in a decade or a young debut artist is sure to gobble up the space. Unless something else on the program, say, the guest conductor, rivetingly snares the attention. Unless everything sounded so routine, the critic couldn't concentrate on anything but the similarities between Ravel's inventive orchestration and its timbral influence on another program-partner (composer) Bernard Rands.

Wouldn't you rather read an essay on how to spot the orchestral thumbprints of famous composers than "It was another ho-hum evening at the Academy of Music?"

Critics are writers; why do people forget that? Writers, regardless of their subject, rely on their imaginations and return, again and again, to their obsessions. Mine concern the need to make connections between music and the other arts, to show what Mozart's women and Jane Austen's characters have in common, how Bachelard's ideas about reverie and space are evoked by the French composers Olivier Messiaen and Henri Dutilleux, how Wagner's "Ring" cycle reeks of C.G. Jung and "Dynasty."

Another obsession concerns the preponderance of human attributes—kindness, aggression, eroticism, vanity—that dwell in classical music. These qualities seem more pertinent to artful living than knowing that a passage of Schubert is built upon dominant-seventh chords, although when these harmonies are important I'll try to tell you why. But I'd rather be a critic known for making interesting conections than for handing out scorecards on who played fine and who played flat.

Readers who read critics as group discussion leaders rather than arrogant authorities might find they like us better, too. Ideas are more in need of company (friendlier too) than opinions.

Virgil Thomson's advice to critics applies here, "Don't give your opinion," the late great composer and critic told would-be-music reviewers. Just describe what you heard. "If you describe you will be giving your opinion."

Opinion under the cover of description is always more fun to read. Thomson first made me take a good look at the distinctiveness of Wanda Landowska's artistry when he said that compared to her every other harpsichordist sounded as if they were playing a door buzzer.

On par with the critic's responsiblity to discuss the quality and context of an event, to encourage the investigation of art that deeply matters, to juggle the disparate needs of composer, performer, listener and reader, is the critic's resonsibility to herself.

She must tell her truths as a writer and as a performer. Anyone who has chased ideas on the piano and a computer keyboard knows there's little difference in adrenalin levels between a public recital and an 80-minute overnight deadline, just as any critic worth the trade knows her lineage. She is following the fingerprints of G.B. Shaw and H.L. Mencken, Neville Cardus, Harold Schonberg and the redoubtable Thomson—each of whom played a mean keyboard. ■

Jazz

Critics of Academia's Influence Forget That It Has Long Had An Impact on This Truly American Form of Music

By Hugh Wyatt

When Miles Davis walked into a restaurant, people stared at him —even if they didn't know he was the famous jazz trumpeter. He had that quintessential "jazz look." He wore sunglasses early in the morning and indoors and competed with French models over his choice of designer garb.

On the other hand, when Wynton Marsalis walks into a restaurant, no one looks at him twice, unless they recognize that he is the well-known Juilliard-trained trumpeter who has been widely acknowledged for his twin skills at playing both jazz and European classical music.

Based on the way he looks and acts, Marsalis could be a college professor, a lawyer or any corporate executive. He wears hip French clothes, too, but he still looks as if he's a customer at Brooks Brothers.

Marsalis and his generation of younger jazz musicians have drastically changed the way they are perceived. They appear to be more clean-cut, wear suits and ties and stand erect on stage. Gone is that old stereotyped image of the far-out jazz musician.

Image? Image works well on Wall Street and in corporate quarters, but in jazz, it does not. In fact, the most negative image right now is the image of academia in jazz—an image rejected not only by many older jazz musicians, but by a growing army of fans as well.

This state of affairs, in turn, is usually blamed unquestionably on the undue influence of academia. Consequently, jazz today is in the biggest rut it has ever been in since the music started at the turn-of-the century in the vicinity of New Orleans.

Much of the problem can be traced to critics writing in magazines. They have not done their homework. They do not understand that academia has long had an impact on jazz. Moreover, critics are embued with a phony elitism. Bluntly speaking, what they prefer is jazz performed by drug addicts, or certainly in that style. They want to go back to Billie Holiday.

To these critics, jazz has grown stagnant, static, even bland in its perceived lack of innovation. This negative school contends that today's jazz artists are content to merely clone the work of the founding fathers of this truly American art form. There are no creative standouts anymore, giants like Duke Ellington, Charlie Parker and Davis, they say. Instead, we have young performers, like Marsalis and a handful of others, scrambling to re-create the good old days, forsaking any attempt at innovation.

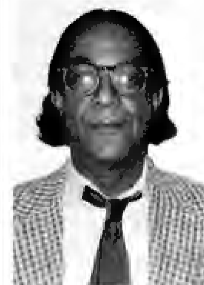
Too much formal training, too many Juilliard graduates, too great a number of conservatory artists and too much intellectualization, assert modern critics of this uniquely American musical form as they assess its current status.

Superficially, the foregoing arguments would seem to have a lot of merit. But they won't really stand up to close examination of the current health of American jazz. It is a music form, after all, that has endured for a century, evolving naturally as the years passed to reach its current status.

And the intellectual residents of academia have always played a role in this evolution without stifling innovation to any lasting degree. As far back as the 1930's, jazz in this country has had an academic edge to it, dating to the era in which scores of African-Americans, some native Americans and European-Americans began to acquire college educations in greater numbers.

Among them, men like Miles Davis and the innovative pianist/composer John Lewis of the Modern Jazz Quartet. He holds a degree in anthropology, of all things, from the University of New Mexico, and is a serious intellectual who has performed at more colleges than night clubs for the last 50 years.

Wayne State University intellectualized Yusef Lateef, with no noticeable damage to the music of the 1950's. Pianist Don Shirley's degree from Harvard certainly didn't set the medium back, either, nor did Duke Ellington's association of the 1960's with Kingman Brewster and the radical chic crowd at Yale.



Starting as a copy boy for The Daily News in New York, Hugh Wyatt became a reporter in 1966 and pop music columnist, specializing in jazz and traditional Irish music, in 1979. He is also health editor of The News, editor/publisher of The Medical Herald and a founder of Inner City Broadcasting, which owns six radio stations and the Apollo Theater.

Nobody accused academia of poisoning modern jazz in the early 1950's when the legendary Modern Jazz Quartet was the darling of the intellectual college crowd, mixing jazz with classical music forms.

And no one would ever accuse either classically bent bandleader Stan Kenton or composer Gerry Mulligan of being blue-collar musicians. There was also Dave Brubeck, who made a fortune playing the college circuit and relying heavily on the same type of formal musical structures more akin to the European classical tradition than jazz.

Drastic Change Came In the Sixties

These players established their track records as pioneers through the Fifties. But by the mid Sixties, the music scene began to drastically change. Led by saxophonists Ornette Coleman and John Coltrane, these musicians moved jazz out of academia and into the avant-garde. They traveled as far away as India to alter the sound of jazz, giving it a distinctive Eastern modal sound. Theymade bebop, which was revolutionary in the Fifties, look tame.

The music, fiery and with tones of black nationalism, reflected the revolutionary spirit of the Sixties, encompassing everything from the civil rights movement to the anti-war protest. The social atmosphere of the day was chaotic and so was the music.

Academia went into further decline in the Seventies, with the arrival of jazz-rock fusion, which was a watered-down version of both modes. Because of the superficiality of the music, many college students, who normally would have been jazz buffs, turned to rock, thereby providing credibility to a music form that was somewhat limited by comparison to jazz.

Traditional jazz musicians and fans appeared to hate fusion even more than the avant-garde. With the latter, while many didn't like what Coleman and Coltrane were playing, they recognized their musical genius and argued that they still had a license to experiment. Many fans noted, however, that their dollars certainly would not pay for the indulgence of these adventurers.

Fusion was also rejected outright for being cheap and crass. Critics said it was a movement by people like Miles Davis, Wayne Shorter, Herbie Hancock and Joe Zawinul, among others, to reap the same awards as their rock 'n' roll cousins.

From this cacophony and chaos emerged New Orleans-born Wynton Marsalis a decade ago, arriving in New York to get his formal musical training at Juilliard. His was a more structured form of music, drawing heavily on the traditions established by such greats as Ellington, Parker, Gillespie and even Louis Armstrong.

All of a sudden, musicians like the young Marsalis showed up in suits and short haircuts instead of shades and outrageous clothing, which had long been de rigueur. They were formal; they were proper, and they didn't use any stagey gimmicks. Oddly, there was soon an army of followers, traditionalists to the core.

And what did the critics say, despite this outpouring of support? They insisted that Marsalis, though obviously a highly talented musician with a wide range of abilities, was not a creative standout in his own right. Again, academia was blamed.

The truth is that whatever the problems of jazz in the 1990's, they cannot fairly be laid at the doorstep of academia. I'm sure it helped Miles Davis. Many Davis watchers said that it was his formal training at Juilliard that enabled him to perform the classic orchestral works he made with Gil Evans in the 'Fifties, which were comparable to any European classical symphonic works.

I don't have the absolute answers myself for the failure on the part of the young turks to carry the music to the next level. I would speculate, however, that one problem might be their lack of knowledge or involvement with the blues as well as religion. Blues represents the foundation of jazz, indeed, American music itself. Perhaps the younger set is ignoring blues because of the raunchy element associated with it, and such masters as Leadbelly, Muddy Waters or even B.B. King. They represent the essence of jazz, and I do not hear that essense in today's jazz.

Religion Inspired Jazz Pioneers

With respect to religion, I have no intention of trying to sell anybody on the merit or validity of the Spirit. But I can assure you that it was the passion and love of religion that inspired the pioneers of jazz. Duke Ellington's greatest work came from his sacred music. Today, it is no secret that the vast majority of younger players do not have a relationship with a church. A case in point: the vast majority of black churches today are filled with women; not men.

If the musician prefers atheisism or agnosticism, then the only recourse is the blues. The musician must inundate himself with the blues. Forgive the cliché, but blues is the heart and soul of jazz. One need only examine the basic structure of jazz to realize the importance of the blues.

One final point. Jazz may be static, but maybe that is exactly where jazz, having become in effect America's classical music, is supposed to be. Change merely for the sake of change ought not to be so highly cherished a notion in an art form that has taken more than 100 years to get where it is.

Perhaps, rather than innovation, what jazz really needs is an altogether new form. It is, after all, a music built primarily on rhythmic, not melodics or harmonics, and it has, in the course of its evolution, always defied the rules. In fact, much of the enduring quality of jazz is precisely because there really aren't any hard and fast rules. Rather than bemoaning a lack of creativity and wailing about waning innovative genius, it seems more valid to use traditional jazz as a foundation for change. Isn't that exactly what Marsalis is doing? But to lay the blame for what is just a part of natural evolution, not a destructive intellectual force, on academia is unfair and not terribly accurate. . In fact, it may just be part of the solution, in the long run. ■

Country Music

Pioneer Critic Is Generally Sympathetic to Singers Voicing Feelings of the Working (and now Welfare) Class

By Jack Hurst

Rather than prompt the titters sure to greet an announced intention to enunciate The Principles of Country Music Criticism, let's begin by noting what this humble niche of the media too often has comprised:

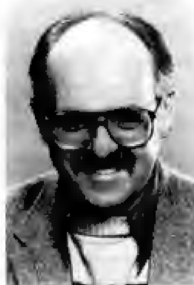
- In the beginning, labored trade—or-fan-directed prose considerably less literate than the music itself.
- Later (and still, in much of the fan-directed press), lengthy and religiously serious analyses of every line, bar and breath of new country records, cassettes and compact discs.
- Throughout the years, waspish commentary by people who were frustrated performers themselves.
- Now, and at every other juncture at which country music has reached the forefront of American media consciousness, half-baked and unsympathetic treatises by journalists who either have personal axes to grind or are uncomfortable with mainstream country music—and, in consequence, can hardly be taken as paragons of knowledge of the field.

Having had the privilege of pioneering ongoing serious coverage of country music in general-interest newspapers South and North (first The Nashville Tennessean, then The Philadelphia Inquirer, and for the last 17 years The Chicago Tribune), I have tried to avoid a vocational designation as Country Music Critic. My reasons were developed by years of attitudes I faced as a person who could read and write and, nevertheless (to the amazement of most of my peers), enjoyed country music. When my first country music report for The Tennessean was written—a public notice that bluegrass masters Lester Flatt and Earl Scruggs and their Foggy Mountain Boys had been nearly mobbed by a 1962 sell-out concert crowd at staid and snobbish Vanderbilt University—I had to fight to print a half-dozen paragraphs about an event that I still think was remarkable. It occurred, after all, in an era when Nashville (to say nothing of Vanderbilt) still considered itself the Athens of the South, Mecca of Learning and Culture. The city's newspapers acknowledged the existence of country musicians only when they caught the fancy of editors by getting shot, arrested, divorced, buried, or married for the third-plus time.

My early country music journalism included a profile of the then-just-emerging Kris Kristofferson (he was, recall, a Nashville singer-songwriter and Rhodes Scholar before becoming a singer, actor and acceptable subject for profiling in People magazine). Shortly thereafter, his song-publisher thanked me with the observation that my treatment of Nashville performers was vastly different from what they had been used to. "You're *for* the act," he wonderingly added.

That pretty much says it. In a general sense, my sympathies are indeed with the country act, and that is the pillar-sized grain of salt with which my ideas on country music criticism, such as they are, must be taken. My views and reviews of the field have tended to be positive—although, I hope, positively constructive. Having begun in an era when country performers had virtually the entire media establishment against them—were, in fact, a "redneck," "hillbilly" minority still denigrated by wealthier classes for whom it no longer was fashionable to make fun of other-colored minorities—I have sought to champion them and, in general terms, their art. I started from the supposition that their work deserved coverage; after all, newspapers weren't in the habit of wasting space on anything that didn't.

All this did, and does, not mean that I have liked everything, or even anything, specific performers did. I



Jack Hurst was born in Tennessee (Maryville 1941), worked his first newspaper job there (Maryville-Alcoa Daily Times), received his degree there (Vanderbilt), became the first full-time country music reporter there (The Nashville Tennessean, 1972) and operates a beefalo cattle farm there. His career on The Teneseean was interrupted by a three-year stint as an Army public information specialist, part of that time in Vietnam. He is now a Chicago Tribune entertainment writer and columnist specializing in country music. He won the Country Music Association's first media award in 1981. His first book, "Nashville's Grand Old Opry," was published in 1975. His second, a biography of Confederate general Nathan Bedford Forrest, is scheduled to be published next spring.

felt obligated, however, to the performers as well as the field's devoted fans to try to understand what each performer sought to accomplish and to judge, not only to my own but also to his audience's satisfaction, how well he had done. Perhaps most of all, I felt obligated to general-interest readers who knew little or nothing about country music to let them know why I thought what I was writing about was important.

That, in fact, is why I long ago chose to begin writing about a field whose commentators recently have proliferated. Country music *is* important and always has been. The American literature of the fiddle and guitar, it even during its less-noticed eras was mirroring the national character—which, remember, is largely that of the working (and increasingly, during the last couple of decades, welfare) classes: an appalling majority of anonymous people who largely determine whether this nation booms or busts.

Country Music Moves To Assembly Lines

Over the last 75 years, country music has followed the bulk of such people from the grinding toil of farm fields into urban blast furnaces and textile sweatshops, onto assembly lines and day labor docks. Just as it soothed, amused and excited the people of Heartland America's agricultural past, it now reflects the relentlessly more metropolitan tastes and concerns of their grandchildren and great-grandchildren.

Nowhere is the question of the relevance of the critic more generally appropriate than in the field of country music. Country fans aren't looking for treatises on why a critic finds a particular album satisfying or inimical to his personal intellectual or socio-political agenda. They want mostly to know if it sounds good. Garth Brooks fans wish to learn how Brooks's latest album compares to his others, and new fans just getting to know Brooks basically want to know the same thing. Ultimately, both groups look to the critic for a clue as to whether to pay money for a performer's album or concert ticket. They typically aren't interested in thumb-sucking, navel-gazing discourses reflective of a writer's deepest psychological needs, aggressions and political philosophies.

In other words, the critic must be more cognizant of his audience's predilections than of his own. At the same time, he must have opinions and try to sway those of others—which he can do, provided he follows a couple of rules listed here in reverse order of importance:

1. Do it subtly.
2. Do it from a part-of-the-audience point of view.

If the critic does not manifest that he likes country music, the field's fans—long accustomed to the sneers of such people, anyway—will end up caring as much about what the critic thinks of a record as they do about what David Letterman thinks of it. And except in the infrequent case of an embarrassingly inferior album by a superstar, the country critic should try to devote his space to praising the many albums worth his attention, not to savaging those that aren't.

The responsible country critic should be more, of course, than a consumer reporter for his field's record buyers. He also is obligated to commend the best, and/or most interesting, of his field's music to the general marketplace. An excellent example is the recent album by sudden sensation Billy Ray Cyrus; it is a package many critics have delighted in bashing for its artlessness while ignoring the compelling aura of its singer. How long Cyrus survives at the top remains to be seen, but he deserved more of an introduction to the American public than he received at the hands of most critics, who generally missed the fact that his Presleyish persona was powerful enough to introduce itself without them.

There are, to be sure, situations that demand a heavier hand, and these are not limited to the reviewing of second-rate records, or second-rate performances, by first-level ticket-sellers. What such reviews should not be, in my view, is exemplified by a recent Newsweek article indicting the Nashville music establishment for the fact that five highly talented but marginally-country performers had not been accepted by the country audience and found it necessary to move on to make their records elsewhere. Nashville record executives aren't always the most imaginative and excellence-oriented people, but over the years they have leaned much more toward diversity than to country traditionalism, and they are hardly to be blamed because country audiences—or, more accurately, country radio executives—so far have been underwhelmed by these particular five excellent performers, doubtless favorites of this writer.

Harshest Review Criticized Awards Show

The harshest criticism I ever recall writing was of a nationally televised California country awards show several years ago whose every title was won by acts signed to a single record company.

Perhaps the country music critic's most important job—and the one offering him the most prospective pleasure and latitude—is the attempt to discover, encourage, and focus public attention on the most compelling of the newest performers on the scene, ones of whom neither new fans nor old are likely to have heard. While working for The Tennessean I was privileged to introduce the Nitty Gritty Dirt Band's enormously important "Will the Circle Be Unbroken" album. Since moving on I have been lucky enough to confer early and often initial national-level consumer press ink on important performers ranging from Reba McEntire and Alabama to Ricky Van Shelton and the previously mentioned Mr. Cyrus.

My early acknowledgment of these performers' work did not "make" their careers. It only, perhaps, made it possible for the public at large to discover them a little more quickly. If there is an important maxim of country music criticism, it is that, apparently unlike his counterparts covering some other fields, the country music critic cannot make or break stars. His job is to provide the wherewithal for that to the final arbiters, the multiplying millions of fellow lovers of the music. ■

Popular Music

Political and Social Realities Can Be Discovered In Serious Criticism of the Medium

By Anthony DeCurtis

Last fall I attended a seminar on media coverage of Africa held at the Freedom Forum Media Studies Center at Columbia University. The two dozen or so participants represented an impressive range of backgrounds and ideological and professional viewpoints.The prevailing opinion seemed to be that coverage was highly inadequate, that it painted an incomplete and unfair portrait of Africa, quite possibly for reasons of an, at best, unconscious racism.

I essentially agree with both those conclusions. But, ultimately, what struck me as odd about the seminar was that coverage of Africa from a cultural perspective was—this time for reasons that might best be described as beneath consciousness—entirely excluded from the discussion. When I raised this point, I met with polite bemusement; it was considered, in near silence, for a moment then the conversation moved on, presumably to what were regarded as more serious issues.

Culture is not only as important as politics in its own right, but also one of the most profound ways in which political and social realities—and the fears and anxieties underlying those realities—find honest expression.

There is simply no question that for the past decade or so popular music has provided the most significant forum in which issues of importance to Africa could be explored and brought to the attention of millions of people. The "We Are the World" single and the Live Aid concert brought the story of famine in Africa into virtually every American home. A series of concerts organized by Amnesty International dramatized the plight of political prisoners in African countries and around the world. A day-long concert calling for the release of Nelson Mandela, attended by more than 70,000 people in London in 1988, triggered a barrage of media debate about apartheid, corporate involvement with South Africa and, after the broadcast in the United States was stripped of its political content, the moral culpability of the international community.

And when Paul Simon released "Graceland" in 1986, no review of that album could ignore such charged questions as: Was it appropriate for a Western musician, whatever his stature and intentions, to travel to South Africa to record an album in violation of the United Nations boycott? Did Simon's use of black South African musicians and musical styles constitute cultural homage or cultural imperialism? How did his borrowings relate to the entire history of white artists, from Picasso to the Rolling Stones, who have drawn inspiration and perhaps more than that from African and African-derived sources?

In our own country, the current presidential campaign makes grimly palpable the extent to which popular music—and specifically rap—has become a cultural battleground. Is it possible to discuss the work of Ice-T or Sister Souljah in purely aesthetic terms, independent of the attacks on them by the likes of President Bush and Governor Clinton? And, as in the days of Elvis and before, every group interested in limiting freedom of expression—an issue of no small significance to the media—finds a ready target in the world of popular music, one of the few cultural arenas that has routinely admitted the voices of minorities and the working-class.

This is not at all to say that popular music criticism can somehow substitute for incisive, analytical coverage of news issues. High-minded actions by millionaire rock stars will not save the world, and rapping about a problem does not solve it. If artists wish to engage the world of public events either in their work or outside it, their motives and opinions need to be examined as stringently as those of any other public figures.

The most skillful writing about popular music is able to do this, to balance a full array of concerns—the intentions of the artists, the aesthetic worth of their efforts, and their meaning in the surrounding culture—with grace, intelligence and insight.

The primary reason why so much writing about popular music is so bad is that, particularly at newspapers, pop

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music criticism simply isn't taken very seriously. A couple of years ago I ran into a childhood friend who had become a surgeon. When I told him I was an editor at Rolling Stone, he asked, with genuine curiosity, if I thought I might ever be interested in going into "real journalism."

Many newspaper editors, particularly outside major urban areas, share that sense of wonderment about why smart adults who appear normal in every other respect would pursue a career writing about popular music. Such editors don't know much about the music, don't like it and couldn't care less. That attitude obviously cannot help but undermine the quality of coverage. Not only do editors tolerate the sort of bad or silly writing about pop music that they would never put up with in other sections of the paper, they subtly—or not so subtly—encourage it. In their staffing decisions and choice of assignments, they might even be said to create it.

Reporters who couldn't cut it in news or, even more certainly, sports—the area with the most demanding readership and in which the standards of first-rate writing and in-depth knowledge are upheld most rigorously—are routinely busted to the pop-music beat. Liking rock 'n' roll and a tolerance for late nights in the hot clubs and crowded arenas in which the music is performed are thought to be the only relevant criteria for the critic's job. Consequently the music rarely receives the type of probing, authoritative evaluation that is accorded without a second thought to the more traditional arts—theater or classical music, for example—or even to the movies.

If I seem to be singling out daily newspapers for criticism, I definitely don't mean to. Publications that offer more specialized coverage of popular culture—monthly music magazines or so-called "alternative" weeklies—seldom do much better, though their problems are of a different sort. Such publications are typically more adventurous in their coverage, often to the point of being proudly and willfully obscure. The role of the critic is perceived to be something like "Ambassador to the Unhip"; the writing frequently is characterized by a chiding—even, despite all the voguish mannerisms—schoolteacherish tone. Attitude substitutes for perspective and opinions replace ideas.

The unstated question underlying such writing might be said to be: "But why don't you know all this already? It's so tedious to have to explain it to you." The stylistic excesses are sometimes justified as the writer's effort to mirror the energy of the music; in fact, they seem primarily designed to relieve the writer's boredom. Half-digested academic cultural theory combines with witless adolescent posturing and outrageously indulgent first-person rantings to create writing that can be of interest only to the most hardened or masochistic insiders.

Popular glossy magazines, on the other hand, often fetishize celebrity and hold matters of substance hostage to the trends of the moment. "Criticism" in any sense of the term can scarcely be applied to this "Lifestyles of the Rich and Famous" approach to coverage.

In the hands of witty, keen-eyed features writers, such profiles can be fascinating glimpses of lives trapped in the soft hell of notoriety—or they can just be fun, journalistic bon-bons. Most often, however, they serve to inscribe more deeply the idea that the rich and famous are not only different from, but better than, you and me.

Some general observations can be made. The function and meaning of criticism are shifting dramatically in every aspect of our culture. The drama critic at The New York Times may be able to shut down a play with a negative review, but few individual or institutional voices wield that kind of power any longer, and that's almost certainly for the good. Providing guidance to potential consumers of the arts—"Is it thumbs up or thumbs down?"—is one legitimate function of journalistic criticism, but it absolutely is not the only one and it should not even be the primary one.

Besides, given the enormous cultural diversity of many of our country's communities, readers and viewers are becoming increasingly wary of placing their trust in one godlike critical figure. Consequently, the most honest and responsible critical writing these days does not hide behind the troubled, time-worn notion of "objective truth," but offers an informed, clearly stated view that the audience can understand and evaluate, accept or reject. Criticism, however penetrating, should not be regarded as the final word; it should mark the beginning of a dialogue with the audience, not the end of one.

Like all arts writing, popular music criticism should be driven by the power of the writer's ideas, not the real or imagined allure of the subject. That is to say, whether the subject is Madonna or the newest, least-known, least-scintillating band on the local scene, the writer's persepective should provide the story's most lasting impression. Like all writing in general-interest publications, critical writing about even the most rarefied, technically demanding or avant-garde subjects should be accessible to non-specialist readers.

Though Rolling Stone is primarily a music magazine, it does not cover music exclusively and its audience is extremely diverse. Some of our audience began reading the magazine at its inception in 1967 and are in their 30's or 40's; others began reading it last year and are in their teens or 20's. Some people read it for the general-interest features or political coverage; others read it for a broader assessment of the pop cultural scene that includes movies and television, and still others do read it principally for its music coverage.

Moreover, particularly in recent years, significant fissures have developed in the music audience; these are changes in Rolling Stone's readership that reflect changes in the society at large. Some of the magazine's readers are rap fans; others hate it. Some, both young and old, revere the titanic figures of the Sixties; others weary of tales about the good old days of peace, love and granola.

Finding a way to address such a splintered audience is a challenge. To avoid being driven mad, I try, both in my editing of the album review section and in my own writing for the magazine, to summon up an imaginary figure I term

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Art

The Trick Is to Set Down Perceptions and Emotions With Candor and as Little Guile as Possible

By William Wilson

Journalistic critics of all stripes serve the society by playing the role of The One You Love to Hate.

Look at the way critics are portrayed in that most telling of all social mirrors, the cinema. Significantly, they are rarely included at all and then only as a particularly repellent sort of borderline heavy. The fictional theater critic Addison DeWitt played by world-weary George Saunders in "All About Eve" is an impeccable fop who winds up trying to seduce the conniving Eve. That this limp fellow is capable of the seductive urge comes as a surprise and redounds to his credit.

The architectural critic in the film version of Ayn Rand's "The Fountainhead" lusts after power. He peddles influence and is altogether a slimy little twerp. The old thriller "Laura" cast Clifton Webb as a critic. I think his persona pretty much fulfills most people's notion of the type—epicene, vicious and witty. He was, you may recall, also the murderer.

Fictional filmic portrayals of art critics are scarce to the point of rarity. I can think of but a single example. Unfortunately the character in question was a thinly disguised version of a real working journalistic critic.

Me.

The film is called "Heartbreakers" and concerns a couple of L.A. artists. Our hero is portrayed by Peter Coyote whose creative wellsprings have been caused to dry up in reaction to an unfavorable review by The Los Angeles Times art critic, Warren Williams. The two characters finally meet. The critic tells the artist that he now likes his work and is in a position to do his career a lot of good.

This line is followed by a pregnant pause implying the moment when the artist is supposed to offer the critic a gift, a bribe or the favors of his beautiful girlfriend. The artist, an honorable fellow who paints pornographic nudes, keeps mum and the moment passes.

Like an Upstart Used-Car Salesman

It was sort of flattering to be skewered in a movie but the manner of it was dismaying. The actor played me like a upstart used-car salesman. If critics have to be social pariahs, the least the image-makers can do is allow them their old part as vaguely glamorous parasites.

Naturally I don't agree with any of the stereotypes indicated above.

I've been writing art criticism for almost 30 years without ever once feeling dangerous, powerful, slimy or much of anything else except vaguely stressed about meeting a tight deadline.

Maybe that has something to do do with a decision I made very early in what turned out to be a long career writing about the fine visual arts.

In 1965 I was hired as an assistant critic by the then-senior art critic of The Times, Henry J. Seldis. He worried a lot about his role in the community. He worried about what people thought of him. He worried about the effects of his criticism. Since Henry was my mentor I assumed I was supposed to worry too. I did. At about the same time I started getting migraine headaches the size of the Goodyear blimp. Since I had never suffered from headaches I did not like them.

Finally it dawned on me that there was some connection between the migraines and the worrying. Even though I thought this masochistic mental self-laceration was an obligatory part of the job, I decided to stop torturing myself. I commenced to set down perceptions and emotions about art with as much candor and as little guile as I could muster.

It worked. Headaches stopped. Writing time diminished astonishingly. Some art-world types got huffy because the writing lacked the oracular pretensions common to the genre. Others found the work agreeable. It was gratifying that those others tended to include literate members of the lay public and artists. In short, I started my tenure by deciding not to worry about the role of

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the critic. Ever since, when the question comes up I find myself leery and puzzled. There is this feeling that when somebody asks you about the role of the critic what they really want to do is to tell you what it is and how to play it.

Critics have no other obligation than to know what they are talking about, be themselves and write well. Great men of letters have written criticism. George Bernard Shaw was a superb music critic. Great critics write so interestingly one reads them for the sheer joy of watching a deft mind at work. For years I read Pauline Kael's film criticism in The New Yorker while rarely seeing the films she analyzed.

The best critics of the fine visual arts tend to be poets either in fact or by temperament. Poets use words to conjure up physical sensations—odors, tactile sensations, visual images. Artists use imagery to conjure up poetry. If that seems to suggest the best place to read good art criticism is in little specialized literary and art journals I've fudged the point. In practice the clearest and most concise version being written today turns up in general reader publications—newspapers and mass media magazines. So does some of the most pretentious, banal and idiotic.

My own admired colleagues include Robert Hughes of Time magazine, Adam Gopnik of The New Yorker, Peter Plagens of Newsweek, Arthur C. Danto of The Nation and Roberta Smith of The New York Times. There are others like John Ashberry, Hilton Kramer and Peter Schjeldahl but all serve the larger point. Each reveals an unmistakeable voice and temperament complete with personal quirks. Each captures larger cultural resonances so they can be read with interest by people who don't spend their lives within the pristine precincts of the art world.

People have funny notions about the function of the critic. They are supposed to act as aesthetic shoppers' guides to recommend readers to the "best" exhibitions. How do I know what kind of art a reader will like? My job is to write with enough passion so the audience will get curious and go see for themselves. I love it when I get worked up and write some screed that causes a gallery to fill up with people wondering what the hell I was on about.

I don't subscribe to the various roles people want to demand of critics such as being a educator, supporting culture in their community or handicapping fashionable artists for tiny coteries of wealthy collectors. A critic may come out being any or all of those things but shouldn't set out to play such roles. It's a question of intent. People should formulate their own taste. It's part of the sacred task of knowing oneself.

The critic should aspire to the same goals as the artist since at its best criticism is literature. The goal of all artists is to tell the truth as they see it and expose bullshit and mystification. No true artist or writer can be an ideologue. Their way of working is too instinctual. Jean Paul Sartre, for instance, was a brilliant thinker and polemicist but his plays and stories have too many lumpy hunks of existential propaganda sticking out like sitcom commercials. Camus, by contrast, was an artist at heart so that even his polemical writing is full of surprises.

Art critics writing for both a general audience and the cognoscenti face a special task. Of the various arts regularly dealt with by the press the fine visual arts are the most esoteric. The Times's obituary writer, Burt Folkart, knows the most trivial used-car-cult salesman and obscure girl singers of the '40's but he has to call me up to find out if an expired artist was famous.

Educator, Priest, Psychiatrist, Comedian

The perception of the art world is controlled from inside by academics, dealers, collectors, critics and artists themselves. The audience is deprived of the vote it registers in other fields by numbers of tickets or copies of books sold. Thus the art critic is faced with a task of clarification that does in fact include that of educator as well as aspects of priest, psychiatrist and stand-up comedian.

I never think about whether I am writing a favorable or unfavorable review. For me, criticism is not an exercise of judgment but rather an act of empathy. Basically I am trying to discover what I feel about the art at hand. If it weren't for the rigor imposed by the act of writing I'd certainly have the same lazy, shallow reactions I have when I go to a show on a busman's holiday—kind of interesting, I loved it, hated it or felt tepid about it.

So the point is to spark insight and understanding in and for oneself, always provisional and subject to revision as age and experience sharpens the eye and mellows the ego, hopefully some day to the point where one is a pure channel for the experience of the art itself.

But, after all this rather self-indulgent exercise goes into a newspaper that reaches over a million readers a day. What's in it for them? With luck, the same thing that's in it for me, a sense of gestalt, of windows of perception opened.

I cherish the story of an early review written on a young artist's first solo show. His studio was in the same building with an artist I know. They met in the corridor the day of the review.

"I saw Bill's piece on your show this morning. He's coming to dinner tonight. You should meet him. Join us."

"No, I don't want to."

"You can't be like that if you're going to be a pro. Bill's a good guy even if he got your work wrong."

"That's not the problem. He got it right. I worked on that stuff for months. In the back of my mind I knew there was this thing wrong aud I just wouldn't face it. He saw it. I'm just too embarrassed to meet him."

On another occasion I was trying to describe an artist's work with a metaphor. I said that if you were to try to imagine what the guy looked like from seeing his work you would see an overweight eight-year-old with his baseball cap on sideways and ice-cream stains down his sweatshirt.

A colleague who knew the artist happened to read the review before it went to proof.

"Have you ever seen this chap?"

"No."

"Well, that's exactly what he looks like."

I modified the phrasing. No sense in being cruel. ■

Architecture

An Anchor in the Real World Is Necessary To Stimulate a Public Dialogue

BY DAVID DILLON

A GOOD CRITIC IS ALSO a translator and a go-between, who converts the data and the jargon of a profession into terms that the rest of the world can understand. As the architecture critic for a major daily newspaper, I write fur the sometimes fictive general public. My first responsibility is to the bewildered person on the street who sees his city being rebuilt over night and can't make heads or tails of it.

It's a myth that the public doesn't care about architecture. It cares enormously; what it lacks is a language for talking about buildings. It may not understand "frontality" and "massing,", but it cares about light and space, about how to get from the first to the tenth floor, and whether the view is good once you arrive. So I have to stick to the vernacular in hopes of sparking a public dialogue about issues that count.

Sometimes it works. On my desk is a letter from an urban planner praising me for "identifying the important public interest issues" in a proposed downtown development. Next to it is a letter castigating me for ignoring those same issues in favor of "minor considerations fo site and circulation." Local architects urge me to back the hometown boys against "carpetbagging New Yorkers" like I.M.Pei and Philip Johnson. At the bottom of the stack is a handwritten note from an 80-year old suburbanite calling for a screed against all reflective glass buildings. She didn't get it.

Besides letting me know that I'm read—nothing to sniff at in an era of shrinking news holes—such letters keep me anchored in the real world. Which wasn't where I stood eight years ago, when I took this job. My initial job description contained this Olympian statement from critic Henry Havelock-Ellis: "The art of buiding, or architecture, is the beginning of all the arts that lie outside the person."

He may be correct, but the high-minded aesthetic road is a dangerous one for a newspaper critic to travel. Though architecture is certainly art, it is also the product of less rarified matters such as zoning, code, easements, interest rates and the whims of clients and the federal regulators. To focus exclusively on aesthetic issues is to treat buildings as if they were sculptures, and to imply that they are somehow the creations of a single consciousness rather than of a complex political and cultural process. Plan commissions and boards of adjustment can have as much influence on how a project turns out as the architect. The critic who ignores this fact creates a skewed impression of how cities get built.

The danger, of course, is becoming so immersed in these details that you lose perspective. Perspective is the critic's coin, the thing that sets him apart from other reporters. Critics are paid to judge things, to express a point of view. Readers have a right to expect a critic to be thorough and thoughtful, to avoid personal attacks and the cheap shot. But they shouldn't expect objectivity. There is no such thing as objective criticism. It's all subjective.

Mostly I choose my own stories. Some, such as the opening of a new art museum or major revisions in the city zoning ordinance, I couldn't ignore if I wanted to. Other stories—on skyscraper lighting or fast food architecture I write for the hell of it, to amuse myself.

I get story ideas from telephone tips, press releases, reading, gossip. I spend at least one day a week on the streets, looking at new work or re-evaluating old work that may have something new to say. Frequently I travel to other cities in order to answer the inevitable—and entirely legitimate—question, "How does Dallas stack up against such and such?" I visited six new concert halls prior to the opening of ours in 1989. I went to four Sunbelt cities to study downtown renewal plans.

But most of my stories are irremediably and unapologetically local. This is where an architecture critic earns his keep, monitoring the day-to-day changes in his own community, helping readers understand how it works and what makes it special.

The toughest information to get is usually financial. Developers don't like to discuss loan terms and construction costs for fear of aiding the competition. But I've never had an architect refuse

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technical information, which is the only reason I talk to one. I rarely ask an architect to explain his concept of the building, or his intentions. I prefer to visit a building alone and figure those things out for myself. If you need a coach something's wrong.

Architecture is a public art and should make itelf clear to an intelligent lay person. Yet I am not a guide to consumers. My job is more elusive—to raise public awareness of design so that people can begin to distinguish between the good, the bad, the indifferent and the dangerous.

During the 1980's one of the biggest challenges was simply keeping up with new projects. Frequently I had to make a judgment on the basis of models and blue sky renderings, which can be captivating, like model trains, yet ultimately have little relationship to what finally gets built. Yet the danger of not writing about works in progress is that architecture and design come to seem less newsworthy than politics or education, which in most cities they are not.

The editors who hired me had no passion for architecture. Rather, they believed that it was one of best ongoing stories in town. And they were right. Moreover, it sharpens a critic's wits to think and write about a building or an issue while many other people are thinking and writing about it as well. Opportunities for public debate, and public influence, are greater before the fact than after.

Architecture critics on newspapers have powerful forums from which to raise questions that architects and planners, for assorted political and business reasons, cannot. But whether in the long run they improve the overall design of a city is hard to say. Influence is a subtle thing, earned slowly, and probably best assessed after decades. Ada Louise Huxtable, the mother of us all, had enormous power in New York City. Allan Temko can"t be ignored in San Francisco. I can even think of a few occasions when my own voice was decisive. Mostly, however, we all prod and provoke and praise in hopes that, over time, others will join the chorus. ■

Books

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The most important pressure to resist is from the author and the publisher. It's not that the parties with plastic glasses of chardonnay and little cheese cubes on toothpicks are so seductive, but that book reviewers tend to recognize how much work it is to write a book and lean toward rewarding the effort.

The most intractable factor in limiting the number of sharp, informative and engaging reviews in the newspaper book pages, is that it's hard to write well. For one thing, it takes a lot of nerve. To be interesting, the reviewer needs to speak with authority. There's a common and mostly unjustified fear that reviewers are poised to use the review as an opportunity to spout off about their own interests and knowledge. Outside of The New York Review of Books, those reviews are in the minority.

The toughest challenge for the reviewer's authority is to judge a novel or a collection of short stories. Reviewers often struggle to summarize every story, when they should discuss a couple and then identify an essential characteristic in the book. Every editor is always looking for a good fiction reviewer.

Given the limits of newspaper life and human nature, I still wonder why there aren't more strong critical voices. Why isn't there a book critic with the talent and influence of the Time magazine art critic, Robert Hughes? Some days I go along with George Orwell's opinion of book reviewing—"a quite exceptionally thankless, irritating and exhausting job" in which the reviewer is "pouring his spirit down the drain, half a pint at a time." More often I think that reviewing is as much an art as writing a book. It's a half a pint at a time and you don't get much fame or money from it, but you still fulfill the purpose of writing. Here the last word goes to Samuel Johnson. "The only end of writing is to enable the reader better to enjoy life or better to endure it." ■

Popular Music

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"the smart, curious reader." By "smart" I mean possessing a reasonable degree of comfort with the process of engaging ideas; for critical writing especially, this seems the minimal requirement. By "curious" I mean possessing a reasonable degree of interest in the subject, even if that interest is entirely abstract and is accompanied by little or no specific prior knowledge. The aim of writing addressed to this reader is work that rewards anyone who comes to it with an open mind.

To reinforce the notion of criticism as an ongoing dialogue, I also try to keep the section open to a broad range of voices, styles and viewpoints—assuming always that the critic is qualified and informed. A review by one writer will sometimes set forth an aesthetic vision entirely antithetical to the one put forward with equal conviction by another writer in an adjoining review. Some readers, like the sort of student who grows uneasy when, at the end of a vigorous class discussion, the teacher refuses to give the "right" answer, find this approach infuriating. Others, hopefully, find it liberating and enlivening, small but telling evidence of a democratic ideal in which differing ideas are all allowed valid expression.

Beyond this, there really is no magic prescription for ensuring first-rate critical writing about popular music or any other subject, cultural or political. The problems with coverage of the music result primarily from problems in how the music is perceived by the people who determine how it is going to be covered. Unless it is seen as a worthy subject that requires serious assessment in all its aspects by talented people willing to communicate with a general audience, the quality of the coverage will suffer. It isn't much more complicated than that. More than 25 years after Aretha Franklin sang the words of Otis Redding, defining in terms of an indelible pop song one of the crucial demands of the civil rights movement, the issue is still respect. ■

Films

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superficial verdicts does their readers a disservice. And they acknowledge that readers have opinions of their own.

Ideally, one should be able to see through a film review to the essence of the work being discussed. A critic's voice can be familiar without being overbearing. We describe what we have seen and put it in some kind of perspective, drawing upon the artists' other work, upon other films with similar themes, upon conditions within the culture at large. We consider the ways in which films reflect that culture, deliberately or otherwise. In the end, if we have done these things helpfully, there is room for the reader to separate his or her own secondary observations from the first-hand ones being described. Whether or not this will lead to a ticket sale is very much beside the point.

Somewhere between the long exegesis to be found in film journals and television's thumb-waving enthusiasms, there remains a place for critical thought that makes itself useful while resisting easy conclusions. This kind of writing relies upon the reader's forbearance. It assumes that films are often more than the sum of their parts, that any kind of artifact is worthy of analysis, that products can be found in the store and not on the screen. It will always have its place, even if no one ever gives it a 10. ■

Ombudsmen—Worth Saving?

By Richard Salant

Even though the Constitution would not have been adopted without the First Amendment, and even though its guarantee of a free press is the linchpin of a democracy whose success depends on an informed citizenry, the special position which the First Amendment grants the press might seem to a Martian as being downright un-American. By prohibiting governmental intrusion, it allows what no red-blooded American would tolerate: the right of the baseball pitcher to call his own balls and strikes, with no appeal. This right is the ultimate in discrimination: It gives the press protection from government interference, which every other private enterprise can only dream of.

This is as it should be. But constitutions can be amended. Unsympathetic judicial attitudes can nibble rights to death if the people—and the bench-warmers—lose their patience with what they see as arrogance, bias, venality, self-interest, disrespect for truth, obeisance in decision-making to judgments based on anything other than news worthiness.

Since the dangers are real, it will not do for the press, when criticized, just to huff that it stands by its story or to shout triumphantly "First Amendment—you can't touch me" or to insist that nobody may look over its shoulder. On the contrary, I believe that everybody except the government should look over our shoulders. And we should check on ourselves.

There is a variety of mechanisms for the press—print and broadcast—to provide that accountability. Generous space for letters to the editor (especially for criticism of the news provider—and without the news organization's saving the last word for itself); op-ed pages; less cryptic and more forthcoming corrections; face-to-face dialogue between consumer and press managers; general interest and freshly thought-out and non-rigid magazines about the press and designed for the general public; news councils which provide news consumers with impartial second opinions and which have no sanction other than whatever publicity news organizations choose to give their decisions.

And ombudsmen.

Lynne Enders Glaser(who calls herself "ombud" while her paper, The Fresno Bee, titles her column "Ombudsman") recently wrote a column defining an ombud's role; She sums up by quoting Charles Bailey: "The ombudsman's job is not to make himself, his editor, or even his newspaper either popular or beloved. His job is to regain (or retain) the respect of readers. It's not a wholly disinterested goal: in the long run, respect is the only sentiment that will keep the public reading, believing, supporting—and buying a newspaper."

In defining her function as the new ombudsman for The Washington Post, Joann Byrd writes that she will "...never start assuming The Post is right. But that does not mean that I will unfailingly stand with people who complain....I hope to act not as a loyalist either to the paper or its detractor but as something akin to an impartial juror."

Douglas Kneeland, Chicago Tribune associate editor, whose column is titled "Inside the Paper" and who questions whether he is an ombudsman since, as part of management,he participates in policy making, nevertheless writes that his purpose in writing his column "is to give all readers with a real grievance the same sort of access to the paper as someone who knew me....would have. What we're saying is, 'Now you know the name of someone you can write to or call if you think we're screwing up'." That seems to me to be a pretty good definition of an ombudsman, even if he doesn't think he is one.

About 70 recent columns have been made available to me for the preparation of this piece. In addition to Glaser,

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Sarajevo

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We wandered up and down the river, protected by buildings from the hillside where the snipers and artillery men sit.

Finding nothing we decided to head a little closer to the hill. We darted up a street, past a first-aid center and on to a main street where people were about. We stopped on a corner and checked the time. It was 12:05. Counting on a 10 minute walk back to the car and a 10 minute drive to the apartment it gave us five minutes to find another picture. Jordi suggested we walk to the top of the next street and then head back. It sounded like a fine idea to me, so off we went.

AP photo by David Brauchli

We stuck close to the wall on the left hand side of the street so if anyone did decide to drop a mortar or rocket-propelled grenade on the area, the angle would be pretty acute and it would be difficult to hit us. I didn't think about ricochet or shrapnel.

Suddenly, there was an enormous bang and both of us were on the ground.

"This doesn't happen to us," I thought, "we cover this."

"Fuck, we've been hit," Jordi said, "Oh Christ, it's my chest."

I looked at Jordi and there were two small holes in his chest, the size of my pinky finger, oozing blood. I thought we were in serious trouble and I had better get us help fast because Jordi didn't look in good shape at all.

"Help Us, Help Us, Help Us," I cried with all my strength. It seemed like an eternity I sat in a doorway on the side of the street and screamed. It couldn't have been more than thirty seconds. Men came running and put us onto makeshift stretchers and carried us to the nearby first aid station. I lay alone for a while. I assumed they were working on Jordi because he was in more serious shape than I was. I think he passed out on the street. I think he probably died there. I knew that later, not then. The medic finally came in and cleaned up my wounds and packed me in an ambulance for the main hospital.

At the hospital I got a firsthand experience of what I'd been seeing so much of for the past three weeks. The doctor who was going to operate on me said he had been working for days without a break. The nurses were on 48 hour shifts. There was no way for them to go home, the roads were blocked and the sniping intense. I had grenade splinters in my jaw, shoulder, hip, groin, thigh and knee. When the doctors operated to make sure my urinary tract wasn't damaged, they had no general anesthetic, only local. It didn't work. The nurses had to tie my hands to the operating table to keep me down.

Meanwhile my colleagues were starting to wonder where we were. Peter, along with our translator Hannah, came down to the hospital to see if we were there. Peter told me Jordi was in intensive care, although by then he was dead. I asked him to call my relatives. When Peter went back to the flat, Tony and Santy got the ball going, getting on the phone to AP New York, AP London, AP Frankfurt, the United Nations in Sarajevo, the EC in Brussels and in Split.

It became imperative to get out. Besides, I thought I was using a hospital bed that would be better off being used on someone more seriously wounded than I was. Tony and Santiago worked miracles. Less than 36 hours after I was wounded the United Nations sent an armored vehicle to the hospital to drive me through the battle zone to their headquarters. The EC was supposed to send an ambulance to meet us, but it never turned up. We drove the 12 hours to Split, Jordi's body and my wounds our passport through all the checkpoints.

The next morning an ambulance plane evacuated me to Bern, Switzerland. The doctors there looked at my wounds, concluded there was no infection, and advised me to rest. Within 24 hours of arriving in Switzerland I was out of the hospital and at my Swiss relatives' house with my parents. Kind of a culture shock.

And what of Sarajevo? The tragedy continues. The West continues to hem and haw. It took the tragic footage of a man begging for help after his foot had been blown off by a mortar to stun the West into realizing the enormity of the atrocities being committed in Sarajevo and all over Bosnia-Herzegovina. Eventually, I intend to go back because the story is important. It has been a dangerous war for journalists, who at times have been as much participants and targets as the warriors. But what happens to Yugoslavia will affect the rest of Europe for the next 50 years. It will also change how the rest of the world reacts to internal crises. Further, as press, we have an obligation to keep the public informed of the tragedy, and the personal risks we take must be weighed against the risks the people of Sarajevo, or Mostar, or Tuzla, are taking every day. We are their conduit to the world, to the politicians and to world public opinion. It's important and I want to be there helping the people who helped me in my time of need. ■

British Press

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people. Labor's campaign was first-rate: programs, publicity, organization, teamwork—all had clicked. From a professional viewpoint, the message, "it's time for a change," seemed to be getting through the British press filter and reaching a public eager for change—or at least a change from Mrs. Thatcher. How wrong we were. We made the classic political mistake of fooling ourselves by placing too much faith in such unreliable evidence as polls, weakening of the pound and even bookie odds. We were also fooled by the Conservative campaign, which to us seemed a masterpiece of boredom: more of the same old stuff, but "nicer" than during the Thatcher years. The third party, the Liberal-Democrats, just teased the electorate with the "best of both," but in the end their act consisted of unelectable fan-dancing. In any event, Perot's withdrawal makes the question of a three-man race moot.

On the surface, political campaign rules of the road in Britain are so different from those in the US that predictions for Bush-Clinton cannot be drawn. There was, however, a vital factor in the Conservative triumph that the American media would be wise to monitor in our election—the middle-class voters' refusal, even though clamoring for change, to look beyond their own immediate needs or to view their futures with seriousness. The electorate and the press were hand-in-glove actors in a short-run, short-future "me-ism."

Precisely because there is a lesson to be learned from the British election (although not the glib "Kinnock lost, so will Clinton"), it is worth laying out the structure of the parties and the election, the issues waged in the campaign and the personalities involved.

Difference 1:
Party Policies

The first difference is that British candidates (Labor, Conservative or Liberal-Democrat) have to toe the mark precisely to a set of policies, called the Party Manifesto and the Party Budget, which have been discussed and passed by the Party itself. This means that the campaign is waged, at times venomously, over specific programs and how to pay for them. To an American, accustomed to seeing intense party platform debates evaporate only days after the ratifying conventions, this seemed like political heaven. The populace knows that virtually all Tory candidates will adhere to the Tory platform, and it knows what that Tory platform is. This party clarity can become party rigidity once a majority is established in the House of Commons, leading some pundits to call the British parliamentary system an elected dictatorship. But for the entire four-week campaign there is debate of incredible intensity and specificity on real issues. As the campaign developed, it was increasingly clear that the basic thrust was status quo for the Conservatives and change for the future with Labor.

Difference 2:
Candidate Experience

The second significant difference is that almost all Labor and Tory candidates are well-known in their constituencies and well-trained by working their way through the British Party structure long before they hit the election trail. That experience, assisted by their (old-fashioned Brit) education in rhetoric and debating, teaches party leaders verbal agility and discipline—all set to the music of Welsh, Scottish and English accents. Fast-foot debating techniques and adherence to every nuance of agreed-upon Party policy are prerequisites for party leaders. As such, the candidates know their briefs (both substantively and politically), and so the game proceeds like an intellectual shuttlecock game at lightning speed. The point is: Kinnock, Major and Ashdown were all very visible public figures, did not struggle with recognition factors, and were each backed by a legitimate and well-organized party structure.

Difference 3:
Individual vs. Team

A third major difference is that the American campaign is waged by one man, the Presidential candidate, with support from his Vice Presidential running mate. For the Democrats, this means Governor Clinton will bear the overwhelming burden, with an assist from Senator Gore. In Britain, by contrast, the party-designated Labor leader and his preannounced Shadow Cabinet campaigned as a team. Kinnock selected this team of men and women in 1987 for positions they would hold if elected to govern. (Parenthetically, this was not true of the Liberal-Democratic Party which obviously became merely a one-man operation as the campaign moved along.) The Shadow Cabinet, in addition to putting themselves before the party and the public, also have the opportunity to 'learn their brief' on their positions. In other words, they are as well trained in governance as one can be while out of office. The electorate can judge the quality of the Prime Ministerial candidate by his choice of a cabinet.

Difference 4:
Length of Campaign

The fourth major difference is, of course, time. The Prime Minister announces the campaign in the House of Commons and Polling Day is thereupon scheduled on a Thursday four weeks later. The polls close at 10 p.m. and a victor declared in the midnight hours of Thursday night. The victor then meets with the Queen on Friday morning and immediately assumes the office of Prime Minister. Bang. Just like that.

Since the campaign is restricted to a (by U.S. standards) relatively short period, it is extremely intense. A typical day began at 7 a.m. with Neil Kinnock and the Shadow Cabinet ministers at the Media Center preparing for a 7:45 a.m. press conference. (The Liberal-Democrats had theirs at 7:15 a.m. and the Tories at 8:15 a.m.) And what grand events they were, despite the gray hour of the morning. A new policy would be announced and a major media blitz would follow. There were fresh, long-stemmed red roses (the Labor Party's new logo) everywhere—on the dais, in each MP's lapel; the dais was modern, well-lit, designed specifically for the many TV crews assembled to feed the half-dozen news shows aired each morning. The press conference started right on time with wonderfully stirring campaign music written for Labor and piped in as the leader and his Shadow Cabinet 'processed' in. Pressed suits, hair in place, and tired eyes masked. It was, each day, a rise-and-shine performance. Likewise with staff—no shaggy rumples there. Smart looking, alert and alive. That was the order of the day.

Then Kinnock and the entire Shadow Cabinet would scatter, fanning the country (which in square miles is the size of Wyoming) and talking about the same policy issue announced earlier that morning. Away via coach, train or plane for the daily campaign schedule, including visiting schools, hospitals, businesses, etc. with press conferences, photo opportunities and voter tête-a-têtes at every stop.

The similarities to political stumping in America were familiarly tedious, but reassuring. I thought often of the absurdity of the campaign routine—wading through a wall of film crews to shake a hand, of having an "honest" dialogue with voters so it would show up on the 6 p.m. news, and then rushing to the telly later to see how it looked to the real voters. But there were differ-

ences too: ironically, the language, for one, and the use of mobile phones. It may be that in London people are disciplined to speak the same dialect, but once in the coach on an "away day", a language mayhem breaks out. Everyone launches into his or her own manner of speech (be it press, jargon and slang, or Birmingham, Cardiff dialects), the speed of delivery increases, all the while seemingly talking only to the top button on their shirts.

Then, there is "the mobile." The mobile phone phenomenon has not hit New York the way it has hit the London political scene. Everyone had one, each member of the press, each member of the senior staff. The press phoned in every movement, utterance or minuscule event.

Difference 5: Press Coverage

Which brings us to the most serious difference between US and UK election politics: the press. First, the nature of election politics in 1992, on both sides of the Atlantic, is completely dependent on the media, not on individual hand shaking. Second, my own journalistic-cum-ideological bias should be made explicit: except for The Financial Times, I have grown to loathe the British press. I believe that most British newspapers have no standards of objectivity or truth, that they are scandalously pro-Tory and anti-Labor, and that by effectively filtering the real world through the prism of their preconceived bias, they can actually sway election results.

To explain this hostility, I recount one story from my first working trip with Neil Kinnock six years ago. He came to the US on his first major tour as Opposition Leader to meet with key policy makers and give a lecture. One evening, Senator Moynihan's office called to say it would have to postpone our scheduled meeting because the Senator had to participate in an important Judiciary Committee meeting (it was the first day of the Iran-Contra hearings). Our meeting was rescheduled for later that week at the end of Kinnock's tour. Thinking not too much about it, since schedules were tight and Friday actually looked better, I mentioned this to Kinnock and his chief of staff. They grimaced (unnecessarily, I thought) but I assured them a new meeting had now been confirmed. I obviously didn't get the point. The schedule change was noted by the 30 British press accompanying him and the headlines the following morning were: "Moynihan Snubs Kinnock," "Senator Cancels Kinnock." I felt snookered.

There were two lessons for me to learn. First, the British press is largely Tory-owned and Tory-biased; and, second, there is no separation between fact and opinion in the presentation of political news by most of the British press. The combination can be deadly if you are the Opposition and explains the Labor strategy of having Kinnock appear on TV as much as possible to show the viewers directly that he is not a member of the "loony left."

The press in Britain includes over a dozen daily newspapers which range from The Financial Times (a paper of great merit) to The Sun (a paper of no redeeming qualities). The middle ground is taken by The Independent, which engages occasionally in Tory-bashing more in sorrow than in anger, and The Guardian, which does the same more in anger than in sorrow. Despite their handling of the Tories, both papers are inherently suspicious of Labor and show it.

More important is the blending of fact and editorial opinion in most newspaper coverage. Indeed, most Brits think our newspapers are incredibly dull precisely because they generally stick to the facts without editorial embellishment. This means that the bulk of the papers have more of a tabloid whiff than newspapers do in the U.S. Many British papers can weave the most scurrilous editorial comments into the normal range of news and have it pass for solid journalism.

For example: Every day in Wales was a homecoming for Kinnock, who comes from Cardiff, with the usual crush of Welsh folks wanting to "see Neil." Indeed, most of them did know him by first name and many remembered him "as a lad." The sea of voters conflicted with the sea of cannibalistic snappers (photographers) and television crews who believed that it was unthinkable not to have Kinnock on film at every walking, talking moment. The snappers would storm down the streets followed by their lackeys carrying stepladders so their bosses could, literally, snap from on high. In tandem were the TV crews, assisted by their lackeys also with stepladders perpetually dangling what look like brown hairy raccoon tails over the candidate to record each utterance.

Such was the scene when Kinnock was ending a visit to a small Cardiff suburb and stepped into his escort car. Unfortunately, Auntie Doreen Day had not reached Kinnock because of this media wall, so as they parted she made a graceful, 81-year-old lunge toward "her boy"—promptly falling in front of the very slowly moving car. Down she went. Out of the car leapt Kinnock. On top of him jumped the security guards. Back like elastic bands went the media mavens. Pandemonium ensued. Rumors flew. Mobiles emerged. The press gloated. The staff winced. Within moments, calm was restored. Mrs. Day, put on her feet, gave Neil the intended kiss (he had known her all his life and she was "Auntie Doreen"). In gratitude for her loyalty and discomfort, she was driven home by a Secret Service escort and was last seen in the back of a red Rover, offering a small, delighted smile and a wave to the crowd.

What Headlines Said of Incident

But, the nanosecond-reactive Tory press had whipped out their mobiles and the next day one read in The Sun: "Elderly Woman Run Over by Kinnock Car" and "Pledging Support to Kinnock with Dying Breath." Really.

Leaving the grim humor aside, there are important issues to be noted here: (1) tabloids (the equivalent of The National Enquirer) are considered part of the press corps, invited to press conferences, travel with candidates and print a lot of so-called political news on their pages (and do so with the same zest for truth as does The National Enquirer here); (2) the pro-Tory editorial bias woven within the normal news reporting pages is palpable and predictable. They have been targeting Neil Kinnock, his family, his staff, his party and his policies on a daily basis since 1980. He has weathered for 12 years what Bill Clinton withstood for only a few months. Does the media affect the views of the voting populace? You can draw your own conclusions.

Imagine, if you will, the editorial posture of The Wall Street Journal appearing in every part of almost every paper almost every day —and all aimed against the Democrats. It would be quite difficult to ignore such brainwashing. I am not alone in holding such views. The Washington Post wrote a week before Polling Day: "Day after day in this short, sharp and very close British election campaign, The Mail, The Express and The Sun, along with their sister tabloids...have been serving up endless helpings of gold-plated praise for Major and the Tories, coupled with acidic abuse for Neil Kinnock and the opposition Labor Party. By the election next Thursday, anyone who reads these papers will be certain that what is at stake is not a bland contest between the moderate right and moderate left, but the future of Western civilization as we know it."

Even more to the point, The New York Times reported that Kinnock "...is a passionate orator who still writes his own

speeches and in private conversation comes across as warm, witty and concerned. But after years of scrutiny, denigration and abuse by the largely pro-Tory press and by political foes on both left and right, in public Kinnock has buttoned himself down and closed himself off." No wonder.

And so?

Voters Similar In Upholding 'Me-ism'

And so, with so many differences for all to see, is there any electoral similarity between Britain and the U.S.? The answer is a (qualified) yes: in a word, middle class "me-ism." Basically, I think the majority of British voters did not want to reach into their pockets and give a hand to their less fortunate, indeed deprived, brethren. They wanted change, yes, but not at their own expense. And in this, there is a profoundly depressing similarity between our two countries in selecting individual gain over community pain.

During the election campaign, Kinnock spoke ardently, eloquently, and quite specifically about the values of the Labor Party—traditional values of caring for the community, sharing with the less fortunate and of the need for investing in the future in all, not just the better off. These policies were based on traditional social democratic values that since WW II parties in all Western European countries—Britain, France, Germany, Italy, Spain—had come to accept in agreements that made sure the level of services provided to the society would be high. It was, if you will, a new Social Contract. The important point in England was the bipartisan support, for example, of the need for free education and free health care. This contract is now very much in the process of fraying and most British voters no longer automatically accept these values.

The era of caring seems to be ending and both British and American electorates have veered toward calculated selfishness. Perhaps the self-interest is a mean-spirited each-man-for-himself attitude. Or perhaps it is simply the manifestation of a long recession and lower wages, a fear of diminished expectations and a desperate attempt to hold on to what we already have. Either way you cut it, you come to the same conclusion: investment in a broader "us", be it in Britain or in the US, is difficult to sell to voters.

With hindsight, it is clearer to me now than it was even just a few months ago that the philosophical underpinnings of liberal or social democratic policies—be they Liberal, Labor, Democrat, or Green—have to be re-analyzed and presented in a totally new way to succeed. The old social democratic tenets of caring and sharing may properly collect dust on the shelf next to "mutually assured destruction." The new presentation of policies, of values, of responsibilities will have to be macro in nature, micro in impact, and surely have to satisfy the cost/benefit analysis of the middle class and the voting establishment. It is a harsher, more demanding, more selfish standard. Indeed, the traditional moral philosophy of social democracy may be as out of date as the traditional military definitions of security.

We in the U.S. see so clearly how dramatically the outside world has changed around us, but we are only beginning to perceive that perhaps equally profound changes are occurring within our own country. And that places a very heavy responsibility on parties of the left, or parties that do represent the underrepresented. It means that the social welfare policies must be revamped in light of current conditions—those conditions being: diminished personal expectations; increased numbers of people living in poverty; the changing nature and content of jobs; the metamorphosis of our population from younger and white to graying and non-white.

These sea changes placed great responsibility on the British press during the campaign—and they failed, by editorializing through their news coverage that the status quo was tenable and that change was a threat. The point was not the endorsement of Major or Kinnock; the point was an honest appraisal of the current facts of British life, a recession longer and deeper than any since World War II. The Sun's nine-page spread on pre-election day, "The Nightmare on Kinnock Street," does not contribute to fairness or understanding.

Now the U.S press has the same opportunity and the same responsibility. The future, even the next few years, is too important and complex to be trivialized by TV jingoism or catchy headlines. The American press, heads and shoulders above their British colleagues, has an opportunity to make clear to the voters, first, that change per se is not bad and, second, what the choices are and where they lead. That means honest reporting of the Bush and Clinton campaigns as they articulate their programs—a job they have done quite well. But it also means a disciplined press not willing to allow perceptions created by candidates to run amok or go unchallenged. The American press does not deserve high marks in this regard.

On running amok, the British press outdid themselves in covering and stimulating inter-party bickering for four full days on a young child's ear infection. The details of "Jennifer's ear" were unimportant then and now, despite the fact that the press fed lustily on every inconsequential detail. The real story, the functioning of the revered national health service, was lost in the media frenzy. On leaving candidates' unchallenged, there is a ripe parallel here on the coverage of the incumbent. There seems to be an unspoken rule on both sides of the pond that says, "Thou shalt not challenge the Prime Minister/President." The childhood tale called "The Emperor's New Clothes" should be mandatory reading before accepting a journalism position.

There is no going back to what used to be, so we need to be enlightened as to where we are going. Politicians have a great responsibility as architects of those plans, but since they are dependent on the media for communicating those visions, the challenge sits squarely in every editorial meeting and story conference. Do those day-to-day decisions make an electoral difference. It allowed a very nice, programless John Major to continue as Prime Minister of England. I'd say that counts. ■

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The New Yorker

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and Ariel Sharon against the respective companies. Letters from CBS and Time to The New Yorker took strong exception to Adler's work—CBS said she "repeatedly and fundamentally misrepresented the record"—but none of their many objections appeared in the magazine. Instead, they had to settle for having them reported briefly elsewhere, including in The New York Times, Newsweek and the Nation.

As unsatisfactory as it may be for a beef to be aired in an inapt forum, it beats no airing at all. That's what faced Rev. Lynn Bergfalk, a Fairfield, IA pastor, who figured in a 1980 article by Calvin Trillin about Asian refugees resettled in Fairfield.

Bergfalk's objections to the account were being stonewalled by The New Yorker when, fortunately in a sense for him, The Des Moines Register reprinted it. That gave Bergfalk the opportunity to have his letter of rebuttal to The New Yorker run in The Register. The New Yorker continued to balk, so the determined pastor complained to the then-existing National News Council, an independent press watchdog on which press representatives served. By this time Bergfalk was ticked off by the magazine's letters policy as by the alleged errors, so he complained to the News Council about both.

On the no-space-for-reply issue, a spokesman for The New Yorker, Robert Bingham, justified the policy to the News Council by noting how the magazine is so careful about facts that it published just four corrections in the previous 18 years. The News Council was unimpressed. It reported:

"The discussion of fact with Mr. Bingham led naturally to a discussion of the interpretation of facts, and whether The New Yorker ought to publish letters from people like Mr. Bergfalk who might dispute The New Yorker's interpretation. Mr. Bingham said the magazine did not feel the obligation of a newspaper to print all sides of an issue or to publish the opposition viewpoint. 'But,' he said, 'that may be a mistake.'

"He said he could see how Council members might be critical of the magazine's reluctance to publish letters taking issue with The New Yorker's reporting, particularly since the magazine does publish barbed comments about errors in other publications."

Sound hunch, inasmuch as the News Council subsequently rebuked The New Yorker. The Council concluded that errors it found in Trillin's piece "caused concern to residents of the community. The magazine's handling of those concerns displayed insensitivity. Therefore, the Council also finds the complaint warranted as it applies to the magazine's handling of the complaint. The reluctance of The New Yorker to provide rebuttal space for those people it writes about was an important part of the problem in this case."

The same reluctance also was an important part of the problem in Masson's libel suit against The New Yorker. Last year he won a U.S. Supreme Court ruling, which helped clear the way for trial. Masson told us recently in a taped telephone interview (yes, he still submits to them), "I probably would not have had a lawsuit if I had been able to have my say in The New Yorker."

Pressed to explain why he said "*probably*...not," Masson added:

"Probably a letter would not have been sufficient at that point because it really was libel what she did to me and quoted things I simply never said and it would take more than my statement. I would've been happy had The New Yorker said, 'Look, let's try it. You say you didn't, she says she has it on tape, we'll appoint an in-house committee to look at this page, to listen to them [the tapes] and allow some kind of conclusion in the pages of The New Yorker and allow you to make your own statement.'

"That would have been something I certainly would've taken very seriously and considered rather than an expensive nine-year lawsuit. When I tried to talk to them [the magazine] originally, my lawyer called and they were not prepared to talk about anything."

Interestingly, the proposal that Masson said might have helped forestall his libel suit—a comparison by New Yorker editors of the taped quotes to the reported ones—is precisely what Malcolm suggested to editors of the Times Book Review.

Libel plaintiffs often report that discourteous or arrogant dismissal of their complaints by editors strongly influenced their decision to sue. Barring the person attacked in a publication from answering in that publication is a virtual invitation to the courthouse.

Gottlieb, the departing New Yorker editor, says the magazine is conscientious about answering letters. What's more, when convinced it made a "serious error" or was "unfair," it says so in its Department of Amplification. That forum, however, almost always is for writers to correct, clarify or add information, rather than for the subjects of articles or for ordinary readers. For the past dozen years or so they have been mute in the magazine's editorial columns.

The New Yorker is a superb publication with this peculiar blind spot, a kind of journalistic macular degeneration. Nearly all publications nowadays publish feedback. Journals without a section for letters conduct essentially a monologue with readers, rather than a conversation. Even Harold Ross might concede that a public-access column is space well spent. ■

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A Call for Crusading

Retired Columbia Professor Urges Press to Campaign To Redress Wrong, Fight for Good Society

BY MELVIN MENCHER

TIME WAS WHEN newspapers had convictions and actively sought their implementation through news and editorial columns. They campaigned and crusaded to address needs and to redress wrongs.

Publishers had a philosophy, a sense of the good society. The young Gene Pulliam took on the Ku Klux Klan and fought for municipal ownership of utilities. C.L. Knight made clear the publisher's obligation: "It is our duty to hold high our ideals of public service or get out of the newspaper business." Jonathan Daniels spoke for his colleagues when he wrote that their "chief contempt is reserved for the quiescent."

When E.W. Scripps said, "Show light and the people will find their way," he was thinking of a serious agenda for his newspapers.

Editors like O.K. Bovard, Pulitzer's newsroom genius, were not embarrassed to speak of public service campaigns that would arouse a "tide of public opinion" that would bring about the desired change.

These journalists were nurtured by concepts of journalism that conceived of the press in the way Jefferson put it in describing a free press as "the best instrument for enlightening the mind of man and improving him as a rational, moral and social being."

Their priorities were set by journalists such as Oswald Garrison Villard, who wrote that the owners of the press "must ask last of all what were the returns of the counting room but must first inquire what ideals a given journal upheld, what moral aims it pursued, what was the spirit of fair play and justice which activated it, and above all on whose side and under whose banner it fought."

Dickens a Radical, But Widely Read

Many of these editors and publishers were well read, and they were moved by the dynamism of Charles Dickens whose novels spoke for the oppressed and the helpless, and whose journalism represented, as Dickens's biographer Edgar Johnson put it, "uncompromising humanitarian radicalism." In the 1850's, Dickens edited Household Words, and into it he poured week after week his indignation at the indecencies visited on the young, the poor and the powerless.

He utilized, says Johnson, "every conceivable weapon: reasoned argument, cajolery, facts and figures, humor, insinuation, irony, parable and allegory, sarcasm, repetition, angry diatribe." And he had "a huge and steadily growing audience ranging in both directions from the middle and upper middle classes."

Our muckrakers held a similar moral perspective as they exposed the employment of children working in mines and mills, racism in the judicial system and corruption.

Something happened along the way to the present state of newspapering. Newspapers turned from advocacy to a value-free objectivity that did not antagonize advertisers and seemed to go down well with their middle-class clientele, which was obsessed with the accomplishments of a supposedly objective science and technology. Ownership passed to sprawling non-journalistic families and to corporations concerned with dividend-conscious stockholders. Publishers increasingly identified with the corporate conscience. Mammon was set loose in the marketplace of ideas.

The concept of the newspaper as an activist, agenda-setting force was replaced with the concept of "responsible" and "balanced" journalism. We now have a reactive, stenographic press.

It is this sanitized, homogenized and objectified press that we see being propped up. The rescuers talk of a decline in readership, a growing aliteracy among the young, the challenge for reader time from television, VCR, movies, Walkman, stereo, and the like.

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They suggest "news readers can use," by which they mean pieces on parenting, job hunting, gardening, menu-planning and the like. As Reid Ashe of Knight-Ridder puts it: When newspapers find circulation declining they "back off the dry government stuff and address real concerns like careers, child-rearing, religion, entertainment, personal investing, participation sports, neighborhood issues. In other words, give them stuff they can put to use in their dealings with the people around them."

Then there are the design and layout solutions: Use color, graphics, prominent nutgraphs, boxes, summaries, no-jump rules, briefs, digests, indexes, news-at-a-glance—a "reader-friendly" design, a newspaper, as one advocate put it, "that is easily scanned in 15 minutes."

And we had better not ignore the good-writing crowd. In seminars, institutes and in article after article we are advised: Use narrative techniques, kickers, quotes; talk over the piece with your editor or writing coach, don't be reluctant to write an outline, rewrite and rewrite.

And there are the reinventers of the wheel who advise newspapers, as a lengthy piece in the Nieman Reports by a former journalism dean recently suggested: Do more interpretive reporting, give readers the overview.

Maybe these devices will bring back the non-readers. Eventually, though, readers will find that they can get most of the stuff elsewhere—on television, by telephone, through tapes. Why spend half a buck on a 15-minute read when you can get the same chitchat from eyewitness news or on the morning television shows?

The dispensers of reader-friendly advice for newspaper survival are prescribing palliatives for a terminal condition. Their prescriptions are fillers that lack the life-giving ingredient. They do not recognize that journalism works best when it stands on a firm moral base and that when journalism's mission is ignored all else is fluff, interesting though the entertainment may be.

That mission is to provide useful information to enable people to live decently in a consensual society. This concept animated the journalists we admire most, those who built the newspapers we respect. It may well be that the major communication device of the future will be a Mac-generated multimedia-audio-visual something. But if we want to preserve print because we believe that democracy functions best when people have information in a form they can examine and ponder, then we should consider returning to our roots.

Unless we do, I fear that we will be held responsible for helping to solidify the ice age of indifference that seems to be holding so many in itsgrip. Let newspaper empires branch out into telephone-delivered information and the rest of the electronic-age services. But retain the newspaper for those who need to be informed. And staff it with editors and reporters who have a concern for justice and decency, who believe in:

- Equal access to the community's services and resources.
- Justice and fair play for all members of the community.
- Equal opportunity to develop one's abilities.
- Political freedom—being able to do what one wishes within the limitations of just laws and reasonable societal limits. The right to say, with Bartleby the Scrivener, I refuse.
- Political freedom—meaningful participation in the management of the community, having a say in the adoption of policies, rules, regulations.

'My God, Martha, Did You Read This?'

These journalists understand what Elizabeth Hardwick meant when she said, "Making a living is nothing; the great difficulty is making a point, making a difference—with words." And they have a respect for their trade or profession reflected in the words Rabbi Ishmael ben Elisha addressed to Meir the Scribe: "Be careful in your work, which is a devine art; for by omitting or adding a letter you may cause the world's ruin."

Most newspapers do not mean much to their readers. They do not engage their readers. Designed to be read on the run, their impact is a powder-puff dab, hardly the stuff of Edna Buchanan's ideal piece that would cause the breakfasting reader "to spit out his coffee, clutch his chest, and say to his wife, 'My god, Martha, did you read this?' "

Unless we care, we cannot produce pieces that involve readers with their newspapers. Unless we see the world from the perspective of the great journalists of our golden age, we will be little more than advertising conveyers.

The signs are already upon us: the belief that three-color weather maps and boxes and briefs belong on page one; the time we spend conveying writing tips. This direction of effort brings to mind Tolstoy's warning: "As soon as man loses his moral sense, he becomes particularly responsive to the aesthetic."

As Pauline Kael, the movie critic, wrote: "Technique is hardly worth talking about unless it's used for something worth doing."

There's a lot out there worth doing, especially in this political season. Harvey Cox said at a Nieman seminar, "I think the press is letting us down. I think the press is not helping us to be an informed and active citizenry, which the forefathers said we had to be. We're becoming an inactive and ignorant citizenry. And part of it has to do with the way campaigns are planned and projected and presented to us, and the inability of the press to help us see through it." Cox spoke in 1989, but little has changed for the better.

As I drove across the country from New York to San Francisco, I sampled newspapers along the way. The major issue seemed to be whether Jerry Brown was present at pot parties. And the endless polls: President Bush's popularity rating, Governor Clinton's confidence rating. The only life I could discern was in the letters columns. There people spoke their minds—on how their U.S. senator stood on gun control, on abortion, on taxes. Surprisingly, several letter writers favored higher taxes to pay off the debt. There was anger, ex-

citement, passion in these letters, a sense of involvement unmatched by the news or editorial columns.

People do want to be involved with matters more substantial than coping with piles and periods; they want something more than news nuggets that give the kind of quick gratification their microwaved breakfasts provide. If we offered more substantial fare, we might find our readers as eager as Dickens's were. His reader "though thirsty for tea, and hungry for toast, darts upon that morning's journal and unfolds it with satisfaction, which shows that all his wants are gratified at once."

I wonder how much confidence readers will have in the newspaper the planners intend for them. A recent Gallup Poll of the believability of 16 news organizations found that people gave highest marks to The Wall Street Journal, the lowest to Geraldo Rivera.

The Journal? The Journal with its unrelentingly long pieces, its day-to-day similar makeup, no pictures, no color, no boxed nutgraphs? The poll reminded me of a conference of Journal editors I attended some years ago. On the agenda was a poll the newspaper had taken of its readers. Also up for discussion were devices to shorten stories, including a no-jump rule. The poll showed that Journal readers had confidence in what they read in the newspaper. They believed what they read, the depth interviews found, because of the array of factual material. As the readers' comments were read to us, an equation became inescapable: Length equals believability.

So much for the no-jump rule.

Here a personal note is relevant. When I traded my press pass for a teaching appointment, my dean informed me that I would have to serve as the adviser to the student daily, which, I was told, was not read. It was not difficult to see why. It practiced bulletin board journalism: Pinnings, press releases, scores. I told the staff to go out and find news, and I required each of my students to produce a series of articles during the semester. One student discovered that movies shown in Kansas had to be approved by a state board of review, and his series and a strong editorial campaign led to a bill in the state legislature seeking repeal of the law setting up the board. It failed passage by one vote, but the board was dissolved soon after by a Supreme Court ruling against prior censorship.

Students discovered institutional racism. Applicants for admission were required to submit photographs with their high school transcripts so that black students would be assigned rooms with other blacks. The university housing office distributed two lists of city housing, one to white students, the other to blacks. The chancellor objected to the story, but the practices were halted. Another student discovered that school retirees were living in near poverty on meager pensions. A campaign led to the legislature's passing legislation improving the pension program.

Making the News? Of Course

One of my colleagues on the journalism faculty complained that we were "making news," not covering it, and I had to confess he was correct. I was trained, I replied, to make news and that was how I was training my students. Some regents objected and a new chancellor found this journalism vexing. It was clear I had to move on.

The point of this recollection is that the newspaper was read. One regent, a publisher most vociferous in his criticism, read us, avidly. A former student on his news staff told us his boss would rummage through the mail every morning to pull out the student newspaper to see what we were up to. The paper was a force for good in the community. It had a point of view. It was in the tradition of the newspapers we admire and respect.

Derek Bok, former president of Harvard, says that values over the last two decades have changed. Values that have risen in student esteem most are being well off financially, personal recognition and running others. Altruistic goals have declined, as has developing a "meaningful philosophy of life." It may be that prescriptions for changing newspapers reflect a shift in values as much as a response to newspaper economics.

Bok's observation brings to mind the final line of Gene Patterson's review of Al Neuharth's book, "Confessions of an S.O.B.": "Neuharth collected small newspapers into one big chain which, looking to him for a voice, found he did not really have anything to say." There is nothing in the prescriptions of the "reader-friendly" salvagers that will counteract the nihilism at the heart of so much of our journalism.

"The junk is dressed up to look as meaningful as the real news," wrote Philip M. Wagner of The Baltimore Sun 30 years ago. He pointed to the objectivity creed, which, he wrote, "becomes in all too many cases an excuse for not making the news judgments that matter, since judgments might be taken to imply a point of view and hence 'bias' or 'prejudice' in reporting—something an 'objective' news editor is not supposed to have...

"Looking at the rank and file of our papers, it is hard to say which traits are the more distressing: the abysmal conditions of our editorial pages, the routine-mindedness and frivolity and refusal to face real decisions which pass for 'objectivity' in the news columns, or the failure to realize that the two—the news and a point of view toward it—are elements of equal importance in making the daily record of our times.

"A newspaper that is not informed throughout by a conscious point of view, a set of basic ideas, a public philosophy if you want to call it that, is a cripple. In that sense, most American newspapers are cripples."

Reporters and copyeditors know the difference between good and inadequate journalism, and it is time for them to speak up. Do they believe the stream of reader-friendly copy they are asked to turn out will make a difference in their community? In 20 years, will they be able to look back with pride and say they contributed something to their communities? After all, a moral sensibility, the desire to help people cope with each other and with the power of government and commerce, is what impelled them into journalism. ■

Ombudsmen

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Byrd and Kneeland, they come from 11 ombudsmen: Pat Riley, Orange County Register; John Sweeney ("Public Editor"), Wilmington (Del.) News Journal; Mike Clark ("Opinion/Reader Advocate"), Florida Times-Union; Art Nauman (Sacramento Bee); Henry McNulty (Hartford Courant); Lou Gelfand (whose column is titled "If You Ran The Paper"), Minneapolis Star Tribune; Gordon McKibben, Boston Globe, and Gina Lubrano, ("Readers Representative") San Diego Union-Tribune.

Their columns are interesting, informative, well written, and lively. Although the temptation must be great, they resist pomposity and superior sermonizing. What is most striking is the variety of approaches and choice of subject matter among the ombudsman. Sometimes they do no more than quote reader complaints. Some discuss the complaints but pass no judgment on their merits. Art Nauman even ombuds himself and confesses his own error for having written "no less than five" instead of "no fewer than five" Some explain just how the subject matter complained about happened—tracing its origins and reasons—thus contributing to public understanding of the news process, and its fallibility. Some present the defenses, rationalizations and confessions of error of the journalists responsible for the questioned copy.

And some go beyond particular reader complaints and write essays as media critics or observers. For example, Clark devotes a column of advice about journalism as a career and another column advising readers how to get into print; Nauman devotes a column to "reinventing how to report"; McNulty offers helpful (and wise) hints to interviewees; and, notably, Kneeland writes essays of general journalistic interest and importance. On the other hand, there are items that are exceedingly narrow and trivial (except to the reader involved; there are unimportant but amusing corrections of typos such as "handsome cabs". There are contrasts about basics among the ombudsmen: Byrd announces she is "not devoted to objectivity" while Kneeland writes an essay to the contrary.

The breadth and informative value of the columns weigh heavily on the side of the ombudsman concept. There are, to be sure, some considerations (in addition to affordability) against the concept: It has been argued, with some supporting evidence, that their impact is divisive within the newsroom and bad for morale. Doubts have been raised about how effective ombudsmen can be when they are not independent in that they are appointed by the news management on which they pass judgment. Even contractual independence may be tenuous: The July/August Columbia Journalism Review reports that The Winnipeg Free Press forced its ombudsman to resign after he wrote a critical piece which led management to demand that he either submit his copy in advance for approval or resign. It has also been suggested—by me, among others—that ombudsman are doing the work that editors should be doing for themselves and provide an excuse for the editor to shift the consideration of complaints away from the desk where the buck should stop. Finally, the ombudsman concept may not work for a nationwide news organization like a television network because a viewer needs a live person to kvetch to, even if on a telephone.

These are tough and dangerous times for the press. The stakes are high, the public opinion of the press is so low, and the public's misunderstanding of what a free press is supposed to be and do is so great. What more frightening evidence of such misunderstanding can there be than the recent Times-Mirror survey which showed that the highest public approval rating of the press was concurrent with the Persian Gulf War—precisely the time when our press was prevented by the government from reporting freely and was forced to serve largely as a bullhorn for the Government?

Current circumstances demand another look, and a willingness of the press to reexamine old porcupine attitudes. It is distressing that after all these years, the number of news organizations utilizing the ombudsman concept is not growing but diminishing—down to only 37 today. Surely the concept and the performance of the hardy band of survivors deserve very much better than that. ■

Richard Salant is a former president of CBS News and the head of the now-defunct National News Council.

Curator

continued from page 2

Dowd noted in The New York Times elements of self-revelation and confession now color all campaign coverage.

It is the sort of trivialization of political debate which allows Murphy Brown (a fictitious incident in the fictitious story of a fictitious character having a fictitious female baby played by a male child) to become the substance of a front page story in The New York Times on the issue of family values in the presidential campaign.

By embedding the discussion and debate of important issues in a context dependent on a story line, on confession and on conflict stunts political debate and cripples the involvement by information-starved citizens.

The computer bulletin board experiences confirm the existence of an engaged public anxious to find more and better information in such times of important public events.

They could be showing the way to a important new opportunity to join the public service information needs of the people and the mass circulation news media's marketing needs for audience. ■

Correction

No, that was not a picture of Morton Mintz with his article in the summer edition of Nieman Reports. It would take too long to explain how a picture of Mort's cousin-in-law was used. Apologies to both.

Fall Reading

Doctors' Dilemma: Patients' Rights in Intensive Care

Intensive Care: Medical Ethics and the Medical Profession
By Robert Zussman
University of Chicago Press
260 Pages $29.95

By Harold Schmeck

A few generations ago it wasn't astounding to be born, live an entire lifetime and finally die all in the same house. Today, in the United States, that life story is vanishingly rare. Most babies are born in hospitals. Few people die at home unless they insist on doing so. Those whose deaths are not mercifully sudden are likely to spend their last hours in what health workers call "intensive care." With machines that can keep the heart beating, the lungs functioning and the kidneys eliminating wastes, almost any death can be postponed. The actual timing has become as much a decision of doctors as it is the much-quoted "act of God."

This circumstance has had an impact on everyone—doctors, patients, families, "activists" of all descriptions and the press. The names Karen Quinlan and Nancy Cruzan should be enough to remind reporters that we all have a professional interest in these things. Not only are they important, they have a tendency to become big stories. As a personal matter, everyone will have a direct interest sooner or later even though most of us prefer to keep that inevitable truth out of mind.

Robert Zussman, associate professor of sociology at State University of New York, Stony Brook, has made an important addition to public understanding of this highly personal and emotional issue. He set out to see how the praiseworthy tenets of medical ethics match the life and death realities of intensive care. The short answer is: they don't.

Intensive care units (ICUs) are special centers within hospitals where doctors and nurses do everything humanly—and technologically—possible to keep patients from slipping over the final edge. Intensive care units save lives and offer powerful reassurance for patients and families. When the heart stops beating it can be re-started. When breathing stops, that too can be restored. But the ICU is also a frightening place where the patient may be transformed from a person to a problem in biology, where many linger unconscious and near death and where even those who are more alert can't speak and can hardly communicate at all because of sedation and the tubes and equipment that are keeping them from dying. It is not the layman's intuitive notion of compassionate health care.

There is compassion in the midst of defibrillators, respirators, dialysis machines and intravenous fluids. But, the focus is urgently simple—keep the patient alive.

One of the reasons for the book is the development of the concept of patients' rights and the emergence of medical ethics as what the author calls a social movement. He says the modern shape of these concepts has emerged within the last few decades. Lawyers and medical ethicists have increasingly become players in the dramas that end life. Patients have rights, according to the unarguable present-day ethical and legal credo, and doctors must respect those rights. Major treatments should be administered or withheld only with the informed consent of the patient. Decisions to continue or end life-prolonging measures should reflect the patient's wishes. Medical ethics should have an important place in all medical decisions. Health care is a contract between provider and recipient.

Intensive care, where life and death decisions are made hourly, would seem to be particularly in need of ethical guidelines and insistence that patients are told what they need to know. This is certainly the place where informed consent is most vital to the contract. But that's where theory slams into reality. Patients are not taken to intensive care units unless life and death are at issue. No such patient and few families could absorb details of treatment at such a stage even if there was time for the explanations.

"Most patients in intensive care, as I have taken pains to argue, cannot participate in decisions surrounding their own care by virtue of the very conditions that brought them to the unit," said Mr. Zussman.

He quotes one staff doctor in an urban hospital as saying "I don't think informed consent exists in an intensive care unit."

"What's addressed in the unit is how fast they're bleeding and where they're bleeding from," said another.

"As a specifically legal doctrine, informed consent presupposes a model of decision making that has little to do with the realities of medical care," said Mr. Zussman.

The book is a report of his research on intensive care over several years. While many studies of medical ethics have been impersonal and theoretical,

his approach was to observe the way medical care is actually given. The studies involved first hand observations and interviews in an intensive care unit in the Boston metropolitan area and another in the Bronx. Each unit is in a hospital linked to a major medical school. The author gives them fictitious names: Countryside Hospital in Boston and Outerboro in New York. At first this is annoying. The author gives copious details and one would like to know which real hospitals and which medical schools are involved. But as the narrative unfolds, the tactic becomes more understandable. Use of pseudonyms for hospitals, patients, doctors and nurses frees the author to quote real thoughts and emotions without caveats and fear of damaging anyone's career.

The author attended daily "rounds" at which doctors described their cases at the bedside.

Mr. Zussman does not emphasize either heroes or villains; there appear to be too many of the former, too few of the latter. Nor does he hit the reader over the head with glib total solutions to the serious problems he reveals. Instead, he paints a disturbing picture of reality. The detailed quotes and case descriptions from his sources are fascinating. The reader takes away a glimpse of highly skilled, hardworking and conscientious health care professionals who are often tortured by the impossible bind between saving lives, minimizing patients' agonies and allowing the dying to go peacefully.

Among doctors and nurses of the two ICU's, the author says, one concern dominates all others: that intensive care units are filled with too many patients who are certain to die and the deaths are too long and agonizing. Part of the dilemma arises from the fact that a patient's true prospects aren't obvious until a few hours or days have passed in the unit.

The author's statistics show that this problem of treating many who are hopeless, while real enough, involves a smaller number of patients than the doctors themselves imagine. Many intensive care patients do survive and are discharged both from the unit and the hospital. Nonetheless, the author described the professionals' concern as deeply personal and highly principled. He also said their concern expresses two of the central issues in contemporary medical ethics: the best allocation of scarce resources and the question of what circumstances, if any, make it acceptable to withhold or withdraw treatment. Into this already agonizing set of choices, medical ethicists and hospital lawyers sometimes pile additional agony by requiring even more treatment for even more time.

Dying and incurable patients are often kept alive only by machines. The author quotes a nurse as saying some of them actually begin to "rot" before treatment is withdrawn.

"...We have one guy who had no blood flow from the neck up, so his brain was gone. He stayed in that bed for two and a half months with a heart beat... We were watching things fall off," she said. "Fingernails were falling off."

Much-publicized cases like that of Karen Quinlan and Nancy Cruzan make it seem that doctors are the ones who most often resist withdrawing treatment. Karen Quinlan, a 23-year-old New Jersey woman stayed in a deep coma. Eventually her parents decided it was time to turn off the respirator that was keeping her comatose body alive. The hospital's doctors refused and the went all the way to the Supreme Court of New Jersey in 1976 before permission was granted.

The case of Nancy Cruzan, a Missouri woman, was similar in some respects. She survived for years, unconscious and in a vegetative state, after an automobile accident in 1983 when she was 25 years old. The case went all the way to the U.S. Supreme Court in 1990 after the parents sought to halt the artificial infusions of nutrients and fluids that were keeping her alive. The court ruled against them and upheld the Missouri courts' insistence that "clear and convincing evidence" of the patient's wishes had to be produced before the life-prolonging measures could be halted. It is hard to believe that many 25-year-old women dwell enough on the prospect of death to leave any such record of their wishes.

These cases, and many others, have given the impression that doctors usually fight to continue treatment beyond all reason. The author said his experience is just the opposite—the doctors are those most likely to put limitations on extraordinary treatments when it becomes clear that the patient has no hope at all. "Physicians most often use their discretion - albeit with some occasional exceptions - to limit treatment. This is in itself a major finding of the research reported here," the author said.

But Mr. Zussman made it clear that health professionals make these moves with reluctance, many self-doubts and a great deal of anguish over every such decision. Furthermore, the decisions are seldom sharp turns in the course of treatment.

"Few decisions to limit treatment are discrete events," he said. "They are, rather, the result of an incremental process consisting of many smaller decisions that often sneak up, almost imperceptibly, on doctors and patients alike."

Law and the tenets of medical ethics require doctors to present these decisions as though they had been discrete events, thus distorting the true nature of the process.

A reader approaching the book with a layman's viewpoint, has to give ethicists and lawyers low marks. They often saddle an immensely difficult process with abstractions and artificial concerns. But, the author noted with approval, that today's climate of opinion has made doctors much more willing, even determined, than in the past to inform patients about their medical status. An example was a study in the Journal of the American Medical Association showing that in 1961 some 88 percent of doctors seldom even told their patients directly that the diagnosis was cancer, while in 1979, 98 percent almost always gave such diagnoses frankly.

Altogether, the book contains much food for unsettling thought. It will be valuable to the debate over medical care that is sure to grow more heated in years just ahead. ■

Harold Schmeck, Nieman Fellow 1954, is a retired science reporter for The New York Times.

A Life Well-Lived: Portrait of Averell Harriman

Spanning the Century: The Life of W. Averell Harriman, 1891-1986
Rudy Abramson
William Morrow & Company
768 Pages. $25

By John Hughes

Marie Harriman, the second and most irreverent of Averell Harriman's three wives, used to toss off a sarcastic quip when friends would tell her how well her husband looked. "You'd look good too if you'd done nothing but play polo until you were 50," she'd say.

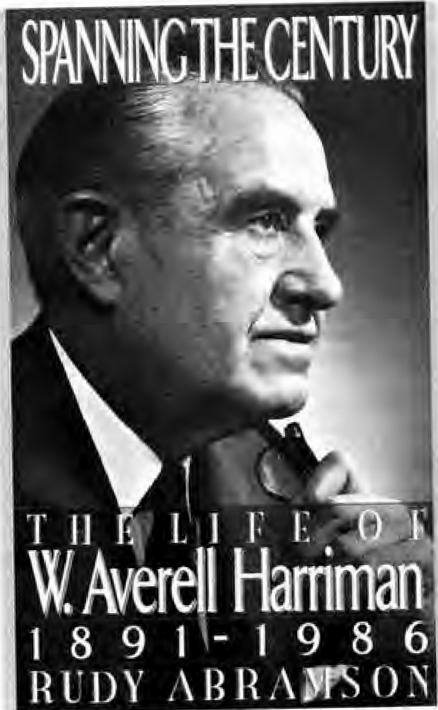
It was, of course, not true.

Harriman, the son of an immensely rich father, did spend much of his life indulging himself in the pursuits of the wealthy. He surrounded himself with cronies from his Ivy League background—Groton, Skull and Bones, and the Yale boathouse. There were town houses and country houses and summer estates, and parties at all of them to which were invited the witty, the famous, including actors and writers and journalists. Harriman financed his obsessions—croquet, rowing, polo—as only a rich man could.,

He also indulged his attraction to beautiful women. One of his liaisons was with Pamela Churchill, daughter-in-law of Winston Churchill. This was at a time in WW II when Harriman was President Roosevelt's eyes and ears in London, and was one of the British Prime Minister's closest confidantes. According to Rudy Abramson, as Pamela Churchill's marriage to Churchill's son Randolph faded, she was torn between Harriman and Edward R. Murrow, whose reports from London made him a kind of journalistic demi-god. Murrow returned to his wife, Pamela divorced and married someone else, but years later became Harriman's third wife.

Although a playboy , he spent the early part of his adult life as businessman, managing the companies and millions left him by his father. Those millions served him well, keeping him afloat when he made bad business calls that would have sunk a poorer investor. But he honed his negotiating skills wherever in the world the deals took him and built up contacts with international leaders that were to serve him well as he moved, in the second part of his life, into politics and diplomacy.

A dull public speaker, unenthusiastic about mingling with the crowds, he blew a presidential bid, but became a single-term Governor of New York, losing in his bid for reelection to Nelson Rockefeller. But it was diplomacy that he relished, and that he excelled at, and it was closeness to a series of American presidents that he sought, sometimes by weedling, cajoling, and unashamedly pleading for special assignments. Rudy Abramson is at his best when chronicling this Harriman career as Ambassador, special envoy, cabinet secretary, and State Department official.



Thus Harriman over the years established a remarkable record of achievement in public service and of contributions to his country's national interests.

As he grew older, Harriman's energy level was high and he kept in good physical shape, skiing into his late '70's. His mind remained sharp, his world-wide contacts excellent. But as presidents came and went, his star began to fade. President, Kennedy told a friend: "If we're going to give [Harriman] a job, he has to have a hearing aid."

Secretly, Harriman lusted for the job of Secretary of State, but it f eluded him. Instead he filled a series of lesser posts at State, ending his diplomatic career as a negotiator for Lyndon Johnson with the North Vietnamese in Paris. Even this was a bittersweet assignment, for Harriman's role was to set the scene for the new Nixon administration to negotiate the United States out of Vietnam.

Widowed, and in retirement, Harriman seemed "old, spent, and ready to die," according to Abramson. But into his life again came his old flame from London days, Pamela Churchill. Suddenly Harriman again had "spring in his step and his killer instinct on the croquet lawn." They married, and kept a Georgetown salon frequented by statesmen, journalists, diplomats. "Spanning the Century" is Abramson's first book, but his twenty-five years as a Washington corespondent—covering such big stories as the landing of the astronauts on the moon, the Vietnam war, Watergate and arms control debates—have served him well here.

Abramson has done a good job of chronicling Harriman's personal frailties and uncertainties without diminishing his stature as a statesman. ■

John Hughes, NF '62, is former Editor of The Christian Science Monitor and currently Director of the International Media Studies Program at Brigham Young University.

The Same Sources Over and Over Again

The News Shapers:
The Sources Who Explain the News
Lawrence Soley
Praeger Publishers
175 pages $42.95

By Jerry Berger

"Round up the usual suspects," barked Louis, Casablanca's chief gendarme, in a memorable movie line that's been repeated more than once in newsrooms across the country as reporters seek answers to the myriad of events surrounding government and politics.

Those newsroom "suspects" are more than likely to be white, moderate to conservative men who ply their trades under the titles of "expert" or "analyst" or "pundit" or "pollster" for think tanks and private universities in the Washington-Boston corridor, according to Lawrence Soley, a journalism professor at the University of Minnesota and a harsh critic of the consultants and other professionals he says have an inordinate role in "shaping" the news.

Few reporters, especially those who work government or political beats, would deny the existence of a small army of hirelings ready to offer a quote at the drop of a dime. One Democratic consultant who plies his trade in the Massachusetts Statehouse has been jokingly compared to a narcotic. "I know he's not good for me, but I can't help myself," a harried reporter has been heard to mutter at deadline.

But to Soley, there's little room for humor in examining the explosion of sound-bite bearing wisemen (there are but a handful of women) who, under the pretense of neutral objectivity, expound on topics ranging from arms control to politics.

That's because he believes such highly visible "experts" such as William Schneider and Norman Ornstein of the American Enterprise Institute, Stephen Hess of the Brookings Institution and U.S. News & World Report Editor David Gergen are partisan gunslingers with overblown credentials and hidden agendas.

He has particular scorn for Henry Kissinger and the conflict-of-interest-ridden relationship in which the ultimate Nixon Administration insider became a paid analyst for the three major television networks, often tailoring his commentaries to meet the political needs of his consulting company clients.

Contrasting network television news broadcasts in 1979-80 to 1987-88, Soley paints a picture of soaring reliance on 17 specific "news shapers," who also included partisans Kevin Phillips, Edward Rollins, Robert Beckel and Robert Squier. Overall, Soley charges, the group is characterized by its ties to the Washington "power elite," a sort of permanent floating crap game group of reporters and sources inflicted with a Beltway myopia coming from professional in-breeding.

Noticeably absent from the airwaves, he declares, are representatives from left-of-center think tanks such as the Institute for Policy Studies or the Economic Policy Institute. Those who carry liberal credentials, he says, are more clearly identified with their ideology than those toeing the "Republican centrist" line.

Soley offers no direct criticism—or praise—for any major print or broadcast news outlets' use of of these professiopnal pundits either in news columns or the op-ed page. In fact, he rejects critics who suggestions that Ted Koppel and "Night Line" are a personal forum for Kissinger, by noting that news shapers can also be legitimate news makers. And he implies that conservatives' condemnations of PBS's MacNeil/Lehrer NewsHour ignore the reality that Gergen and other right-of-center shapers are virtually permanent fixtures.

But Soley rejects ABC bigfoot Sam Donaldson's explanation that the political tinge to the experts reflects "the prevailing Washington power structure and the political winds." Instead, Soley appears quite sympathetic to the notion of a conspiracy between reporters and their sources to shape the news to their own political ends.

While hardly a conspiracy, there is an all too uncomfortable coziness on the political beat. It might stem from the socio-economic roots Washington-based reporters share with the people they cover, as Hess has attempted to trace — most recently in these pages. Or it well could be the Palace Guard mentality Mark Hertsgaard attempted to document in "On Bended Knee: The Press and the Reagan Presidency".

But more than likely it also includes a strong strain of pure, old-fashioned survival instinct, the kind exhibited in city halls and statehouses where reporters do not share the salaries, perks and prestige of their Washington colleagues. To be successful, a political reporter must practice that tried and true biological principle of symbiosis — going along to get along.

Unfortunately, sources have become wonderfully adept at manipulating the media, whether through the use of "experts" who offer perfect sound-bites that often reflect the line-of-the-day emanating from the Oval Office or the Corner Office. The well-documented efforts of Michael Deaver in the Reagan White House are only the smoothest example of a practice that goes on daily at all levels of government.

But instead of implying reporters are tainted by accepting these visual handouts, as Soley does, the principal sin at work is more simple — laziness.

Pressured to produce daily stories where often no news exists —and fearful of not matching the direction taken by the pack—government and political reporters have all too willingly accepted the daily narcotic "fix," whether it be the partisan tip or the well-crafted phrase. And as reporters fall deeper into the rut, more and more groups are offering how-to lessons on manipulating the media.

What's the answer? Soley suggests that for starters newspaper and television station librarians become keepers of the Rolodex, researching the background and biases of the experts who give good quote. It's a solution with little appeal for several reasons.

For starters, it ignores Soley's own finding that some of the biggest victims of the news shapers' efforts are the small newspapers and television outlets that don't have the time to double check the sources in Heritage Foundation reports before running them as "news." To assume these outlets have full-time librarians is folly.

More importantly, it represents an abdication of the basic premise of reporting — check out the facts, draw your own conclusions and don't be spoon fed by anyone. If reporters don't think it worthwhile to acquaint themselves with the background of their sources perhaps they don't have the temperament required to do the job.

The simple solution to the legitimate problem of an overreliance on news shapers is to return to good, solid reporting. Collect the facts from multiple sources, analyze what you have and use the basic gut instinct as a reporter to decide what is right or wrong.

That could be the start of a beautiful friendship, between the news media and an increasingly skeptical public.■

Jerry Berger teaches government and political reporting at Northeastern University in Boston and is perfecting the art of being one of the news shapers he happily worked with as a Massachusetts Statehouse reporter for United Press International.

Writing Yourself Into Stories

The Vanishing Coast

Elizabeth Leland
John Blair Publisher
$21.95

By Tom Regan

Attention teachers of journalism. Or any writer interested in crafting skillful, interesting pieces on a people, a region, or a community. Carolina journalist Elizabeth Leland has written a book that is not only a text book guide to writing feature pieces, it is also enjoyable, thoughtful, warm.

Leland is an accomplished journalist. She won the Ernie Pyle Award in 1991, and was a Nieman Fellow in 1991-1992. In 1988 Leland was working as a staff writer at The Charlotte Observer. She knew the Carolina coast that she had known from her childhood was disappearing, so she convinced her editors to let her do a series on this vanishing area. For three summers, she traveled up and down the Carolinas, from Daufuskie Island, South Carolina, to Wanchese, North Carolina. This book is the result of those many newspaper articles.

So what makes this book so special? A number of things. First, Leland's ability to capture the uniqueness of each place she visited, while at the same time showing us the common thread that runs from community to community. Her feel for the sounds and texture of a place is uncanny. She paints pictures with words. Second, her gift for finding the essence of character and humanity in the people she interviewed. And there are some remarkable characters in these pages: the oyster man Sephus Taylor, Captain Tom Grant of the Mosquito Fleet, Roberta Prioleau of Pewleys Island, to name a few. Many of these people have struggled in one way or another for most of their lives. Leland shows the effects these struggles have taken, but also digs below the easy surface characterizations to find the deep well of pride and dignity that resides in each of these people. She is familiar without being nosy, thoughtful without being earnest, engaging without being coy.

Elizabeth Leland

Third, and most intriguing of all, is the way Leland weaves herself into the stories. It's not that she includes herself in every story; far from it. (Although one of the best stories in the book is her personal reminiscence of jogging boards, an invention of Charleston's past.) But you sense her in every story, watching, being the reader's eyes and ears, without imposing herself in an intrusive way. I've never been to the Carolinas, but I have a greater feel for it now. And reading Elizabeth's book made me think a great deal about my own childhood in Nova Scotia, and how many things those who live along the Atlantic share in common. This is features writing of the very best kind.

So if you're a journalism professor looking for a good book on feature writing for your students, or a writer interested in improving the texture of your pieces, get this book. Or if you're just someone looking for an enjoyable bit of non-fiction—a damn good read—than this book is for you. ■

Tom Regan, Nieman Fellow 1992, is a columnist for The Daily News in Halifax, Nova Scotia.

The Butterfly Solution to Third-World Development

The Nature of Development

Roger Stone
Alfred A. Knopf. 286 Pages. $23

By Charles Onyango-Obbo

Roger Stone has written something rare—a book about economic development and the environment that is neither boring nor all grim.

Heroic stories of people working to save the earth, shine through a thicket of alarming statistics. In Indonesia, on the Irian Jaya Island, the Hatam people live in a remote mountainous area. In nearby towns and abroad the demand is growing for their bird-wing butterflies and birds of paradise. To meet the demand, the Hatam netted the butterflies and paradise birds so heavily, that most are now found only on steep upper slopes.

There were fears that the Hatam could quickly destroy a significant portion of the entire Arfak forest. In a creative program inspired by the World Wildlife Fund (WWF), the Hatam agreed to setting up a reserve to protect the butterfly and bird species. In exchange, on selected areas of forest or grassland, WWF helped ranchers cluster plants whose flowers or leaves are known to attract key butterfly species. They regulate their harvests according to market demand and sustainable limits. The environment and butterflies are preserved and the Hatam have been started on the way to making butterfly ranching commonplace and profitable.

This is one example of the small steps against the great pressures on the Earth's environment. By 2015 the number of rural people in the Third World may reach 1.25 billion—more people than now live in the entire industrial world. The tropical habitats where many of these live are also where as many as half the 100 million or so species of plants and animals, exist.

Development is causing huge losses in biological diversity. Stone cites scientists who estimate that the losses are 100 or perhaps even 1,000 times any previous rate, the most severe extinction since dinosaurs disappeared 65 million years ago. By the year 2015 25 percent of all species may vanish.

How have so many species survived? One possible explanation is that the idea that man was the most significant entity of the universe (anthropocentrism) always competed for public acceptance with animal and plant worship.

Stone cites the Bible as the manifesto of the anthropocentrists. While it begins with a nod to biodiveristy, in its first few words, God grants humans "dominion...over every creeping thing that creepeth the earth." Ever since, Stone contends, the anthropocentric view has been a strong element in Western thought, and a central component of human behavior.

European whalers hunted the white whale to extinction. New England settlers tamed the land and harvested coastal areas recklessly. Pioneers in their march westward began the process that reduced the prairies to the dust bowls of the 1930's.

Fortunately the world was not inhabited by anthropocentrists only. Asian animists always considered the natural world with reverence. From the early totenism of North Americans to the scarab in Egypt, cows, trees, insects, monkeys, elephants, all became objects of worship because of fear of the unknown or out of admiration for sexual prowess. In recent times reaction against the destruction in the West, led to the conservation movement. The anthropocentric view, nevertheless, has dominated economic thought.

In Costa Rica, only 17 percent of its forest cover remained by 1983. In Botswana, the beef industry has taken a lot of land, reducing its once vast wildebeest herds to some 10 percent of original size.

But Third World countries do not have to destroy the environment to become rich. It is here that Stone finds hope. He argues that environmental degradation in developing countries provides economically viable alternatives to human assaults on the environment. The Hatam example is one of several success stories of dedicated individuals and non-governmental conservation groups working with community-based groups that Stone encounters in his travels to remote places in Latin America, Asia and Africa.

But there is a catch. In all the cases where such projects have succeeded, almost always the communities have been free from government red tape and political control. Secondly, profit has been a key incentive to get the people to work.

The conclusions are obvious. To achieve environmentally healthy development, Third World governments will have to allow robust forms of local democracy and let go of their tight controls on their economies. Yet to consolidate their power, the insecure leaders of poor new nations tend to suppress decentralization, depriving and squeezing the countryside, and to pamper the urban poor where dangerous opposition is likelier to crop up.

Stone recognizes that overcoming this opposition will not be easy. In Brazil, where the environmental crisis is acute, and awareness high, the governor of the central Amazon was elected in 1990 precisely because he ran on an

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A Look Back at 18 of Journalism's Most Talented Writers

The Great Reporters: An Anthology of News Writing at Its Best

Wm. David Sloan, Julie K. Hedgepeth, Patricia C. Place, & Kevin Stoker. Vision Press. 300 pages. $18.95

By Dale Maharidge

Newspapers are desperate for a formula that will snare readers with the same kind of fury that Republican presidents garnered votes in the 1980's. The facts are grim and well-known, but bear repeating: since 1970, readership has been frozen at about 63 million, despite the addition of 30 million new households.

Various tricks are being employed to revive the industry. Gannett has its "News 2000" plan that essentially follows its money-losing (something like nearly $1 billion, yes, that is with a "b") USA TODAY approach that decrees the only thing better than a short story is an even shorter story.

There are others. Most plans treat stories as "units of text block," as one friend laments. It doesn't matter that the factoids are often the print equivalent of sugarless cold oatmeal.

Perhaps the bean counters should fire the overpriced consultants and fork out 19 bucks for "The Great Reporters," an anthology of primarily pre-World War II era journalists. On second thought, forget the bean counters. Reporters should read this book and start a revolution from the ranks.

The authors may have intended the book to provide a window on past great reporting, but in doing so, they have also provided a study as to what journalism should and must become if newspapers are to at least maintain readership.

The lesson of "The Great Reporters" is one that harkens to the rootsof newspapering: excellent writing based on solid, exciting reporting will attract the citizenry.

A journalist comes away from "The Great Reporters" a little wistful and angry that this kind of writing does not often find its way into newspapers of our day. All the emphasis seems to focus on graphics and other technical splashes.

I talked with Sloan after finishing the book, perhaps breaking a book reviewer's canon, but I learned the authors did not set out with the intention of including only reporters working before the 1950's. As they researched the subject, however, it was clear that the early body of work was the most compelling. "You had talented people who were able to use that talent, unlike today," Sloan said. "What I find discouraging is people feel if it's good writing, it's not good journalism."

The authors selected 18 journalists who wrote for American newspapers. Their work spans the time from the Civil War with The New York Tribune's Charles Anderson Page, through an eyewitness account of the landing at Inchon in the Korean War by New York Herald Tribune's Marguerite Higgins. Between, there are doses of James Creelman, Herbert Bayard Swope, Damon Runyon, Grantland Rice, and the ubiquitous Ernest Hemingway.

The authors (who do not reveal who they are in the book for unexpressed reasons), teach at or are otherwise associated with the University of Alabama's journalism department, culled these 18 from a semi-final list of 100. One detects the absence of some notable journalists, such as Ida Tarbell, whose turn-of-the-century reporting for "McClures" led to the breakup of the Standard Oil Company.

As explanation, the authors say they were more interested in great writing and reporting, not just great reporting. Yet the volume has flaws in that the work chosen tends to lean heavily toward sports and war. In going through hundreds of feet of microfilm as the authors must have done, one cannot help but assume they came across other journalists of merit who were not writing about men pounding or shooting each other.

A defect of this approach is the inclusion of just two women, Higgins, and Anne O'Hare McCormick, The New York Times reporter who was considered a "teacher to her readers." And we only see their war reporting.

In spite of this, the work chosen is brilliant. Along the way we are given reasons why each journalist was a good writer, a critique of their style's success, the commonality of all being the use of verbs which outnumber nouns and adjectives, and writing that is clear and active.

Picking a few choice paragraphs and leads from this anthology is difficult. It is something akin to being shown a treasure chest brimming with a hundreds of jewels and being asked to choose two or three favorite diamonds. A few:

During the stampede, for a moment the attention of hundreds was attracted to a horse galloping around carrying a man's leg in the stirrup—the left leg, booted and spurred. It was a splendid horse, gaily caparisoned.—Charles Anderson Page, writing after a major Civil War battle.

Listen to this, buddy, for it comes from a guy whose palms are still wet, whose throat is still dry, and whose jaw is still agape from the utter shock of watching Joe Louis knock out Max Schmeling.—Bob Considine's lead to the 1938 Louis-Schmeling fight.

Former Lepke aides and gunmen made corpses on Catskill, Brooklyn, and Bronx landscapes. They were burned with gasoline, buried in quicklime, shot, stabbed with icepicks, garroted—all on the orders of the little man with the fawnlike stare and the uneasy and diffident front."—Meyer Berger writing about the 1930's trial of mobster Louis "Lepke" Buchalter.

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A Look Back

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And there are surprises for younger reporters who believe military press restrictions are something new. Things were as bad in World War I as they were in the Persian Gulf War. We find that Floyd Gibbons of The Chicago Tribune angered Damon Runyon (both excerpted in the volume) when Runyon, who was far to the rear in a press pool, saw Gibbons rumble past secretly with an artillery unit to witness the firing of the war's first shot. Gibbons was arrested and held for two days, though, ruining his exclusive.

Considine also speaks to the present, to those who want to dumb down newspapers because they assume the masses are stupid. Considine, of Hearst's International News Service, is quoted as believing one of reporting's greatest offenses was to write "down" to people. "Let me write from the shoulder, and always with the assumption that those who read know more than I," he said.

Good advice for any era. ■

Dale Maharidge, Nieman class of 1988, teaches at Stanford University. "The Last Great American Hobo," his most recent book, will be published in 1993.

Butterfly

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anti-environment platform spiced with accusations that "foreign ecologists" were conspiring with international business interests to keep Amazonian mineral wealth out of the hands of Brazilians. The governor boasts, quite correctly, that "I wasn't elected by trees."

An optimist, Stone says the survival of third world governments, even the dictatorships, may depend on policies favoring the environment. Degradation of the rural environment has left many people poorer. If they stay in the villages, their protests could explode into guerrilla wars. If they go to the cities, they will be unemployed and thus breed conditions for urban revolt that the governments fear more.

A former Time correspondent, now a consultant at the Council of Foreign Affairs, Stone has put his experience to good use in this book. ■

Charles Onyango-Obbo, Deputy Editor of Weekly Topic, Kampala, Uganda, has just completed his year as a Nieman Fellow. He is working as an assistant editor of Nieman Reports.

About Journalism

Expanding Free Expression in the Marketplace: Broadcasting and the Public Forum, by Dom Caristi, Greenwood Press, 192 pages, $45.

Horace Greeley: A Bio-Bibliography, by Suzanne Schulze, Greenwood Press, 240 pages, $45.

Spin Control: The White House Office of Communications and the Management of Presidential News, by John Anthony Maltese, 297 pages, $29.95.

Through Jaundiced Eyes: How the Media View Organized Labor., by William J. Puette, ILR Press, 240 pages, $38 cloth, $16.95 pb

Fooling America: How Washington Insiders Twist the Truth and Manufacture the Conventional Wisdom, by Robert Parry, Morrow, 336 pages, $25.

Political Controversy: A Study of 18th Century Propaganda, by Robert D. Spector, Greenwood, 200 pages, $45.

The Spot: The Rise of Political Advertising on Television, 3d ed., by Edward Diamond and Stephen Bates, The MIT Press, $14.95 pb

Guide to U.S. Foreign Policy Issues, by editors of Foreign Policy Assn., $9.95 pb ■

The Making of Middlebrow Culture

Joan Shelley Rubin
The University of North Carolina Press
416 Pages $34.95 hc, $14.95 pb

Joan Shelley Rubin's aim was to delineate the democratization of literary culture in America in the first half of the Twentieth Century. As far as newspapers are concerned, she gives the most credit for bridging the gap between scholarship and entertainment to The New York Herald Tribune's Books section—not the market leader, The New York Times Sunday Book Review section. The reason for this choice is Stuart P. Sherman, who resigned as a professor at the University of Illinois in 1924 to become Books editor, with the goal of writing "so far as possible...about happiness, and what it is, and how it got there...." Others noted by Ms. Rubin for the making of middlebrow culture are Harry Scherman (The Book of the Month Club), John Erskine (Great Books) and William Lyon Phelps (The Swift Hour on NBC radio). Ms. Rubin neglects to say where culture is going. Two paragraphs tacked on to the section about the rigging of TV quiz shows in the mid 1950s merely express a hope for "moral and aesthetic commitments." ■

The Women's Bible Commentary

Carol A. Newsom and Sharon H. Ringe, Eds.
Westminster/John Knox Press, 396 pages. $19.95

This commentary seems aimed principally at women of faith who regularly study the Bible. The interpretations by 41 women scholars—Jewish, Protestant and Catholic— will also be helpful to men of faith, laymen as well as clergy, as they read views of selected Biblical passages from a woman's perspective. For journalists who write about religion the book is of obvious value. And for the typical reporter or editor tending to think of the feminist movement in terms of the National Organization of Women, the commentary demonstrates that the drive for equality has gone far beyond liberal political circles. ■

Nieman Notes

Washington Dinner

Circle November 19 on your calendar for dinner in Washington for Nieman alumni in the Washington-Baltimore area and their spouses—and any other Nieman alumni who want to attend. The guest of honor will be Bill Kovach, the Nieman curator. Details of place, hour and cost will follow in the mail, but for those who need to know soonest, call Peter Braestrup at 202-707-1535.

1963

Patrick Owens is taking advantage of Newsday's offer of a "buyout" effective September 1. His future holds possibly "another personally satisfying job" or, until then, he'll keep working on books, taking free-lance assignments and living most of each year in Kalispell, MT.

Bernard D. Nossiter died June 24 at his home in Manhattan. He was 66 years old. His companion, Eleanor Hauser, said he died of lung cancer.

For 24 years Nossiter was a reporter for The Washington Post. From 1979 to 1983 he was chief of the United Nations bureau of The New York Times.

Later he wrote two books, "The Global Struggle for More" (Harper & Row, 1987) and "Fat Years and Lean: The American Economy Since Roosevelt" (HarperCollins 1990). Previous books included "The Mythmakers: An Essay on Power and Wealth" (Houghton Mifflin 1964), "Soft State: A Newspaperman's Chronicle of India," and "Britain: A Future That Works" (Houghton Mifflin 1978).

Nossiter was born in Manhattan. He received a bachelor's degree from Dartmouth in 1947 and a master's degree in economics from Harvard in 1948. His marriage to Jacqueline Robinson in 1950 ended in separation in 1988. Besides his wife, who lives in San Francisco, he is survived by his mother, Rose Jacobson of Manhattan, a brother, Paul, of Wellfleet, MA, and four sons, Daniel of Washington, Joshua of San Francisco, Adam of New Orleans and Jonathan of Manhattan.

Shelby Scates, columnist of The Seattle Post-Intelligencer, wrote the following reminiscence for Nieman Reports:

> Bud Nossiter, a superb writer, great reporter and boon companion, was a newsman for all but a fraction of his 66 years, an artist among us craftsmen.
>
> We spent the best year of my life together on the Harvard Yard and outside, around Boston in places of more fun and less renown, as Nieman Fellows, 1962-63.
>
> Some of that class felt, with ample reason, like barbarians brought into Court of the Han Dynasty for Mandarinization. We had come straight from small towns, bad newspapers and unsavory state legislatures to the great eastern seat of learning.
>
> Bud was different. He was already Mandarinized. He knew more about economics and government, if not about legislative deal-cutting, than professors we had encountered. Most of us came from state colleges. Bud graduated from Dartmouth and had a master's degree in economics from Harvard itself.
>
> Between classes, Nieman seminars, four kids and Boston night life, Bud wrote "The Mythmakers," an excellent book about Kennedy Administration economic policy. Other books were written in Washington, Paris, Delhi, London and Israel between deadlines.
>
> We hooked up again in June 1967, covering the Mideast war from a rented Ford with telephone connections to New York from Tel Aviv and Tiberius. Bud wrote furiously with two fingers savaging a small Olivetti, frequently from the front seat of our Ford.
>
> I'm fairly certain we were the first Western reporters to file from Syria during the war since none of the others were nuts enough to ride up through minefields and into the Goal Heights with an Israeli reckon company.
>
> When Israeli MP's closed the road to Quenetra, the Golan's provincial capital, Bud and I brought khaki shirts, desert hats and posed, like hot-shot officials, in the back seat of our Ford, using an Atlantic Monthly stringer as our fake chauffeur. Speeding past the guard post, we saluted. The ruse spared us friendly fire. We made Quenetra in time to greet a United Nations peacekeeping force, the last of Syria's Army stragglers coming out of holes.
>
> Bud might have looked like the image of a 19th Century European political intellectual, piercing eyes behind thick glasses and constant smoke coming out of his pipe. He was the consummate American reporter—a hell of a man to boot.

1966

Robert Giles, editor and publisher of The Detroit News, was recently elected president of the Accrediting Council on Education in Journalism and Mass Communications.

When Deb Price, news editor of The Detroit News Washington Bureau, proposed a weekly column on gay issues, she described it as "something unique in mainstream journalism: a column based on the idea that discriminating against gays is wrong, period. Beyond that, expect the unexpected."

Bob Giles, the newspaper's editor and publisher, signed on to the idea and introduced it to News readers with a front page memo, promising that Deb's view of life from a gay perspective would be provocative and enlightening.

Reader reaction has been vigorous. Critics of the column seem to focus on two things, Giles says. First, that homosexuality is only about sex and second that it is OK to discriminate against gays because their

lifestyle conflicts with the religious values of some readers.

Ministers have written to report that Price's column has helped them counsel teens struggling with their sexual identity.

"Readers who acknowledge their intolerance and those who cite its educational value are persuasive testimonials for the column," says Giles.

1974

Morton Kondracke is writing a twice-weekly column for United Feature Syndicate covering topics such as White House-Congressional relations, politics, the economy and foreign policy. Kondracke, senior editor/writer at The New Republic, is also a contributor to The Economist of London and appears regularly as a panelist on the McLaughlin Group and serves as moderator of American Interests, PBS's weekly foreign policy series. He also writes a column entitled "Pennsylvania Avenue" which appears in Roll Call.

Nicholas Daniloff was named director of Northeastern University's School of Journalism effective July 1. In announcing the appointment, John Curry, President of Northeastern, said "Nick brings a wealth of national and international experience as well as a real vision of communications in the 21st century."

Prior to joining the faculty of Northeastern in 1989 Daniloff was a journalist for UPI and US News and World Report in Washington and Moscow. In 1986, while serving as US News & World Report's Moscow bureau chief, Daniloff was detained by the KGB and charged with espionage. The incident was in apparent retaliation for the FBI's arrest of a Russian United Nations employee. The detainees were exchanged after 13 days.

Daniloff's plans for the program focus on two aspects: keeping the program as healthy and vital as it is now and looking to the future to make the program as relevant as possible to future journalists as journalism changes and developes. He hopes to continue the process of modernization at the School with a focus on computers. He would also like to help develop journalists who work well in TV and electronic media and also develop additional courses in advertising and public relations to meet the needs of students in those areas.

Daniloff feels that the US is undergoing a crisis of values and the press should be more sensitive to ethical issues. He has a deep commitment to the freedom of the press and its place in a democratic society and feels the School needs to transmit to students the significance of freedom of the press and ethical responsibilities.

Nick Daniloff

1983

Bill Marimow was one of three journalists spotlighted in an article in the June 6 edition of Editor & Publisher whose career has taken a different turn leading to operations management.

One year ago Marimow, a two-time Pulitzer Prize winner at The Philadelphia Inquirer, assumed the newly created position of assistant to the publisher, Robert J. Hall, where he coordinates the transition from their downtown plant to a much larger site in Upper Merion Township. According to Marimow, "It's been probably the most intensive learning experience I've had since college—maybe ever."

Among the more satisfying aspects of his position, Marimow includes "the chance to get to know people in every nook and cranny of newspapering." Another plus is that "life on the operations side can be structured to be a little more manageable and efficient."

When he returns to the newsroom he will take some first-hand knowledge of business. He feels that in the years to come it will be of critical importance that top news executives have a thorough understanding of the business side.

1986

Stan Tiner sent the following note to the Nieman office:

> I have returned to the newspaper world in the most splendid of places; Mobile, Ala., where I am editor of The Press and Register. It is wonderful to be back, and I promise never again to run for Congress. Vickie has reluctantly joined me, leaving her beloved position at Shreveport's Cathedral Parish behind.
>
> The rest of the Tiners are scattered to the winds. Mark is a Peace Corp volunteer in Costa Rica, Jon is a senior at Louisiana Tech, and Heather is a sophomore at the University of Alabama.
>
> We would love to host a Nieman Fellow '86 reunion at Gulf Shores sometime in the near future. If you are interested please call or write and the party will begin shortly.
>
> Tiner's address is: Press Register, P.O. Box 2488, Mobile, AL 36630. Telephone number: (205) 434-8674.

1988

Dale Maharidge writes that he has left his teaching position at Columbia University, and instead will be teaching at Stanford University for the coming academic year. He will be teaching a reduced load so that he can continue to write books (there are two non-fiction projects and a novel in the works).

1989

Cynthia Tucker, editorial page editor for The Atlanta Constitution, is writing a weekly column syndicated by Chronicle Features. The column, entitled "As I See It," discusses personalities and timely topics including abortion, gun control and sexual harassment.

1990

Kazutami Yamazaki was appointed the Op-Ed Page Editor of the Nikkei Weekly on March 1, 1992. He will also serve as columnist and write a weekly column for this Tokyo newspaper. Mr. Yamazaki anticipates that his new position will be tough, but very challenging and enterprising. From his experience as a journalist he feels that the quality of the Op-Ed pages is crucial to a quality newspaper. He hopes to have Op-Ed pieces that are provocative, even controversial.

"Journalism and politics go hand-in-hand in Colombia," according to Adrianne Foglia Moreno. Adrianne's husband, Luis Alberto Moreno (NF '91), was named Minister of Development in July. He joins another former Nieman Fellow, Juan Manuel Santos (NF '88), who was appointed Minister of Foreign Trade in November of 1991.

The last two months have been busy for the Moreno family. On June 15, Adrianne

started the first radio broadcast in English in Latin America.

1990

Here is an update from Dick Reavis:

Miriam and I have come back to Texas, where I'm working for The Dallas Observer, an alternate weekly edited by my old friend from Texas Monthly, Peter Elkind.

We were last in Monterrey, where I was correspondent for the business desk of The San Antonio Light. Monterrey was polluted; Miriam had asthma for the first time in 30 years. It wasn't the kind of place where we'd want to spend the rest of our lives.

Though the people at The Light were enthusiastic about my work, both Miriam and I were continually irritated by reports others wrote in both the Mexican and American press, i.e., by the dominant coverage. The Bush administration has tapped Mexican President Carlos Salinas de Gortari for sainthood, and American reporters, as a rule, either don't know enough about Mexico to see through the sham, or can't report what can be seen everywhere: Mexico can't create a modern economy without a domestic base. Yet the wages of all, absolutely all hourly workers in Mexico are not sufficient to the task and real earnings are dropping, not falling. Twenty years after Volkswagen and the Big Three United States auto manufacturers began production in Mexico, Mexican auto workers still can't buy cars! The Mexican press, as a rule, still takes its lead from its government, just as ours does.

My return to the States was also prompted by Bill Clinton's admission, however timid, that he had opposed the Vietnam War. It has long been my opinion that until the country decides, once and for all, that that war wasn't in any way justified, it can't advance its political outlook. Clinton has contributed to that process, however unwittingly. (Strange logic, I say. Baby boomers have had to show that they were wrong on the chief political issue of their generation, in order to be right for candidacy. If that doesn't reward stupidity, nothing does.) I look forward to a day—will it ever come?—when having opposed the war will be a better credential than military honors.

The Dallas Observer is owned by New Times, which owns similar papers in Phoenix, Miami and Denver. The image most people have of Dallas is of a sleek, rich city, managed by a conservative oligarchy. For that reason, several friends warned me, "you don't want to go to Dallas." But Dallas is Monterrey with clean air.

Only part of it is rich, as everywhere, and the work that The Observer is doing has grown more important with the closure of The Dallas Times Herald, the city's number two paper. My job will essentially be to write about the life of the poor. Miriam has begun working part-time for The Observer as a computer whiz, and we're here for the long pull: last week we closed a deal on a house.

1991

Tim Giago, publisher of The Lakota Times, has received many supportive telephone calls from readers in response to his "Viewpoint" column in the June 20 issue of Editor & Publisher. Many of the callers say that for the first time they understand.

The article, entitled "Mascot issue will not go away, and neither will Indian people," applauds the "courage and sensitivity" of William Hilliard, editor of The Oregonian, who changed the editorial policy of his newspaper regarding the use of names of sports teams which may be construed as racist. Hilliard received a lot of criticism from editors and publishers who accused him of trying to be "politically correct."

1992

Stan Grossfeld reports on his trip to Rio De Janeiro:

Despite the watered-down treaties, the hypocrisy of the "environmental" President and the virtual disappearance of Rio's street children, the Earth Summit was an unqualified success.

For at least two weeks, Rio was an environmental Woodstock. One hundred seventy nations discussed the future of planet Earth. Forget about the headliners: Bush with his I-will-not-apologize speech; Castro, who photographers say deliberately walked in front of Bush to upstage his enemy; Mitterand, who reportedly is afraid of tunnels, as common to Rio as squirrels to Boston Common.

No, the newsmakers at the carefully orchestrated earth summit were clearly not the news. The crosstown non-governmental Global Forum with its 1,420 bit players are tomorrow's hope. Everyone found common ground and ideas pollinated in elevators, buses, hotel lobbies and tents. It received less attention but in the long run it may accomplish more.

President Bush never bothered to visit the Global Forum but Senator (now Vice Presidential candidate) Albert Gore did and he received a standing ovation after a speech in a 100-degree tent. As he gulped ice water and made his way through the admiring crowd he passed near an upside down American flag and a sign chastising Bush for not signing the biodiversity treaty.

Mike Love of the Beach Boys said the rock group donated $100,000 to buy video cameras for NGO's all over the world to document needs and deeds. The Global Forum to him was more than good vibrations. "What happens here will generate over time," he said.

These grass roots organizations will pressure governments into taking off their big-business blinders and keeping an eye out for our children and our children's children. After all, history does not always instantly judge events in proper perspective. Take, for example, General George Marshall's 1947 Harvard commencement speech which stirred little fanfare yet became the Marshall Plan.

Oceanographer Jacques Cousteau had the big picture in mind. "Stop thinking only of ourselves," he said at Rio Centro. "Surviving like rats is not what we should bequeath to our children and grandchildren."

Brazil also used its military to vitually eliminate it's infamous crime problem and sent its street children scurrying like cockroaches when the kitchen light is switched on. Delegates felt safe with the military stationed on every corner of the street. Brazilians, remembering years of military rule, felt uneasy. "I was sorry to see the earth summit end," writes Victoria Fahlberg, who helps run a Rio clinic for abused children. "The troops went back to their barracks and Rio once again turned into a haven for criminals."

The Environmental Woodstock is over. The real work is just beginning. ■

NIEMAN REPORTS
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Haitian Journalist Wins 1992 Lyons Award

Jean Mario Paul, a correspondent with Radio Antilles Internationale in Haiti, is the 1992 recipient of the Louis M. Lyons Award for conscience and integrity in journalism.

The 25-member Nieman Fellow Class of 1992 selected Jean Mario Paul in recognition of the courage he has displayed in the face of government intimidation following the September 30, 1991 coup d'état, and for the excellence of his reporting on local official corruption.

Since 1989 Jean Mario Paul, 25, has filed news reports from Petit- Goâve, a town some 20 miles from the capital of Port-au-Prince, to Radio Antilles Internationale, a premier Haitian radio station, which the government shut down after the coup. His political analyses and steadfast reporting on corruption also appeared in two newspapers: Petit-Goâve Info and May Nan May. He was also a founder and leader of a local youth organization in Grand-Goâve that actively opposed military authorities.

During the September 30 coup, Paul's home and his mother's residence were burned. That same evening six radio stations, including Radio Antilles Internationale, were made inoperative in raids by soldiers and citizens supporting the coup leaders. In an atmosphere of intimidation and threats, several other radio and television stations ceased broadcasting in the months that followed. Two journalists have been killed; others report receiving death threats, and the campaign of harassment has forced many journalists to practice self-censorship.

On November 9, Jean Mario Paul was arrested and charged with arson in attacks on the police station and court house in Grand- Goâve. He was taken into custody and removed to Port-au-Prince where reliable reports indicate that he was beaten severely enough to require hospitalization. The Committee to Protect Journalists found that Paul was held in the"toad" position, in which a victim's neck is tied to his legs while he is beaten on the back and buttocks. After his release from the hospital, he was returned to Petit-Goâve Prison on December 16. Family members, in fear for their lives, have gone into hiding.

On April 29, Jean Mario Paul was released from jail after a Haitian judge dismissed his case for lack of evidence. Paul has not resumed his writing, nor can his voice be heard on Radio Antilles Internationale since the station, like many others, remains closed. As with many other journalists, Paul's ability to tell what has happened in Haiti has been curtailed by the government. As exiled President Jean-Bertrand Aristide said in April of the silencing of Paul:

"It is symbolic that he is in prison because in the same way the press in Haiti is still imprisoned. Radio gave people a way to express what they want and how they feel about democracy in Haiti. Now that ability to talk to each other is taken away."

The Lyons Award, named for former Nieman curator Louis M. Lyons, was first given in 1964. The award, which carries a $1,000 honorarium, will be presented in September in Cambridge and in Boston with members of the city's Haitian community.

There were two 1991 Lyons Award winners, Gitobu Imanyara, editor of The Nairobi Law Monthly in Kenya, and Max du Preez, publisher of Vrye Weekblad (Independent Weekly Journal)in South Africa. Both faced threats to life and liberty.

Similarly, Jean Mario Paul faces threats to his life and liberty in his pursuit to tell the story of what is happening in his country and to its people.■