



I was pleased to read the headline praising "The Simpsons," and by no less than a Shakespeare scholar ("The Greatest TV Show Ever," Sept./Oct.). But I was disappointed by Paul Cantor's assertion that the "Itchy and Scratchy" cartoon-within-the-cartoon is the show's greatest accomplishment. How could such a bright man get it so wrong?

"Itchy and Scratchy" is the least imaginative aspect of the show, as it endlessly repeats a minor variation of the same lame joke. That Cantor wasted so much ink and time praising this throw-away segment of an otherwise brilliant show is sad.

If Cantor had only described some of the better episodes, the readers of TAE would have been introduced to the most imaginative and biting commentary on contemporary American life in any mass-market medium. Where else but in a single episode of "The Simpsons" is a viewer treated to a musical parody of *A Streetcar Named Desire* (with an original score and deliciously satirical lyrics), coupled with a separate story line that traces two-year-old Maggie's escape from the Ayn Rand Daycare Center, with a tribute to Hitchcock's *The Birds* thrown in for fun (Homer carefully backs out of a room full of pacifier-placated babies that look as ominous as any flock of seagulls)?

I'm sure many of your readers came away from Cantor's article smug in their disdain for what they perceive as hopelessly low-brow fare. And that's too bad, for it's their loss.

Bob Consigli
via CompuServe

We have come across a solution I did not see in the September/October issue

on television. When our daughter received a gift of a TV/VCR for her room, I decided not to hook it up to any antenna, cable, or satellite dish. She, and now our son, can't just watch whatever is on—they must choose from (too many) videotapes in our collection. The majority of them are movies, old and new, and PBS favorites. No "garbage" will be "dumped" in their room without our knowledge.

Michael Freed
via CompuServe

Your September/October issue on television was excellent, funny, witty, and bright. But I was surprised to see no reference to "TV-free America," a Washington-based organization that puts out "Kill Your TV" bumper stickers and sponsors "TV-free Week" annually. I think they're the only full-time anti-TV organization.

You also might have referred to *The American University* by Jacques Barzun, who argues that Americans are trapped in the vice of instant gratification. Barzun's book was written in the late 1960s; imagine how TV has contributed since then to the instant-gratification mentality.

Michael H. Agranoff
Stafford Springs, Connecticut

With reference to Matthew Stevenson's "American Unplugged," I am compelled to respond in the affirmative (Sept./Oct.). The removal of the television from our house was close to the most important and beneficial decision I have ever made. It is a thief of time and a teacher of honey-glazed immoralities.

Charles R. Chesnutt
Dallas, Texas

Bill Kauffman's

FLASHBACK on Jackie Robinson and the old Negro Leagues was commendable (July/August). But to include any quotations from such an obnoxious and full-blown black racist as Amiri Baraka almost completely ruined it. To use material by a black supremacist like Baraka totally contradicts the conservative ideals of TAE. If Kauffman is aware of this, or Baraka's hateful, racist beliefs, he and your magazine must realize that such opposites do not work together, either in a magazine or in real life.

David Kelly
Louisville, Kentucky

Bill Kauffman responds:

I do not share Mr. Baraka's taste for pan-African Marxism; however, he has written well about the Negro baseball leagues. In real life, sometimes we learn from those with whom we disagree.

Jonetta Rose Barras and Ted Rueter both understand the ACLU better than most law professors ("Enemy of the People," July/August). Unlike the latter, Barras and Rueter do not mistakenly equate rights with liberty. To be sure, rights are a necessary condition of liberty, but they are not sufficient. Absent a modicum of civility and community, all the state-anointed rights in the world fail to liberate.

Barras rightly details how the ACLU works against the interests of the poor. Civil libertarians will resist this judgment, but no amount of ideological posturing for the poor can ever substitute for literally improving their lot. Indeed, civil libertarians pose a serious danger: They can damage the poor with

their "noble" deeds without even a trace of guilt.

It only goes to show that the ACLU is the godchild of a morally and intellectually bankrupt interpretation of liberty. Tragically, it also shows what happens when intellectuals accept no responsibility for the consequences of their ideas.

William A. Donohue
Catholic League for Religious and Civil Rights

Jonetta Rose Barras errs wildly in claiming that the ACLU "struggles everywhere to save mankind from religion." The ACLU is a great friend of religious liberty ("Enemy of the People," July/August). In defending the constitutional principle of separation of church and state, the ACLU is defending the proposition that religion can do its job best when government leaves it alone, that our nation's rich religious diversity demands that government be religiously neutral, that government in America has no authority to compel taxpayers to support religious institutions.

The ACLU is a democratic organization in which minorities and women are well represented. Its positions are established carefully and are grounded on constitutional values. The ACLU is not the "enemy of the people." It is a voluntary protector of the peoples' constitutional freedoms.

Edd Doerr
Americans for Religious Liberty

When he uses Shreveport as an example, Stephen Moore slightly undermines his case that cities with low percentages of foreign-born individuals are "in great despair" (SCAN, Sept./Oct.). In the past few years, unemployment here has declined significantly, although it is still above the national average. Worker shortages are very common in a few areas such as construction, while real estate values have risen rapidly and hotel and apartment occupancy rates are near capacity. True, Shreveport is by no means a developmental dream, but these and other indicators show that neither is it a basket case.

Jeffrey Sadow
Louisiana State University in Shreveport

Howard Husock's article "The Landlord as Entrepreneur" was outstanding (July/August). It vividly captures the purpose and mission of our organization, the American Association for Small Property Ownership. From our standpoint, real estate needs to be viewed first and foremost as a business. It has also been a tremendous enterprise for families, where children were involved in the business and learned responsibility at an early age. And, as the Pew research study showed, when mothers can work part time, the family is strengthened. This happened in past generations, before the advent of government intrusion into housing markets.

F. Patricia Callahan
American Assoc. for Small Property Ownership

Your May/June issue focused on the privileged backgrounds of the protesters during the 1960s, but this image of '60s radicalism is very narrow. It focuses on the late '60s, and it ignores, for example, the Black Panthers who were certainly not privileged members of elite institutions.

Further, the claim by Karl Zinsmeister in BIRD'S EYE that "in its initial, adolescent phase, the '60s ruckus often had nothing to do with politics or 'idealism,' or making a better world," and that "what we saw in action was plain old-fashioned self-indulgence," is preposterous. Perhaps we can credit the early southern civil rights movement as something apart from the hippie culture that came a decade later. But any observer must grant that the involvement of white students in the freedom rides, voter registration campaigns, and the 1963 march on Washington clearly made up the "adolescent phase" of the youth movement. This had nothing to do with "politics"? Risking one's life had nothing to do with "idealism"? The deaths of Michael Shwerner, James Chaney, and Andrew Goodman were self-indulgent?

But in spite of these insulting preassumptions, there is an element of truth in your criticisms of the more privileged students who joined the movement for less idealistic reasons. True, many of the more extreme aspects of

the '60s were self-indulgent, and many American youths did act like spoiled little rich kids. That's not surprising because the most spoiled radicals were children of the wealthy, the chief beneficiaries of a spoiled culture.

Glenn Loury recalls looking out at these "privileged" protesters thinking that these "students were mainly protesting just to protest" ("The Other '60s"). Indeed there may not have been much more to it than that. But that alone justifies them. They were protesting their own spoiled rottenness. If they looked ugly, it is because they were ugly Americans and knew it. America could not have faced the economic and political 'malaise' of the '70s had it not been for the hippies who reminded us that there were more important things in life than cheap bananas and gas-guzzling cars.

Paul Bjerk
Brooklyn, New York

Buried in the middle of the entertaining colloquy between P.J. O'Rourke and Robert Bork was a disturbing line from the judge: "Conservatism doesn't depend upon charismatic leaders: What we need are some mundane leaders who understand what conservatism is about" (LIVE, May/June). This typifies the current trend among some conservatives who devalue leaders and leadership. Such a posture—one is loath to accord it the dignity of a well-considered position—not only ignores history but fosters the disappointing situation in which an increasingly conservative electorate is demonstrably queasy about granting greater authority to the current crop of conservative leaders.

James M. Strock
San Francisco, California

CORRECTION: In our article about Alan Greenspan's early life and relationship with Ayn Rand (Sept./Oct. 1997), we reported that Mr. Greenspan first appeared in the *New York Times* in 1957. Actually, the Federal Reserve Chairman gently informs us, he was initially captured in the *Times*' amber in 1948, in an article about corporate profits. He was 22 years old at the time.

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Alexine leads a full life as a grandmother, volunteer and Chairman of a medical technology company in Washington, D.C. In 1986, she was diagnosed with breast cancer. Thanks, in part, to medicines developed through our research, today she is a 10-year survivor who spends her time and energy improving the lives of others. Personally and professionally, Alexine understands the importance of our increased R&D efforts, which include more than 200 drugs in development for cancer.

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