

Forest and Santa Barbara and on the Main Line. . . . What they tell us to buy, by God, we buy. . . ." The Man from Schweppes (dashing a little different) is to be seen boarding our evening train at Grand Central. The Man in the Hathaway Shirt is an exurbanite. The estates of Roy E. Larsen, president of Time Inc., and of Gardner Cowles, editor of *Look*, are equidistant from my small house in the exurban woods. The Henry Luces, formerly resident in Greenwich (which, under the Sectorsky classification, has become mere crowded suburbia), have moved up into our out-class by taking up a few hundred acres in remotest Ridgefield.

Exurbanites, Unite!

There may be grounds for reflection in the thought that the purveyors of dreams to America are themselves inhabitants of a splendidly scenic but increasingly encumbered dream world, doomed to pass. Still, residence in exurbia brings with it certain responsibilities along with distinct opportunities. One feels one's self in the heartland. The minor exurbanite, hurrying into the city with manuscript or advertising layout or portfolio in hand, meets his nodding acquaintance, the very important exurbanite, on the 8:12. If he is smart, he corrals his man. (Mr. Sectorsky is good on the business of corralling your betters on the train and making a captive audience of, say, Mr. Larsen.) Ideas are tossed about. Editorial positions are hammered out as the train passes Stamford. An advertising campaign that may revolutionize American dental care is developed before we reach 125th Street. The interplay is exhilarating. Simple suburbia never had it like this. I wouldn't miss it for the world.

I think, in short, that Mr. Sectorsky is inclined to be a trifle superior at our expense. He knows us, but he didn't stick it out. He had his fling out here, but then he fell back into what we call the fleshpots. He says we have escaped the oppressiveness of the city only to subject ourselves to a far more persuasive structure of conformity out here. Could be. But he overlooks the rugged individualism of getting into jeans and building your own terrace—even if your

neighbors are also building terraces. He says that our city-bred wives, stuck here on their acres all day long with no relief but the second car, the country club, the P.T.A., and, in certain instances, a nip from the bottle, are often bored to tears by this experiment in pioneer luxury living. But I know one who seems completely happy when just thinking of her

next year's garden. Perhaps Mr. Sectorsky just doesn't like dreams and gardens.

I AM WRITING this under the full autumn glory of my hard-earned maples, and I think Mr. Sectorsky is missing something. I'll never have as many maples as Mr. Larsen over the hill, but even so . . .

CHANNELS:

The Fallacy of Quantity

MARYA MANNES

ANYONE interested in isolating the elements of good and bad in television should see a rehearsal of a big production. Specifically I learned why the good in television is not better by watching the first "Omnibus" of the season rehearsing for three hours in a bare loft.

This "Omnibus," called "The Birth of Modern Times," was wholly devoted to an examination of the Renaissance. Robert Coughlan of *Life* magazine wrote the original script, the preparation of which took sixteen weeks; the cast of seventy-eight included such stars as Charlton Heston of the movies and Betsy von Furstenberg from Broadway, and the

My first impression at the rehearsal was perhaps the hardest to define, although it goes to the core of all television weakness. I think I would call it the diffusion of waste—waste of time, waste of people, waste of money. All rehearsals involving many scenes and many extras are, I know, amorphous; but in the theater certainly, and in the best moviemaking, there is a ritual and a discipline that I found absent here. There was an aggressive slackness throughout the company (and I believe this is typical) that bordered on indifference, and very little of the cohesive tension that characterizes a unified project. "We may be actors," they seemed to say, "but it's not written in our contract that we must have pride in the fact."

In the ultimate TV performance, talent and competence emerged from the group, now unrecognizable in wig and velvet. I mention their rehearsal attitudes merely as an indication of a state I suspect is chronic in a medium so new and so rich that it has bred a sprawling and makeshift society, without those disciplines which tradition and thrift impose on creative expression—usually for its good. Nowhere is the fallacy of quantity more evident than in Spectaculars and panoramas that pretend to widen the screen while in fact they limit vision. And while this particular "Omnibus" far excelled them in taste, it suffered from the same fallacy.

Part of it—more people, more jobs



company had rehearsed 2,703 actor-hours by opening time three Sundays ago. A little Puerto Rican boy actor who sat next to me said, "Do you know this cost \$150,000?" Although this has not been confirmed, I can well believe it.

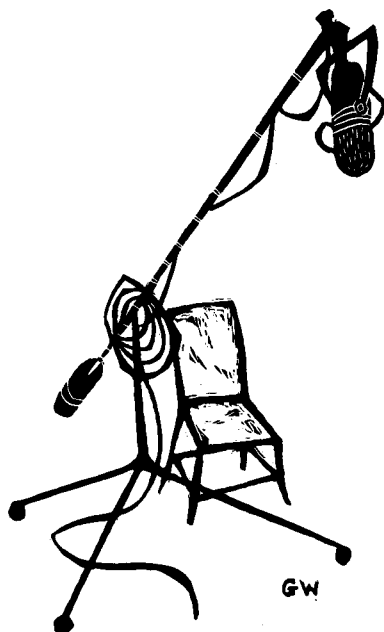
—was noticeable in the rehearsal.

Clutter and Crowds

Apart from director, technical director, and choreographer, there seemed a plethora of assistant assistants exerting their small powers. They confirmed a long-held feeling that the medium in all its aspects, from ad agency to administration, is cluttered with expensive and expendable human digits who expand the budget while they shrink the product.

As the rehearsal proceeded, two other suspicions ripened into conviction. One was that the scenes containing two or at most three people were the most effective, and the crowd scenes the least so.

This was in part due to the clear and literate script of Robert Coughlan, who knows what he writes about, and in part to the fine presence and diction of Charlton Heston as Niccolò, the “universal man,” and such lesser names as Peter Donat as Botticelli. But the crowd scenes, rehearsed between the yellow tape lines of camera angles, were ludicrous jumbles of bodies performing actions in two feet of space which demanded ten. Even on screen, elaborately and faithfully costumed and carefully “patterned,” these street scenes and carnivals were diffuse and ineffective, and I am sure an imaginative mind could have conjured up a Florentine street with four figures and an atmosphere of sensual riot with two.



Once again, TV is primarily not the crowd. This is its limitation and its strength. The writer, the actor, the dancer: These and these alone will make it great, and no amount of “production” is worth a cent without them and the co-ordinating genius of one man.

So the good things in the “Omnibus” rehearsal were the good things in the performance on television: the relaxed, astute, and humorous commentary of the fifteenth-century Niccolò (and Heston was a brilliant choice for the part) and those moments in which Coughlan the writer becomes most eloquent.

It is all to the good when millions of people can hear a song composed by Lorenzo de’ Medici played by the Pro Musica Antiqua and see Michelangelo’s “David.”

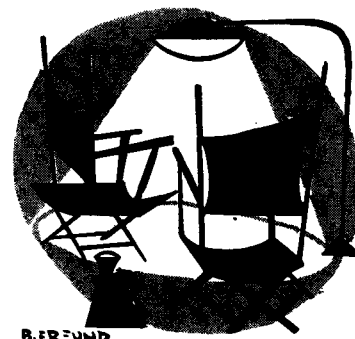
And it has always been to the good that they can learn some art and some history, however fragmented, from a man who looks and speaks as if they were part of his own knowledge and being: Alistair Cooke. But if the TV Workshop of the Ford Foundation learns anything from its own rehearsals, it will go slow on panoramas of space and time or merit the descriptive tag put on “Omnibus” by *TV Guide* (quite without critical intent, I am sure) of “Cultural Variety.”

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The Abuse of Emotion

A play by one of TV’s most talented playwrights, Reginald Rose (he wrote *Almanac of Liberty* and *Twelve Angry Men*), highlighted two more elements injurious, I believe, to the worth of television. I say two, but they are in fact one, for I mean the stimulation of intense emotion without a resolution.

Time and again I have been excited by the potentialities of a given hour-long drama only to be left empty and cheated of memory or meaning. Even so able a writer as Rose indulges in it. In this instance it was a play called *The Expendable House*, and it started off with a theatrically magnificent idea: An unhappy young soldier detailed to an atom-bomb test in the desert decides to end his life by staying in the dummy house—“the typical American home”—devised by the Army to



test blast effects. There he waits, in the company of a dummy husband, a dummy wife, and a dummy boy, rigidly placed in “typical” positions. It is a gruesome premise, fairly trembling with implications and possibilities.

BUT WHAT HAPPENS? In the G.I.’s tormented mind the dummies turn into his own family, and we are subjected to a series of scenes, all too familiar on television, in which people of no control and less intelligence scream, sob, rant, plead, and collapse, all for the love of a young man who, any way you look at it, is a psychopathic heel. After a few of these flashbacks, the realization that he is indeed a heel (yet not, for some unspecified reason, really responsible for his acts) impels the soldier to escape the doomed house and rejoin his company in its trench a safe distance away; and we last see his face irradiated and calmed by the explosion. Unfair, Mr. Rose, and very, very unlikely.

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Better News

Having thus examined the flaws in a great medium, I think it only fair to alert you to some of its finest programs this year, old and new: CBS’s “Talkaround,” the first really stimulating show using young people; the same network’s “Adventure,” still the best natural-history documentary; and “Face the Nation,” a better and less acrid “Meet the Press”—all on Sundays. Eric Sevareid, always rewarding, has an expanded Sunday commentary. And watch for anything out of the Salomon (“Victory at Sea”) stable at NBC in the “Project 20” series, notably “Nightmare in Red,” due November 13.

A Lion In the Garden

MADELEINE CHAPSAL

WHEN William Faulkner came to Paris on a State Department mission, he might have known what he was letting himself in for. But anyone who took a good look at him at cocktail parties, receptions, and press conferences could have no doubt that Faulkner was in worse trouble than he had anticipated.

His most grueling ordeal was the Gallimard cocktail party. The publishing house is on the Rue de l'Université, and its large paneled rooms open onto a lawn with three trees—one of the famous secret gardens of Paris. Behind this eighteenth-century elegance the firm runs a greedy monopoly over most of the best French authors of the day.

When Faulkner arrived at precisely six o'clock, there was no one to greet him. The Gallimards—there is a whole family of them—were still upstairs. He found himself with three journalists and a photographer who, like the guest of honor, happened to come on time. They were lucky; in a few minutes four hundred people would be there. For the moment they had the hero to themselves.

At first sight the man is not impressive. But there is something unbending and strong, peasantlike, in the way he holds himself. He speaks very quietly, and he makes no sudden gestures. He looks like the kind of man who gets along well with animals and children.

The newspaper people approached him reverently: "Mr. Faulkner," they would begin. And immediately they would run into a wall, that famous wall about which Paris had been talking for days but in which no one really believed until he faced it. It is built of the most exquisite but the most obdurate politeness—the special politeness we in France think of as the attribute of certain Americans brought up in the South. When you come up against it you

find yourself gently pushed back to an immense distance from William Faulkner.

Try it yourself. Ask him a question. He leans toward you, he listens to you, he answers "Yes" or "No," and then he takes a step backward. It is that step backward which seems so tragic. After forcing him to retreat—each question a step—even the hardest newspapermen give up.

Yet the three reporters tried it one after the other. They were there to bring back a story, after all, but when they reached the wall, they gave up.

"To think that I have the sound truck outside, and all for nothing!" the radio man said, as if he were saying, "I have the Cross and the nails outside." The reporters were sorry for the radio man. Back in the office they could always cook up something to write.

The photographer took a last shot. Faulkner was left with a young woman. He asked for a bourbon. He is different with women, probably because he likes them and is not afraid of them. Women do not attack him with mechanical or intellectual gadgets; women, like Faulkner, are more inclined to feel like displaced persons. Also he had his bourbon. He is very fond of bourbon.

THE PERFORMANCE began. The entire Gallimard clan descended upon him with one smile and a half dozen tentacles. The society women trooped in. The hunt was on. After an hour of it, Faulkner had retreated as far as he could go. He was standing at the far end of the garden, beneath the tree with the heaviest foliage, backed up against the wrought-iron barrier.

From time to time in the brilliantly lighted reception rooms, someone would put down a glass, refuse a sandwich, and plunge out into the darkness of the garden. Two minutes later he would be back again,

in dismay: "It's appalling! I can't watch it; it's like seeing someone being tortured."

A lady who arrived late took a few sips and then set her drink down, proclaiming, "And now I am going out to put a few questions to our dear, our great Faulkner." The others watched her proceed down the graveled path of the garden. Half a minute later she returned: "It's cold out there beneath the trees." Her voice was not the same.

Yes, it was chilly out there for those accustomed to being enthusiastically greeted as soon as they say they are on a newspaper and smiled at as soon when they mention the author's work—for those who thrive on interminable literary chatter among people belonging to the same world even though they have never read a word written by the genius.

There is no use looking at Faulkner. You must read him. To someone who has read him, Faulkner has given all that he has, and he knows it. Then one can understand that when he keeps saying "I am a farmer," or "I wrote that book so that I could buy a good horse," it is only another way of putting first things first—what Faulkner wants one to be interested in are his books.

Faulkner does not seem to be reconciled to this persistent attempt to take from him what still belongs to him. After all, it's so little. The expression on his face, for instance, or the gestures of his hands. Nothing is more pathetic than the tired indifference with which he lets people stare at him so that they can go home and say, "What a head! What wonderful hair!"

AT LAST the party was over. "I would like to go," Faulkner said to someone. "I would like to say good-by to a Gallimard." They fetched him one, a fat Gallimard: "No," said Faulkner, "not that one." They went into the crowd and fetched him another, a long, thin Gallimard: "It's not that one, either," said Faulkner. "Which one do you want?" they asked him. "The one who looks a little sad," said Faulkner. "The bald one." "Ah, that one has gone to bed," they told him. "It doesn't matter," said Faulkner, going out into the Paris streets, tired, a little shaky, but free.