ceedings, many as they were taking place, we but a few hours later.

Television has also performed an important mission in the dissemination of culture. In his N.B.C. broadcasts Toscanini regularly reaches an audience variously estimated to be between three and six million people. The Philharmonic broadcasts within a four-week period generally reach somewhere between twelve and fifteen million people.

Through radio and television, too, particularly through the Metropolitan Opera broadcasts, each of which reaches 4,520,000 people, a wide public has been won for opera. When the "Omnibus" television program produced a condensed version of *Der Fledermaus* in English, 55 per cent of the program's mail was in praise of the opera. When it produced *La Bohême*, also in English, it drew 80 per cent of the program's mail. *Fledermaus* was heard by thirteen million listeners; *Bohême* by close to fifteen million. Probably not more than 10 per cent of these audiences was familiar with the music previously.

So far as the dissemination of culture is concerned, the mass media are limited by the potentialities of the individual reader, listener, or viewer. Compulsory education can and does bring Shakespeare and a modified Euclid to every schoolboy but it cannot make of every boy a lover of literature or a reasonably good mathematician. And so one should not have exaggerated expectations. The mass media are not compulsory; at least not in free countries. The voluntary audience selects what it already likes. People are curious, however, and some out of sheer curiosity will tune in on a symphony broadcast or a televised opera. Some of these will find that, after all, this highbrow stuff is rather agreeable. Again, there is chance. A potential music lover comes across a music program while waiting for another program or he listens because his hostess is listening. So a convert is born.

A Casual Revolution

The exposure of more and more people to knowledge and the arts, however they may resist such exposure, is the essential cultural counterpart of democracy itself and constitutes a cultural revolution. The media expose everybody to an assault on eye and ear, to a bombardment of the senses, to a multiplicity of impressions, to vicarious experience, even to what I like to call vicarious ideas —those that the listener or viewer takes over from someone else.

It becomes a strange paradox, however, that the daily expression of this cultural revolution should take place in an atmosphere that is basically casual. Acceptance, not criticism; passivity, not activity, is the usual order of listening or viewing. One listens to radio; one looks at the movies or television. One sits back and enjoys the show. In America today more people have more leisure than ever before; more leisure than any people has elsewhere in the world. Ironically, this leisure is devoted less to self-development and more to killing time through a lazy gratification of the senses.

What is taken so casually, however, strongly influences our lives. For even the most indifferent listener or viewer—and most listeners and viewers are not indifferent—absorbs unconsciously. Such absorption leads to reiteration without real knowledge but with a show of knowing. The result is echo talk; ditto thinking. The listener or viewer generally subdues his own personality to the professional personalities that exhort him and so, momentarily at least, becomes a creature of automatism. "Milton Berle says," becomes a commandment for daily living. Or even just simply "the radio says," or "they say on television."

Many housewives even take their recipes for living from their favorite soap opera characters. I know of one woman who wrote to Helen Trent, a soap opera heroine, for the magic rule for staying young though middle-age threatens. I know of another who wrote a major network appreciatively that she had left her son's house when she realized that she was in the way, because "that's what Stella Dallas did." Network fan mail is replete with such instances. The audience thus tends to confuse entertainment with knowledge and to allow its attitudes to grow out of imitation rather than out of a reasoned judgment.

Television, as we saw, is a valuable source of political information. Television can add vividness to the current scene, reinforcing words and opinions by live interviews with those who make the headlines, by graphs and charts to illustrate and make clear what has been stated. The encounter with newsworthy people, which converts a name on paper into a face recognizable at a possible meeting, colors the reaction to them. Putting the newsworthy and responsible into public situations in which their opinions are on trial creates a public forum analogous on a national scale to the old-time town meeting on a local scale. In a program like "The Author Meets the Critics" the author must defend his position against those who challenge it. In "Town Meeting of the Air," "Chronoscope," "Crossfire," "Washington Exclusive," "At Issue," "Meet the Press," public officials are called upon similarly to defend their stand. This airing of opinions provokes thought. It may clear up issues. And it takes the remoteness out of the world of ideas and out of the world of public action. It glamorizes these guests by making them performers in an entertainment medium, but it also deglamorizes the position that they occupy in the world itself by bringing that role down to earth.

Television's discussion programs naturally combine the forum techniques of radio with a number of new elements. Perhaps the most exciting of these new elements is the direct participation of the audience in the discussion, as in "Keep Posted." Ubiquity lends authority to discussion as when "People's Platform" posts a roving cameraman on outdoor location and Douglas Edwards, the curbside moderator, coordinates the "on location" portion of the debate with the studio portion.

A Television Generation

Yet television has had an adverse effect on conversation, reading, participation in sports, moviegoing, visiting. It has brought the family into the home, but in silence. Families with children between six and twelve use their television receivers 25 per cent more hours per week than families without children of this age. Television has endowed children with a worldliness that gives us pause.

Already there is a television generation—children who have never known a world or a home without television, who can rattle off the casts of their favorite crime shows before they have learned the alphabet. A prominent educator overheard two members of this new generation—his four- and six-year-old daughters—discussing the best way their daddy could poison mother. Said the television-wise four-year-old: "Strychnine is faster. It isn't so safe, though. The cops can find out where you bought it." Her sister thought she had a better method. "I'd use arsenic. It's slower, but safer."

A Federal Communications Commissioner had a similar experience with his seven-year-old daughter. The child complained that there were not enough prize fights on television. When her father asked her why she wanted more, her reply was: "I want to see the blood."

At this stage of the prevailing cultural revolution, however, its effect on children is, on the whole, less serious than is its effect on the cultivated man. He is, in fact, the most serious victim of this revolution. For it is the man with undeveloped taste—that is, the mass man—who calls the tune that radio, television, and movies obediently play. This majority audience, amorphous conglomerate that it is, is treated as though it were infallible. Good box-office, high Hooper, Crosley, and Nielson ratings wait on its approval. As a result popular culture rests on quantitative, not qualitative judgments. Quality, therefore, is often driven into hiding just as, according to Gresham's law, the worst currency in circulation drives all other forms of currency out of circulation.

The cultivated minority has no desire to impose its will on the majority; it merely wants a fairer share for itself from radio, television, and the movies. And it does not want taste as a whole to be frozen at the lowest levels. It wants the potential graduate from the majority to the minority to have his opportunity.

This does not take place because standards of popular culture are sagging. There is no pinnacle from which the mass media can fall because nowhere else in the world has there ever been a popular culture literally reaching everybody. Talk of sagging standards is confused because it attributes to a hitherto nonexistent popular culture the standards of an altogether different one—the culture of an aristocratic elite in a world where the many were illiterate. The better standards from which popular culture has allegedly fallen are elite standards which applied only to a small fraction of the population.

The average person in that world, being illiterate, was not on the whole much given to reflection or criticism. This was, of course, a deprivation. But so long as his life was spent in isolation from the ideas, opinions, and arts of his time, this lack was not of particular importance. Today, however, with that vacuum filled by information and opinion distilled by mass media, the lack of the critical faculty is a matter of the greatest urgency. Half-knowing has replaced lack of knowledge; thinking that one knows has replaced unconcern. The man formerly without opinions because he was exposed to no source of them has become a man with opinions passively acquired.

Insofar as the audience lacks this critical faculty, it thwarts the full flowering of the cultural revolution. For unless the audience brings criticism to appreciation, information will be miscellaneous and meaningless; opinions will be absorbed parrot-like; and entertainment, professing to have no serious purpose, may nevertheless have adverse effects. The challenge that mass media, along with education, must somehow meet, is to develop in people the power of analysis, a capacity for criticism and judgment to keep pace with their overstimulated eyes and ears. In other words, the next step in the development of mass communications is for the mass audience to grow up.

At Last

To Himself

I cannot find you where the cedars darken
The mound that bears your chill, deceptive stone,
Nor yet within our walls that, when I hearken
For your loved voice, give back my cry, "Alone."

I hoped the spring would ease despair, denying
That death could sever hearts which had been one:
In vain: not breaking buds, not bluebirds flying,
Persuaded me you were not wholly gone.

But now, beside the sea—the long waves falling
In frail embroideries of foam—upon
The clean salt wind at last I hear you calling:
Your sail moves toward me, leaning on the dawn.

MARY SINTON LEITCH