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Between You and Me: A Memoir

By Mike Wallace with Gary Paul Gates

Hyperion Books, New York
(292 pages, $26.95 pages, including DVD)

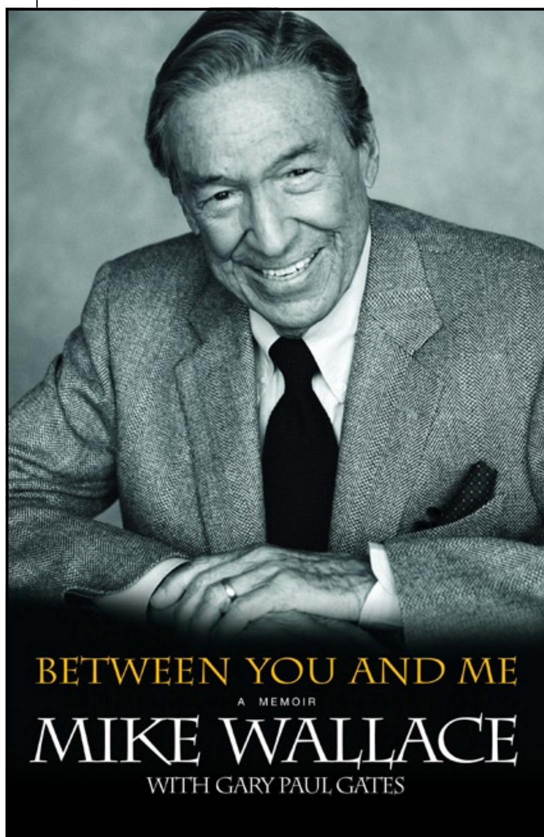
By Norman Felsenthal

Mike Wallace, the 88-year-old (as of May 9) correspondent emeritus of *60 Minutes*, has written an entertaining and informative memoir of his 60-plus years as a broadcast journalist. The book, co-written with Gary Paul Gates, is his second autobiographical effort. Wallace's first book, also co-written with Gates, was published in 1984 and dealt with his early career in broadcasting. This 2005 memoir focuses almost entirely on various luminaries Wallace has interviewed, primarily during his years at CBS.

The book's title, *Between You and Me*, comes from a phrase Wallace used to make some of his subjects more comfortable and less cautious during the interview process. While the book is not an autobiography in the usual sense of the word, we do learn that Wallace was a violinist and concertmaster of the orchestra at Brookline (MA) High School as well as a boyhood neighbor of John F. Kennedy. We also learn that Wallace suffered from periodic bouts of depression, the most serious of which required hospitalization in 1984.

Wallace avoids a chronological order but instead divides the accounts of his interviews into nine topical channels from "Presidents" to "Other Celebrated Characters." He places Arthur Miller, Johnny Carson and Mel Brooks in this latter category. The seven middle chapters include stories about the famous and infamous — from Vladimir Horowitz and Itzak Perlman to Mickey Cohen and Joe Bonanno. Artists, con artists, movie stars, civil-rights leaders, foreign statesmen, and presidential wives are all here.

A few of Wallace's interviews go back to a 1956 program on DuMont's local New York station. It was during these *Night Beat* days, that Wallace created a confrontational style of



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questioning that earned him the "Mike Malice" nickname. Based on that program's success, Wallace moved to ABC and *The Mike Wallace Interview* before becoming a general assignment reporter for CBS and, in 1968, the co-anchor with Harry Reasoner of the newly created *60 Minutes*.

Wallace's style may have softened over the years but it never really disappeared, much to the annoyance of the Shah of Iran, Anwar Sadat, Lyndon Johnson, Barbra Streisand and even Nancy Reagan, a close personal friend, with whom he crossed verbal swords when she felt he had asked her husband some embarrassing questions.

Not all of Wallace's remembrances come from his interviews. While he and *60 Minutes* Executive Producer Don Hewitt were touring the LBJ ranch with the former president, Johnson noticed a stray candy wrapper by the side of the road, brought the car to a screeching halt, and ordered Hewitt to pick it up. As Wallace noted, the candy wrapper incident demonstrated LBJ's "well-earned reputation for being almost compulsive in his need to exert authority and dominate all who came into his presence…At the LBJ ranch, he was still commander in chief."

Wallace admits that he was impressed with the "new" Richard Nixon who emerged from political defeats in 1960 and 1962 to launch a successful campaign in 1968. He reveals that he was invited to join the Nixon team as press secretary or communications director and gave it some thought. He declined because he thought he would find it difficult to "put a good face on bad facts," a portion of every press secretary's job description. Further, said Wallace, he shuddered at the thought of having to serve as a Presidential spokesman when the Watergate dam broke in 1973.

The very title of the Westmoreland documentary, "The Uncounted Enemy: A Vietnam Deception," was guaranteed to provoke intense controversy.

On a more jovial note, Wallace described his efforts to quell Thomas Hart Benton's stage fright when the 85-year-old artist was about to deliver a lecture at a local church to raise money for the Martha's Vineyard Arts Association. "Fully aware of [Benton's] lifelong fondness for the sauce, I had come equipped with a flask that contained his favorite libation — cold and very dry martinis — and for the next half hour or so, we stood outside the church and gulped them down with the fervor of parched Bedouins quaffing at an oasis. Thus fortified, we entered the church fully prepared to be as loquacious and provocative as the occasion required."

The most poignant chapter of *Between You and Me* deals with two of Wallace's most controversial interviews, a 1982 *CBS Reports* documentary with General William Westmoreland and a *60 Minutes* 1995 interview with Jeffrey Wigand, a former researcher for the Brown and Williamson who turned whistle-blower against the tobacco

industry.

The very title of the Westmoreland documentary, "The Uncounted Enemy: A Vietnam Deception," was guaranteed to provoke intense controversy. It revealed that the General had undercounted the number of enemy troops by excluding an entire category of the Vietcong army, the self-defense militia, for what Wallace insisted were political reasons. Three days after the program aired, Westmoreland held a news conference during which he denounced the documentary as "a preposterous hoax." *TV Guide* then published an article claiming the documentary had smeared the General, CBS answered with a weak and equivocating response, and Westmoreland filed a $120 million libel suit against CBS. Wallace describes two years of pretrial legal maneuvers, a four-month trial and his own slide into a clinical depression that brought him to the verge of suicide. Two days before Wallace was due to testify, the general withdrew his lawsuit and the trial ended.

The second half of the chapter involving the Wigand interview is even more compelling. Wigand told Wallace the tobacco companies were in the "nicotine-delivery business" and that big tobacco used chemical additives in a process know as "impact boosting" to enhance the effect of nicotine. Wallace describes in stunning detail the lengthy and unsuccessful battle he and *60 Minutes* producer Lowell Bergman fought to air this interview. In Wallace's view, Don Hewitt and CBS News President Eric Ober knuckled under when confronted by CBS senior management. Wallace reminds the reader that Laurence Tisch was then Chairman of CBS and that his son Andrew Tisch, the CEO of Lorillard, was one of seven senior tobacco executives who testified under oath before a congressional hearing that they believed nicotine was not addictive.

Eventually, a reedited version of the Wigand interview was aired on November 12, 1995, and Wallace believes that "even in its emasculated form, it was a powerful indictment of the tobacco industry." A lengthy article in *Vanity Fair* titled "The Man Who Knew Too Much" and a Hollywood movie, *The Insider*, with Russell Crowe in the Wigand role, followed. While Wallace was not entirely happy with either the article or the film, he notes with some amusement that it was not the worst thing in the world to be portrayed by the handsome and urbane actor Christopher Plummer.

A "bonus" DVD is included with the book. This DVD contains portions of 38 interviews Wallace has conducted over his lengthy career. As in the book, the interviews are arranged by category rather than chronology. The earliest, a 1956 *Night Beat* interview with surrealist Salvador Dali, is amusing on two counts. First, the artist insists that he will not die. Second, the stark lighting and heavy plume of smoke from Wallace's cigarette remind us of the black-and-white images that typified this early age of television.

In a more serious 1985 interview and one that still has relevance today, former president Jimmy Carter expresses criticism of a foreign policy that minimizes negotiation and

diplomacy, and he notes with regret that "our country's first reaction to a troubled area on earth is to try to inject American military forces or threats as our nation's policy."

In another DVD segment, Richard Nixon insists shortly before the 1968 presidential election that "the most important thing about a public man is not whether he's loved or disliked, but whether he's respected." On a lighter note Shirley MacLaine describes her previous incarnations, Vladimir Horowitz plays a rousing piano rendition of "The Stars and Strips Forever" and diploma-mill operator Ernest Sinclair, the president of a nonexistent college, squirms as he attempts to explain the existence of some of the make-believe faculty listed in his glossy brochure.

Wallace's book, a capsule history of the last 50 years, adds a personal touch to the period. And the book seems just a little more relevant with the author's recently announced retirement. It's doubtful that we'll encounter another journalist who has been in the limelight for so many years or interviewed such a broad swath of politicians and public figures. *Between You and Me* is a good read and a tribute to Wallace's unique journalistic career.

Norman Felsenthal, Ph.D., is Professor Emeritus at Temple University in Philadelphia, having recently retired after 33 years as a faculty member in the Department of Broadcasting and Telecommunications. He has represented the Mid-Atlantic Chapter of the National Academy of Television Arts and Sciences as a National Trustee and currently serves as Chair of the Scholarship Committee.

CITIZEN SPY:
Television, Espionage, and Cold War Culture

By Michael Kackman

University of Minnesota Press
(280 pages, $18.95)

By Paul Noble

"Is there such a thing as an ethical spy?" the *New York Times* asked in a recent front-page story headlined "Outfitting Spies with New Tool: Moral Compass." At a weekend retreat for the intelligence community in Virginia, the topics covered included: interrogation techniques using torture, the "alleged skewing of prewar intelligence on Iraq," eavesdropping on American citizens by wiretapping, and "rendition," in which individuals suspected of terrorism are kidnapped abroad and transported to the United States or elsewhere for interrogation and frequently lengthy imprisonment. The article quoted a retired C.I.A. operations officer, who pointed out that "intelligence ethics" is an oxymoron. "If you don't want to do that," he said, "just have a State Department."

Of course, those of us — most television viewers — aren't surprised by any of the illegal or controversial methods spies use: false names, disguises, fantastical devices of all kinds, "cover" careers, bribes, blackmail, and betrayal. We've seen them all, thanks to the "documentary melodrama" form

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known as the spy story, available from TV's earliest days until the present, with hits such as *The X-Files, La Femme Nikita, Alias, 24* and *The Agency*.

In fact, it is sometimes difficult for us to be outraged by today's high-tech spying and brutal espionage; we've been conditioned by more than five decades of acceptance, thanks to network television's enormous output of spy dramas and syndication's long shelf-life for the more successful programs in the genre.

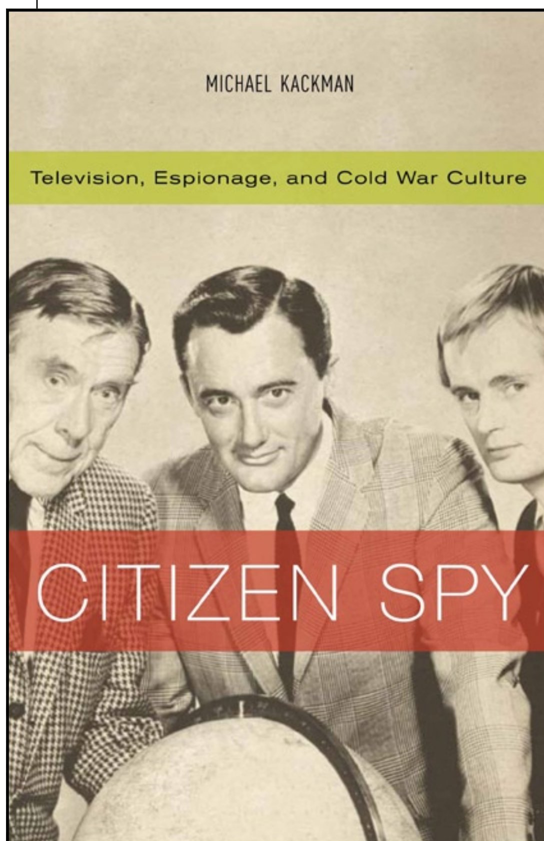
Michael Kackman, assistant professor in Radio-Television-Film at the University of Texas in Austin, is an academic who is clearly in touch with the popular form he illustrates in his book *Citizen Spy: Television, Espionage, and Cold War Culture*. With the help of the personal files of many participants, including producers and writers, he's brilliantly set the spy programs in historical perspective.

What a story it is. For the material he describes is extraordinarily relatable to the history, the society, the culture which spawned the spy programs.

Infant television, in the late 1940s, following the conclusion of World War II, was mainly a "live," in-studio medium. But cheaply-made, location-driven half-hours were syndicated in those days, station-by-station.

One must recall, too, that post-war America's worst fears were that of a "vast Communist conspiracy [which] threatened to undo American democracy." Based-in-fact series like *I Led Three Lives, Treasury Men In Action,* and *The Man Called X* addressed that issue and others. Domestic surveillance, masculine heroes who represented national interests, the rooting-out of "internal deviance," "the profound mistrust of any activity that takes place outside the glare of full daylight" were recurring themes of these early, cheaply-produced syndicated series, some from the pioneering vendor in genre weekly strips, Ziv.

Throughout his book, a doctoral dissertation, Kackman places the most popular or representative shows to the chronology of the second half of the twentieth century — from what Winston Churchill dubbed "the Iron Curtain,"



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the Cold War, the Red Scare (there was a "Red under every bed"), the revelation of the theft of atomic secrets by Americans who sold them to the Soviet Union, McCarthyism and the House Un-American Activities Committee hearings rooting out Communists in the media, cultural strictures of conformity to middle-class values, rigid courtship rituals and assignment of gender roles, the "Domino Theory" which led to our costly adventures in Korea and Vietnam, the crushing of the Hungarian rebellion, the establishment of the Warsaw Pact among Communist nations which opposed the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, the launch of the Soviet space satellite Sputnik which showed Soviet scientific superiority to the United States, the building of the Berlin Wall and the establishment of the Berlin airlift, the Cuban missile crisis, the so-called "baby boom," the creation of a "youth culture," and, finally, the globalization of mass media.

In the fifties, spies were everywhere in America, affirming our worst fears. Of course, most of those spies were on television shows created by producers who enlisted government institutions to lend plot lines and authenticity. Documentary and fiction, then as now, were blurred in the name of making television viewing a "responsible civic activity." The Federal Communications Commission licensed stations to act in the "public interest, convenience, and necessity," and this was taken literally by network and local honchos to sound and look "legitimate." On the other hand, governmental agencies such as the Treasury Department and its FBI and the State Department with its CIA had an extraordinary opportunity to "help shape a powerful new medium that bridged public and private spheres." In other words, watching TV was a civic duty and the viewer was made to feel that he or she was personally involved in anti-Communism.

What were the shows and what did they present that changed perspectives during this period? *Treasury Men In Action* showed that any activity that takes place "outside the glare of full daylight" was subversive. *The Man Called X* showed how the outside world (outside of the United States) was terrifying, and that democracy was constantly at war with Communism. The American spy was therefore an important aide to our allies, working in the "spirit of the Truman Doctrine," the late 40s containment directive.

I Led Three Lives, supposedly based on the true exploits of an FBI agent who was an undercover Communist for nine years, made Herbert Philbrick the "representation of the masculine male in the traditional American family." To reinforce that, the enemies were generally "monstrous Communist women" and feminized Communist men. American women, definitely not agents in these stories, were "docile and virtuous." The unspoken message in the early 50s, according to Kackman, "Communism has the potential to turn otherwise charming little girls into stern disciplinarians immune to the 'cult of domesticity.'"

Behind Closed Doors and *World of Giants*, two short-lived series in the 50s, were restrained by business fears that spy shows might embarrass friendly

countries with whom we trade and by State Department fears that American agents operating illegally abroad would be "fodder for the Red propaganda mill." These were entertainment television shows, but there was great concern that they would be considered as factual.

By the early 1960s, hour and half-hour shows were produced in 35mm film, with production values similar to theatrical motion pictures. With the addition of color, their costs were very high, and those costs could only be justified by international sales. So, in those days of the Bay of Pigs, the fight for civil rights, Vietnam, political assassinations, the feminist movement and the emerging purchasing power of young people, spy show turned away from reality to parody, from documentary melodrama to incongruity and absurdity, authority and authenticity replaced by "political nihilism." Kackman, of course, refers to *The Man from U.N.C.L.E.* and *Get Smart*, the spy shows that co-existed with the new pop phenomenon launched by the James Bond movies and possibly best represented on network television by the appearance of *Batman*. "Stern patriotism" was replaced by commercialism and camp.

New types of heroes like dashing and sexy Napoleon Solo and Illya Kuryakin in *The Man from U.N.C.L.E.* and the inept Maxwell Smart in *Get Smart* appealed to audiences "becoming increasingly critical of the interventionism of the federal government." The catch-phrases of *Get Smart* spoke to the young people of the domestic antiwar movement who mistrusted the bureaucracy that ran our institutions. "The Cone of Silence," "Sorry About That, Chief!" and "Would You Believe?" ridiculed the establishment through parody. As the Chief told agent 86, "that's because the CIA isn't a secret organization. It's supposed to be, but it's not."

I Spy brought the genre back towards reality. With one of the very first black heroes in network history — Bill Cosby as Robert Culp's tennis trainer, both of them fronts for agents — this series demonstrated that the civil rights movement is "not a critique of mainstream American culture, but is rather its fullest, most patriotic expression." The villains in the series had hard-to-place national allegiances and were often Americans working for unnamed foreign governments.

Mission: Impossible, probably the longest-lasting and most-syndicated of the series, presented a team of specialists made up of agents without personal histories, or, indeed, individual personalities. Each episode was a self-contained realistic drama with high-tech equipment almost taking it into the realm of sci-fi. The series was presented from 1966 to 1973, overlapping most of the Vietnam years. It represented, according to Kackman, "the most aggressive and imperialist tendencies of 1960s foreign policy." In fact, the last three years of the series were made a domestic crime series in which the enemy was the Syndicate rather than Communists or other anti-American groups. Critics of the time, including Robert Louis Shayon, quoted by Kackman, disliked the heroes interfering "directly in the affairs of foreign nationals with whom we are at peace and from whom no direct threat

to our safety emanates."

Spy shows evaporated in the mid-70s and resurfaced in the 90s with *The X-Files, La Femme Nikita, Alias, 24* and *The Agency*. Political content in those series is less important than personal. But the Cold War continues. "The Permanent War" appears to exist now. After 9/11, the failed mission in Afghanistan to capture Osama Bin Laden, and the continuing conflict in Iraq, with fears of nuclear capability from North Korea and Iran, the need for improved intelligence is apparent. But the more we learn about the incompetence of our spy networks and information analysis, the more we believe that "our nation's future (is) in the hands of Maxwell Smart, Agent 86."

For the casual reader, Kackman's academic writing is unnecessarily challenging. It relies on 20 long words when 10 shorter ones would suffice. For example, when describing "World of Agents," he says, "The queerly unstable relationship of this tenuous pair of agents did more than complicate normative heterosexuality; it also invoked the specter of political subversion. Within containment culture, heteronormativity was deeply intertwined with patriotism." Or, referring to *Mission: Impossible*, "[it] represents a shift in constructions of American Cold War identity, one in which the very coherence of 'America' is revealed to be relational, situational, and characterized by political, cultural, and economic self-interest."

Kackman is fond of "conflation," "su blimation," "historiographic priorities," "representational decisions," "discursive authority," "cultural resonance," and "univocal narratives," among other words and phrases. Despite this tendency to wordiness and jargon, *Citizen Spy* captures the period and the shows very well. It relates quite clearly how networks, studios and their television divisions, independent production companies, sponsors, advertising agencies, federal agencies and freelance experts all interacted to make the programming possible, despite their divergent goals and methods. We may never know how J. Edgar Hoover or Allen Dulles or another high-level bureaucrat was responsible for the use of these programs, especially the early ones, for their own purposes, but this book gets about as close as possible to that tantalizing question.

Paul Noble most recently was vice-president of film acquisitions and scheduling for Lifetime Entertainment. He began his television career as a producer/director at WGBH Boston and for 30 years produced, executive produced or hosted programming at Channel 5 New York under Metromedia and Fox. He is currently on the advisory committee of the Palm Beach Theater Guild.

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Two Aspirins and a Comedy:
How Television Can Enhance Health and Society

By Metta Spencer

Paradigm Publishers
(312 pages, $24.95)

By Earl Pomerantz

A while back here, I reviewed Steven Johnson's *Everything Bad Is Good For You*, which claimed that television made you smarter. Metta Spencer's *Two Aspirins and a Comedy* claims television can lead to world peace. And I thought it was just a big waste of time.

Here's the story. A sociology professor, laid up with osteoarthritis, gets hooked on reruns of *Northern Exposure*. Watching twice a day brings her "…analgesia and joy. My pain was generally reduced for hours." Welcome to Norman Cousins country. Decades ago, Cousins' recovery from serious illness was substantially attributed to the viewing of comedies, laughter, as comedian Sam Levinson once wrote, being the best medicine.

The healing power of laughter cannot be overlooked. Along with improvements in the serotonin department, we are told that enjoying comedies steps up the blood flow in your arteries, while watching the first fifteen minutes of *Saving Private Ryan*, showing intense depictions of graphic violence, slows the blood down. You can watch what you want, but one type of entertainment enhances your health, while the other can give you a heart attack. It's up to you.

The problem is that *Two Aspirins and a Comedy* is barely about comedy at all. *Northern Exposure* isn't a comedy — certainly not of the Norman Cousins variety; he healed on the manic hysteria of the Marx Brothers and *Candid Camera* — *Northern Exposure*'s more modulated whimsy. The other show analyzed in *Two Aspirins and a Comedy, Street Time*, concerns drug dealers and

slippery cops. No belly laughs there either. So what's going on? Why the glaring disconnect between the book's title and the majority of its content? Is it possible that a well-meaning academic treatise has adopted an appealing "hook" to enhance its marketability, positioning it as one thing when it's clearly something considerably less sexy? I'd have to say yes.

Beware of a book about comedy that's dedicated to the Dalai Lama. The question's offered: "In a world where only two of every five persons practices a religion, how are we learning compassion?" A convalescing professor, nurtured by an enchanting television series, proposes a solution: "Why not through television series?"

A reasonable proposal. If a TV series can enhance your physical wellbeing, why not construct series to enhance your moral and ethical wellbeing? From which comes Ms. Spencer's generating principle: "Of all conceivable ways of fostering a global florescence of civilization, I think the most promising approach is to improve entertainment."

And why specifically the TV series as a vehicle for upgrading our "moral/spiritual sensibilities"? The answer's in the form. Television series offer continuing characters that viewers, over time, come to "really, really care about." They identify, they mimic, and they change. If a beloved character starts with a similar perspective to that of the audience, then evolves to a more enlightened perspective – they stop smoking, they walk away from fights, they use a condom – an empathetizing audience will follow their example. TV series aren't one date and see ya later. Series loyalty means a commitment to characters over years. There's a bond. They become family. There's an influence. Leading to the possibility of…

…a better world.

Even violent shows can serve the cause. Some viewers, we are told, crave smash-mouth entertainment owing to a highly active thrill-seeking gene called *DRD4*, a condition left unsatisfied by their humdrum existence. So you offer them an outlet to work it off. Not that violent shows per se are necessarily bad. Stories involving "gray area" Bad Guys, blameworthy but understandably human, provide valuable lessons in pity and compassion. These stories can also stimulate debates on the roots of wrongdoing, illuminating the system that makes men go bad.

But what about "copycats"? This question echoes an age-old debate going back to Plato and Aristotle. Plato's concern is for the dangerous habits an audience can pick up as it empathizes with and later mimics the abhorrent behavior it observes on the stage. Aristotle, in contrast, believes the theater can be "psychologically and morally therapeutic." The conflict articulates two roads to enlightenment, one favoring reasoned philosophy, the other, the storyteller's punch in the gut.

Which returns us to *Northern Exposure*, where the issue is played out on a weekly basis. The protagonist, Fleischman, arrives earth-bound and all in his head. In contrast, his assigned outpost, the Glocca Morra-like town of Cicely, Alaska, is judgment-free and sprinkled with fairy dust. And

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there you have it—opposing cultures, head to head—let the Games begin. In the end, Ms. Spencer, rooting for a balanced Taoist resolution of balance, feels powerfully disappointed when the once-rational Fleishman completely surrenders to the other side. That's bad news to a social reformer. You can't fix the world when you're living in the clouds.

In the end, the show that nourished the author's healing has let her down. Why? Because Ms. Spencer is above all a passionate cheerleader for what she calls "edutainment." It's as scary as it sounds. Aware of its influence, Ms. Spencer wants to co-opt TV series to promote her messages. That's right, messages. In a single paragraph Spencer ticks off twelve issues she believes need urgent attention, ranging from fending off nuclear Armageddon to the belief that "our criminal justice system can be replaced, largely with restorative justice." Twelve causes. And series TV is just the place to spread the word.

Ms. Spencer's prescription for social betterment resonates with the chilling specter of "We-know-what's-best" Big Brotherism. She's clear where she stands on the issues, but what if others disagree? Do they get their own "We-know-what's-best" series to rebut hers? And what if some people believe dangerous, hateful things? Do they get series too?

Who decides which issues are "series appropriate"? Who decides whether a show deserves to stay on even when its ratings are tanking? How do you turn agenda-pushing propaganda into must-see programming? And where the heck are the laughs?

And here's the scariest part. Acknowledging government should never censor, Ms. Spencer offers an unmistakable threat: "[I]t is government regulatory agencies that allocate airwaves to particular broadcasters, holding them to standards that supposedly reflect community values. Strengthening the democratic responses of these agencies, and giving them stronger teeth, would be entirely appropriate." Yikes! If you gave more teeth to regulatory agencies to enforce "community values", how many communities would have blacked out some of the greatest series in the history of the medium, including *Northern Exposure*?

The writing is riddled with "we should…," "we ought to…," and "we need to…," phrases that are anathema to the non-judgmental lexicon, not to mention the canon of sociology. These are the tools of the firebrand, tools to which the author is unquestionably entitled, though by using them so liberally, she risks turning a heartfelt proposal into a major turn-off.

And now, a sincerely-offered suggestion: Since this title could easily be prosecuted under the Truth in Advertising statutes (if there are any), I'd like to propose a different title: *Television Can Save the Planet!!!* Hyperbole? Perhaps. But it's closer to the book's intention. And there's always the chance that Ms. Spencer may be right.

An award-winning veteran television comedy writer, Earl Pomerantz is the author of "Why Do Advertisers Still Covet the 18-49s?", on page 40 of this issue of *Television Quarterly.*

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Gandhi Meets Primetime:
Globalization and Nationalism in Indian Television

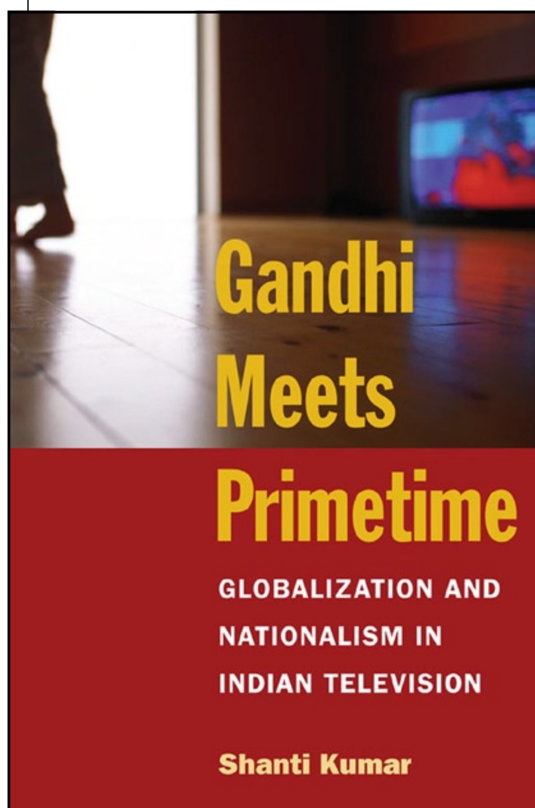
By Shanti Kumar

University of Illinois Press, Champaign, IL (240 pages, $45 cloth, $25 paper)

By Srinivas R. Melkote

This is a welcome addition to the growing scholarly literature on the role and place of emerging communication technologies in globalization. Shanti Kumar looks specifically at satellite television in articulating a vision of nationalism in India. He places his work in the context of Mahatma Gandhi and how he has been used, abused, deified or defiled by the political, academic and economic elites in India as well as elites in transnational capitalism. The author combines his review and analysis of contemporary television programming, historical archives, journalistic accounts, scholarly writings, policy papers, and other documents with textual analysis of advertising messages in the print media and attempts to synthesize the myriad strains of ideas and views through theories and concepts from diverse fields of study. This book, then, provides a unique perspective to television culture in postcolonial India.

In Chapter 1, the author traces the history of *Doordarshan*, the state-controlled Indian television network, from the 1950's to the late 1990's. Acting as the cultural arm of the federal government in New Delhi, *Doordarshan* was vested with the responsibility of fostering national integration in culturally diverse India and furthering the nationalist agenda of the state government through educational, entertainment and news programs. The entry of non-Indian STAR TV and other private networks in the 1990's and the consequent proliferation of television programs induced the Indian government to attempt to transform *Doordarshan* into a public broadcasting service under the control of an autonomous corporation.



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The author also addresses attempts by *Doordarshan* to carve an imagined Indian nation both as an ideal and a niche in the face of rapidly changing electronic communication scenario in India and abroad.

The second chapter is a critical textual analysis of advertisements in large-circulation Indian news magazines such as the *Illustrated Weekly of India* and *India Today*. The author examines the advertising messages of Indian electronics companies that purport to cast television viewing as a means by which the external world is brought into the home in dynamic detail. The author contends that such advertising practices by the electronics industry encourage televisual imaginations that promote a "synthetic sense of reality" in the minds of the readers of these magazines, and by extension, in the minds of the television viewers.

In Chapter 3, the author introduces the reader to the literature in development-support communication where communication media are utilized to promote or accelerate national development, mostly in the Third World. The author posits that this "utopian" vision aimed to promote national development via capital investments using modern technology and the scientific method. This chapter also addresses Marxist critics of Western models of modernization and development using the capitalistic route as well as the development ideas and policies of Indian leaders who attempted to carve a "middle ground" between Western capitalism and Soviet-style socialism.

In Chapter 4, the author comprehensively documents how the name of Gandhi is used and abused by the forces of nationalism and electronic capitalism in India. He outlines how "an Indian *community* of television is imagined by overwriting the narratives of nationalism in the discourse of electronic capitalism." The ideological battles as well as collusions are dramatically displayed via the television screen that attracts both the "hungry 'haves' and the hunger of the 'have-nots.' There is a subtle implication that most of the changes taking place in India such as the unbridled consumerism among the haves is due to the impact of satellite television.

The television set, therefore, has become the site where competing visions and imaginations of nationalism are played out, as described in Chapter 5. Thus, revered icons that represent national identity to many in India are defiled by others on the electronic screen, thus making television the new battleground where these competing visions of nationalism, internationalism, and localism are mediated and collective visions of national identity and cultural difference are brought into sharp relief.

In the final chapter, the author wraps up by re-visiting the five questions that anchor his thesis. Basically, he re-examines the concerns of media scholars, media critics, journalists and policy makers on the negative causal effects of television on perspectives relating to nationalism in India. Regardless of how one views the power of television to change society, the author concludes that television is now the new battleground for capturing the

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soul of Indian nationalism.

Ghandi Meets Primetime is valuable scholarship but it is not without its share of problems. The author claims that he is presenting empirical evidence complemented by a sound theoretical analysis. However, the empirical evidence is confined to interviews with journalists and the author's review and analysis of sources such as legal documents, policy statements, television programming, scholarly and journalistic writings. While these sources are valuable they cannot inform the author of the diverse imaginations of television viewers.

The author employs extensive textual analysis of advertising messages of national and transnational corporate media interests that attempt to transform the collective imaginations of the viewers regarding the world outside. The advertising messages are directed at the viewer and he/she alone determines meaning production of the text.

Mr. Kumar is critical of Benedict Anderson's idea of the nation as an imagined community and instead posits the notion that today the nation as a community is unimaginable. Yet, the author buys into the baggage and language of the imagined community as a nation. He constantly refers to Hindi as the "national" language of India and relegates other major Indian languages to the status of "regional" languages. The idea of a national language only makes sense when one buys into the idea of one imagined nation. In my view, Hindi, Tamil, Telugu, etc. are Indian languages each with a rich history, literature, and culture and it is illogical to create hierarchies such as national language and regional language when the nation is an unimaginable community.

While the author is critical of the Hindu-centric aspirations of *Doordarshan* that showcased Hindu religious serials as also being nationalistic and thus marginalizing the non-Hindu Indians, he does not problematize the role of *Doordarshan* in showcasing Hindi as India's dominant language. Scholars have contended that even among the Hindus in South India and West Bengal, the language of transmission was a sore point. These scholars have posited that *Doordarshan* marginalized the possibility of non-Hindi serials emanating from the center and thus leading to the marginalization of the discourses grouped around the non-Hindi languages.

Finally, the author accords too much power to television to mold viewers' imaginations. This is a recycling of the discarded magic-bullet theory of powerful media. This assumed power of the media needs to be tested and documented and not assumed. The receiver is not a passive entity who succumbs to the media onslaught without any resistance. On the contrary, the viewer employs intricate filters and complex reception patterns to distort and domesticate the message to his/her unique social, cultural, and individual perspective.

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