Advertising patronizes arts—with our money

(EDITOR'S NOTE: This is the third of is articles on American popular university of the Interest of the University of California at Sun Diego, it is the text for an Oakland University course taught by Prof. as the University of California of California of the University of California of the University of California of the University of California of Californ

Brdowment for the Humanities.)

By GEORGE GERINER

Popular culture is the stories we stane ever say. Call it news, fiction, education, mythology or just media, that great and uniquely human process governs much of what we do.

Who is the most prolific and tireless story-teller in your home? It used to be the parent, grandparent or older sibling. Today in most homes it is television—by far.

Television has achieved what all emperors and topose could only dream

viction—by far
Television has achieved what all
emperors and popes could only dream
about—a pulpit in every living room,
with a charismatic messenger providing the common ritual of entertainment and information with a central
underlying sales message for all.
The story belind this great transforment with the control of the control
we allocate and use our popular culture resources. Who pays for what to
whom?

whom?
For most of human existence, public story-telling was a handicraft process, conducted face-to-face and administered by a priestly or noble hierarchy. Payment for it was extracted in the



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form of tribute or tithe and justified in terms of cosmic order. Tradition, memorization, incantation and author-itative interpretation of scriptures ruled the day.

ruled the day.

THE INDUSTRIAL and electronic revolutions changed all that.
One of the first machines—the printing press—began mechanized story-clining and cultural mass production. The Bible could now be plit into the lends of ordinary people to interpret as they saw fit, paving the way for interpret as they saw fit, paving the way for the Reformation and the secular state.

"Packaged knowledge" could only in the country of family and caste. The old hierarchy gave way to the new corporate owners and governors of industrial society.
Their power rests largely in their freedom to manage the industrialisations.

process of story-telling and to build mass markets for mass production through the mass distribution— bols and advertising messages. Eventually advertisers replaced nobility, church and state as the patrons of the most popular of the arts, particularly radio and television. The public's money (included in the price of advertised goods) is chan-neled through them to support corpo-rate aims, sales and powers. THE ELECTRONIC wave that eath-

THE ELECTRONIC wave that gathered strength with radio hit hard with lelevision, engulfing and changing the contours of all aspects of popular culture.

The chief characteristics of television are cradle-to-grave and nearly universal coverage; centralized, standardized and ritualized production; and nonselective use. In addition,



Sears paint, subject of an intensive national tele-ision advertising campaign, illustrates that com-

mercial advertising is the chief support of popular culture.

most elements of program production are centralized so that news, fiction, drama, documentary, talk, game and other shows serve the same basic institutional purposes are some basic institutional purposes in the production of the second production

HOW DO WE pay for this?
Advertising costs, which are passed onto the American consumer, total \$36 million annually—100 times the total gross budget of the United Nations.
Some 1,762 callary and more than 7,500 weekly newspapers absorb nearly one-third of that amount. Television uses 20 per cent of the total, and its share keeps rising, gradually squeezing older media out of the business. Radio now gets less than seven per cent of the total advertising support, and magazines less than six per cent, with outdoor, direct mail and other control of the total advertising support, and magazines less than six per cent, with outdoor, direct mail and other calles accounting for the rest, a few largely anonymous, swome executives who regularly anonymous is more than 100 million Americans a day and extract from their pockets more than \$50 million aday to pay for the advertising that supports the programs, the agencies, the broadcasters, the television set manufacturers, the repair people and the electricity needed to run the set.!

THE POWER of television enables it

run the set.!

THE POWER of television enables it to charge an average of \$100,000 per prime time commercial minute and up to a quarter of a million dollars for a core-minute commercial inserted into a movie like "Gone With the Wind"—and advertisers stand in line for the privilegal by audience size, these accounts of the privilegal by audience size, these accounts of the privilegal by audience size, these accounts of the privilegal prices and up to an attractive "cost per thousand" view-

ers) compared to other more selec-tive—and selectively used—forms of mass communications and advertising. Television also leads popular culture in terms of its concentration. It takes a tig network to produce expensive shows and to take big risks. The top 2s retwork advertisers pay more than the production of the production of the paying some layer of the total paying some layer can of the total the paying some layer can of the total paying some layer can of the total The rest of the money we spend for popular culture goes for books, movies, records and sports, all of wealth moved depend on broadcasting for which moved append on broadcasting isself—can also be bought directly by the consumer.



Mirror of American Life

Mirror of American Lite

ADVERTISING-supported media create the bulk of popular culture. But their principal products—the products the products of their principal products—the products of their principal products—the products—the products—the products—the products—their products—their products—their products—their products—their products—their products—their products—their products—their principal products—their principal ways.

In other words, the public's own money is used to sell public audience to the highest bidders. This is done in three principal ways.

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In other words, the public's own considerations from excessing stations are the products—the encounters and necessity," according to the law, In fact, they operate as businesses to make a profit, but the encomously profitable license to broadcast in the public domain is given a way free of charge.

2. The advertising subsidy that sup-

ports and guides the cultural industry is extracted through a levy on the price of all advertised goods and serv-ices. Some call this private taxation without representation. The tax is hid-

without representation. The tax is hidden in the price of soap: I pay when I
wash, not when I watch TV or read a
magazine.

3. Congress made advertising a taxeducible business expense, subsidizes the postal rates of printed
media and provides certain advantages for "failing" newspapers.
Without these direct contributions
from the public treasury, "private"
media would not be profitable, and
probably could not exist at all.

STRIPPED OF mystification, the new religion, and other cast at all.

STRIPPED OF mystification, the new religion, and other forms of mainstream popular culture operate on legislative and market mechanisms that channel public money to private corporations to support "cheap" or "free" meda as the cultural arms of business and industry. Since the marketing mechanism is concerned not just with popularity but with persuading large audiences to buy the goods and services advertised, the quality and diversity of the cultural service, and its relevance to the needs of many specific publics that make up the total community, cannot, therefore, be the chief criteria of most mass cultural production.

What of the future?

There are signs of tension and of

mass cultural production.
What of the future?
There are signs of tension and of pressure to loosen the hold of the corporate giants and the networks and to dversify the mainstream of popular culture, especially television. Citizen control of the production of the public interest from all government—private as well as public.
Such broadening and democratization of popular cultural production on the public interest from all government—private as well as public.
Such broadening and democratization of popular cultural production would have the additional advantage of not selling the same fears, hoped and styles of life to practically all of the people, practically all of the time.

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8 "The old hierarchy gave way to the new corporate owners and governors of industrial society."

How schools, cowboys made us Americans

By JESSE PITTS

By JESSE PITTS
Oakland Leiversity
Today I speak about "sponsored"
popular culture as compared with
"spontaneous" popular culture, which
was the subject of last week's article.
Sponsored culture is the entertainment and information that its sponsored by authority figures—i.e., figures who have "organizational weight" because they claim to represent the voice of the people and to have a direct connection with the sacred. It has "cerremonial velence"
because we know we all share its meanings.

meanings.
Our first contacts with sponsored popular culture, as differentiated from family culture, derive from our participation in the church and in the school.

IT IS TO the Protestant clurces and the public schools that we over the common reservoir of Biblical love that inspired so much of the eloquence of American laymen, politicans and notables. John L Lewis, the great president of the United Mine Workers and the creator of the CIO (with a good assist from the Communist Party—USA, which for once got the worse of the deal), was a master of Biblical eloquence, probably the last one.

one.
Today, most of my Oakland students know little or nothing of the Bible. Bib

Motor interest or noting of the Bible. Bib-flar references leave them blank or with the suspicion that their professor may be some sort of Jesus freak. The schools stopped in 185 the prac-tipe of the morning prayer. Easter and Opristmas decorations have dis-appeared from our schools and col-leges. How much this factor reflected of promoted a disaffection from Puri-ma Christianity is hard to say. Today in our so-called neutral public schools, any Baptist child will find, through more or less subtle cues, that his teachers do not think much of his parents' fundamentalist beliefs.

AN EXAMPLE of sponsored culture is the promotion of the Cult of the Nation by the elementary, junior and

Nation by the elementary, junior and high schools. I still remember the description of the between of the republic. George Washington floating on the clouds of the unfinished Gilbert Stuart painting; Parson Weems' story of the cherry tree; Abraham Lincoh learning to write on the back of a shovel by the light of the fire. I drew Thanksgiving pictures of the Pilgrins with their maskets, their hats and shows with the allver buckles, and the turkeys cavorting in the snow.

We saluted the flag every morning—at the same time as millions of other American children, our teacher would accure to a season of the flag of the fla

THROUGH THE SCHOOL experience, immigrant children came to share the mythology of the country their parents had come to join. They believed, as did Nathan Hale (our first ClA agent), that it was too bad they had but one life to give to bein country, which was God's country. When the time came, Italian-harricans would lob greandes against their ludlan cousins, and German-Americans would lob greandes against their German cousins, without any hesitation.

German cousins, without any hesitation.
Through the learning of the language, through a passionste exposure to sacred symbols, through ceremonies a thousand times repeated, through the sharing of popular culture, they had been transformed into Americans. As such, they were ready to fight whenever their president, heir to the Pounding Fathers, would ask them to go: to Flanders' fields, to Burma, to Micronesia, to North Africa, even to Vietnam.

Vietnam.

Many could not spell the names of the places where they died, even though no one from these countries had ever attacked their sister's honor

Mass entertainment—through the dime novels, the Buffalo Bills of the circuses, followed by the movies, the radio and TV—was to continue what the schools and the churches (especially the Irish Catholic parishes) had begun: the diffusion of American Puritan culture to the natives and immigrants.

A MAJOR VEHICLE of that Puritan culture was the making of the cowboy into the great American myth. The cowboy became the modern ver-sion of Bunyon's John Christian. Like John Christian, he put devotion to his

thaty above family and community. And his duty was to uphold Right and to defeat Evil. For this, he would sac-rifice comfort and endure pain and

And his duty was to uphold Right and to defeat EVI. For this, he would sacrifice comfort and endure pain and noteliness.

Indeed, the cowboy is a man alone. He does not believe in the sanctity of the tribe. Often enough, he is misun-decision and shurned by the very page will from thing to help, by remote the committed himself, he turns down both the girl and the sheriff shadge that a grateful community wants to horse he had done the jeb to which he committed himself, he turns down both the girl and the sheriff shadge that a grateful community wants to horse he had shown to horse he had been to have been done to have

PART OF the success of the cowboy saga throughout the world is due, no doubt, to its resonance with many of the growth problems of boys from 8-1s. But more important is its premise to the common man that he, too, could be a knight without having to be born a Samurai or a nobleman. In blue jeans, with his gun and its courage, any man could make something of himself and be the messenger of mod

ould make something of himself and be the messenger of good. The cowboy is part of sponsored popular culture because it was the mass media that enshrined him and created his legend. It was the organizational weight of the publishing houses, the newspapers, the endorsement of historical figures like Baffalo Bli and Kit Carson, relayed by mass entertainment, which gave the cowboy his credibility. It was the ceremonial valence of his sage, the ritual nature of the "horse opera," which made it such a force in molding our national character.





