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USSR effort "to stabilize their relationship at a lower level of tension" than existed during the 1950s. However much the people of Eastern Europe would welcome a loosening of Soviet ties, their experience—the Russian invasions of Hungary (1956) and Czechoslovakia (1968)—makes clear that power relations in Eastern Europe are not apt to change. Soviet dominance over Eastern Europe will continue to threaten the security of Western Europe; and Western Europe will continue to rely on U.S. might and money to deter the Russians and to help maintain the cooperative economic system that brought prosperity in the years following 1945.

**DECIDING WHAT'S  
NEWS: A Study of CBS  
Evening News, NBC Nightly  
News, Newsweek, and Time**

by Herbert J. Gans

Pantheon, 1979

393 pp. \$12.95

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ISBN 0-394-50359-7

From an avowed "left-liberal" perspective, Columbia sociologist Herbert J. Gans soberly examines four leading national processor-purveyors of news—and finds them wanting. He does not share the conservative view that a leftish Manhattan bias pervades the output of *Time*, *Newsweek*, CBS, and NBC. Rather, his periodic researches (in 1965–69 and 1975) indicate that these media uphold America's "dominant" values. For the most part, these organizations report "on those at or near the top . . . and on those, particularly near the bottom, who threaten them" to a vast audience located in the middle. To hold audiences, news executives focus on Big Names in government, politics, show business, or crime, on melodramatic conflict and disaster. They favor domestic "trends" over foreign news. (Vietnam became a "domestic" story when American GIs entered combat.) Well-paid *Time* and *Newsweek* editors, says Gans, universalize their own "upper-middle-class lifestyles"; they have little contact with ordinary Americans. TV commentators attack erring politicians or individual corporations as "bad apples"; they do not question the "existing economic order." Journalists transmit the only nonfiction that most Americans see, hear, or read. As counterpoint to David Halberstam's anecdotal bestseller on the media, *The Powers That Be*, analyst Gans argues for increased "diversity" in the

news—more stories on the views of Right and Left, of teachers and businessmen, parents and children, employers and employees. He is not optimistic.

*Arts & Letters*

**THE NABOKOV-WILSON  
LETTERS: Correspondence  
Between Vladimir Nabokov  
and Edmund Wilson,  
1940–1971**

edited by Simon Karlinsky  
Harper, 1979  
346 pp. \$15  
L of C 78-69627  
ISBN 0-06-012262-5

**THE HABIT OF BEING**

by Flannery O'Connor  
edited by Sally Fitzgerald  
Farrar, 1979  
617 pp. \$15  
L of C 78-11559  
ISBN 0-374-16769-9

Novelist Vladimir Nabokov and critic Edmund Wilson engaged in much-publicized disputes—about Boris Pasternak's *Doctor Zhivago* (Wilson praised it; Nabokov considered it pulp fiction), about Nabokov's *Lolita* (which Wilson liked "less than anything" Nabokov wrote). Yet they were close friends, as their letters make clear. In 1945, "Bunny" Wilson, who helped the Russian expatriate get writing assignments at the *New Republic*, the *New Yorker*, and the *Atlantic Monthly*, wrote to "Volodya" Nabokov: "Our conversations have been among the few consolations of my literary life through these last years." Nabokov shared with Wilson his sketches, some of which found their way into *Lolita* (1955) and *Invitation to a Beheading* (1957), of odd and sundry Americans: a drama teacher who resembled the Duchess of Windsor, a timid bachelor who purchased a 75-foot flagpole for his backyard, a foul-mouthed bigot talking to two soldiers on a train.

Vladimir Nabokov "impressed, even possibly influenced" me, wrote Flannery O'Connor. Given their disparate backgrounds and writing styles, it is a surprising connection. O'Connor, born and bred in rural Georgia, a practicing Roman Catholic who wrote in the Southern gothic tradition, is best known for her collections of short stories—*A Good Man Is Hard to Find* (1956) and *Everything That Rises Must Converge* (1965). She died in 1964 at age 39, the victim of lupus erythematosus, an incurable disease of metabolic origin. Collected here, her letters attest to her courage and stoicism in facing her invalidism, her uncompromising belief in Catholicism, and her self-confidence. Novelist John Hawkes once asked her why she wrote, and she snapped back, "Because I'm good at it." The letters—to friends, readers, other writers—are folksy,