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clusively with daytime. The show features no gunfights or car chases; there are moments of leisurely, uneventful conversation between the younger and older generations.

It is a curious inversion: Where once daytime TV fled prime time, prime time now copies daytime. The evidence is everywhere, from the success of *The Forsyte Saga* and *Upstairs Downstairs* (soap operas with extra starch) to major television serials like *Rich Man Poor Man*, *Roots*, and *Captains and Kings*. Spectaculars aside, even a regular offering such as *Family* reflects a soap-opera sense of continuity. The major characters suffer. They have affairs, consider marriage, drop out of school, worry about mortality.

It goes too far to say that daytime dramas are genuinely realistic. The necessities of the form require too many brushes with the kinds of crises that most families would suffer only a few times in a generation. But both soaps and game shows have certainly tried to move television closer to what Paddy Chayefsky called "the marvelous world of the ordinary." What daytime TV has given prime time is the possibility of exploring characters not through the prism of fantasy, but through a focus closer to the way most of us spend our lives. And that is no mean contribution.



## TAKING COMICS SERIOUSLY

*by Arthur Asa Berger*

New art forms are often greeted with derision. Attic tragedy was denounced by conservative Greeks, impressionism by high-brow Parisians. Americans, too, have snubbed new, indigenous art forms. The comics, for example, like jazz music, are a home-grown American product; and like jazz, they were long ignored by "serious" critics.

As critic John Canaday recently noted, the pendulum has now swung to the other extreme: The comics have changed from