time with some turpentine and mixing the cock's-tails at the same time, and I don't know how it happened, but a little tiny drop of turpentine seemed to have got into each of the cock's-tails and all my guests were taken violently ill in different parts of London. I wonder how it happened.'

DAVID PEEL: But did you ever see him disguised as a French *ouvrier*? That was absolutely marvellous. He put on the blue dungarees, mounted a bicycle and charged down the King's Road. And if you met him when he was disguised as an *ouvrier*, you'd say, 'Robin, how are you?' and he'd look absolutely straight through you as if he'd never met you in his life before, because you were supposed not to recognise him. He had inherited, I think from his mother or a relation or whoever it was, two maids. They were considerably advanced in years by the time I began to visit Durham Place. And one of them, Winifred, had risen to the exalted post of parlourmaid, and used to serve dinner with an Edwardian maid's cap. This was considered highly necessary and very *de rigueur*. And one day she obviously thought that perhaps this was a little old-fashioned, and at a very grand dinner party served dinner without the cap. Robin, of course, spotted it straight away, and said nothing, until this enormous wassail was over and we left the dining-room. And he said to Winifred: 'Oh Winifred, dear, I don't mind you not wearing a cap for dinner, but if you are not going to you must tell me—because, you see, one of us must, and if you don't, I shall.'

CARLETON HOBBS: He told me on one occasion how no one could get any parlourmaids or housemaids, but he had got two cooks. I said: 'Well, you're very, very lucky to have one.' He said: 'Oh, Carleton, it's that blessed word—"single gentleman".' As an example of a rising crescendo, I met him one Sunday morning when I happened to have on what I thought was a rather snazzy pair of biscuit-coloured trousers. He greeted me almost *sotto voce*: 'Hello, Carleton dear. How nice to see you again. I do like those trousers.' Crescendo: 'I'd like to tear them off you!'

VIVIENNE CHATTERTON: He wasn't venomous at all. He had a sharp, razor-edged wit, which sometimes got the better of him, but *au fond* he was the kindest person I think I've ever known.

DOUGLAS CLEVERDON: The last years of his life were mostly spent in Switzerland.

VIVIENNE CHATTERTON: He wrote me a postcard once: 'It's been wonderful out here, but very hot, and we've had terrific thunderstorms which go round and round the valleys, reminding one of the closing scene of *Götterdammerung*—only one sleeps so much better in Covent Garden.'

DAVID PEEL: There was towards Robin's last years an increasing fear of death, which, allied to this curious power of evil, I think did to a certain degree play on his mind. A friend of his said: 'Robin dear, you shouldn't be worried, you must have faith.' And he said: 'Oh, but I've done such terrible things.' And this person said: 'Yes, Robin, but you've also done some very wonderful things. Perhaps they'll balance out.'

From the Third Programme

D.A.N. Jones on Sidney Newman

I had a word with Sidney Newman on his last day as BBC-TV Head of Drama, when everyone in the Corporation seemed to be calling with compliments and making him mellow and over-kindly. To cloud his brow a little, I showed him Malcolm Muggeridge's reference to his work in the previous week's *Listener*. Muggeridge was commenting on his own conversation with John Reith: 'He considers that he should have stayed on to save the nation from *Cathy Come Home* and other delectable "gutsy" (the Drama Director's own felicitously chosen word) items.' Sidney Newman is quite proud of *Cathy Come Home*, one of the most effective dramas in his *Wednesday Play* series—if only because it forced general attention on the way in which poor people can be deprived of homes. Newman said: 'Muggeridge is a little old man who can only indulge in knocking copy. I want to believe he means well but I can't understand why the nation should have to be saved from Cathy. I wouldn't have thought Muggeridge was that cynical. His obsession with the sex he's running away from is to me ridiculous; but never mind . . . He just doesn't entertain me any more.' Particularly irritating was the fact that the Reith interviews should be the context for these strictures. Sidney Newman admires Reith, sharing the widespread feeling that there is still time for him to be fully stretched.

'Reith is a dead honest Old Testament man. I was brought up, in Canada, as an orthodox Jew and my wife is a Scots Presbyterian. I'm a product of John Grierson. I worked under him when he reorganised the National Film Board of Canada. Again the Scots Presbyterian influence. My concept of public service and responsibility I get from Grierson. He lives in England and I still see him and recharge the old purity batteries.'

But what about that word 'gutsy'? It may be better language than Muggeridge's debased Augustan ('delectable', 'murky', 'felicitous'), but what does it mean? 'Art that is graphic, sharply delineated. From the gut: that is, honest, without side-effects. Fresh. I mean, *Cathy* was important because of its form more than its content. It was on the side of the angels but it was treading old ground. Look, I'm old. I've been through the Thirties and I remember Agitprop. But TV brings that content afresh, to a new audience, people who want to see their own lives dramatised. The actors shouldn't look like actors, for instance. I say "graphic" because I used to be a painter. But the school I went to was not artsy. Mostly it taught kids to be commercial artists and I was told that a good poster was one that would get the motorist when he was driving past at 25 miles an hour.

'Painters talk about "reading" a picture. Now most people can't read a work of art; they can't read creative things. Art is a pimple on the arse of society—no, not even that, it doesn't irritate. It's the bow on the box of chocolates. Most people don't know that art is really a catalyst for intangible truths. I want plays that reveal truths in a way that's useful to ordinary people. I don't frankly care about pleasing the post-A-level group as a group: they're just as philistine as anyone else. I've told my guys to make their plays useful first, not beautiful. Viewers are looking for kicks and also for a drama that draws on their own experience of life. If on top of that you get something beautiful, that's the jackpot. I've been one of the big purveyors of art in this country; but I'm not interested in providing art for artists. They can look after themselves, I want to give work which is immediate, for the time, for the audience. It's a journalistic approach.

'I came into the BBC from commercial television. But I don't think that's an example of ITV influencing the Corporation, because I didn't change my beliefs when I came over. I did *Armchair Theatre* for ABC and Hugh Greene saw it and gave me the BBC job. Now I'm going to work for the Associated British Picture Corporation.' (Warner Brothers own 25 per cent.) 'I'll still be myself. The professional limits of this world are new to me and I won't make pronunciamentos. Cinema in this country was dead by 1958 but the last three or four years have seen improvements and there's room for cinema. You've got to give people a reason for going out and making a social thing of it. I want to do stories about today which will be seen by millions and add a fresh layer of meaning to their lives, and to make money for my bosses.

'Perhaps ITV has influenced the BBC in the sense that it was after a mass audience and did things to attract them. Perhaps the BBC was too well-fed in its monopoly position and ITV stretched it. The tragedy of socialist endeavour is that we all need competition. The BBC rose to that competition, realising that you mustn't yield to the leadership class if you want mass audiences. ITV provides the best commercial television in the world. Because the BBC exists? Possibly. Or because of the outside authority, so that commercial advertisers don't directly influence programme content. When I put on plays for General

Motors, I couldn't mention their competitors' cars and I couldn't even discuss strikes and industrial situations.

'We've always thought too much of live theatre. I feel like McLuhan. It's a medium we're all still impressed by because it was great 50 years ago. Its social impact now is simply that it influences people in other fields of drama. The BBC covers the whole range of drama—it's beautifully balanced.

'I've picked good people. You have to be able to talk to creative people and understand something of the creative process—and protect them within the organisation. Not that the organisation's a nasty enemy. . . . This is the unspectacular, grubby side of my job. If I didn't have these beliefs, how could I do *Dr Who*? Or, come to that, the Galsworthy? I'm as proud as anyone of *The Forsyte Saga,* but I've got no illusions that it's gutsy, any more than Anouilh is. *Softly, Softly* is a simple thing I like. An even simpler thing we do is *The Newcomers*; but, by God, it shines with a kind of simple truth.

'People concentrate on the *Wednesday Play.* I used to get critical letters before but I'm aware of much more pressure from the public upon the BBC, because we have more responsibility. I've been one of Mary Whitehouse's targets. If I'm quoted as saying "gutsy drama", it's not only Muggeridge but 50 others complaining and associating it with women taking off their stockings or something. I admire my colleagues in the BBC who go on, year in, year out, taking pot shots from people. I don't know how Hugh Greene does it. But these people can't "read" creative things, they can't tell real life from a story and they think reproduction of bad things in real life is encouragement. If I have a Cubist painting, they think I expect people to be made of cubes.'

The Inculcations of Father Culkin

FATHER CULKIN: If you took the communications experience of a young person growing up at the turn of the century and took the communications diet to which they were exposed at the time, it would have consisted of face-to-face communication, a small amount of print through newspapers and books, and very little else. And the characteristics of this were geographical stability, a limited number of communicators, so that if the traditional mediators of culture like the school, the church, the family, got together, they could pretty much determine the media diet of the kids at that time, so that the characteristics were that it was a fragmented and relatively private kind of communication.

JOHN TUSA: And where do you expect the breakthroughs in modern electronic media to come?

CULKIN: They come by knocking down these private worlds that were established by the older media of communication. The geographical limitations, for instance. The characteristics of the new technologies are that they transcend time and space, that they are unifiers rather than fragmenters, and that they appeal to a multiplicity of sense responses rather than to a strictly visual one, which was true of the Guttenburg era. For 400 years we've had a one-medium school system. What is happening now is that the child grows up in a highly sensate multi-media environment and then, when official culture gets its clutches on him and puts him into school, he finds out that he is back in a world that has been passed by.

TUSA: The single medium you're talking about is the spoken and written word?

CULKIN: Mostly the written word. We're very neurotic about literacy in our culture.

TUSA: Am I right in saying that you think that both face-to-face communications and the printed word are dying out?

CULKIN: In the United States—and I'd like to talk about young people here, because they are the only natural citizens of this new electronic environment—the people who've been born since 1950, say, have never known a world where there was no television. These are the people who have experienced the electronic culture directly. The rest of us are still translating it, are buffered against the full impact of it by our past education and experience. So if you want to find out what's different about the electronic culture, get fathers to look at their sons. The rest of us really should have passports to get into the electronic age. We're strangers. The little private worlds that used to be able to exist—some of which were very cruel, like the private world that excluded certain races from membership in its club—can no longer exist. For instance, if you look at movements today, the political movements towards unity and towards freedom, these came with the electronic age. The religious movements towards ecumenism came with the electronic age. Gutenburg came and the Reformation came; electronics come and the ecumenical movement comes. The electronic media are providing a world with a nervous system which makes it aware of itself in all its parts, so that at a dramatic time, like the assassination of President Kennedy, his body is hit with the bullets and the whole world reels in the exact moment almost.

Television has taken over a lot of baby-sitting roles; it's taken over all kinds of

Life and Times in NW1: Fully Stretched