

Mr Brian Lamb - C-Span,

April 22, 1997

Sir,

Your Booknotes interview of Leonard Garment Sunday was one of the strangest I've seen.

I should say first that, as a retired newspaper reporter, I find your interviewing technique is exceptional in bringing out the personality of the author & his knowledge of the subject. This casts a fine reflection on the value of the book in question. I should add that, in most cases, I would choose ^{NOT} to buy such a book or even wait for the Readers Digest version, but it is valuable in judging the reliability of the info in the book.

Such a conclusion was possible in re the book about Elijah ~~muhammad~~ mohammad (?) the mentor of Malcolm X, several weeks ago. The author in your interview showed that his "scholarship" was amateurish. He has colorful anecdotes which fill out the mysteries or lack of info about Elijah's life. It is colorful & offers a complete biography of the sort that Oliver Stone would use. I mean, finally, that your interview methods bring this out.

as for L. Garment, this fine form of interviewing brings out the impression that Garment has an extremely disordered mind. There is no way that you could draw out info from the man in any chronological or otherwise orderly way. It makes me wonder how he was able to write a book. Toward the end, his personal life went through years of manic-depressive fluctuations & may account for his rambling recollections. From the standpoint of getting such insights into the author & his subject matter, Leonard Garment interview reminds me most closely of that of ^{Robert} McNamara, the Secretary of Defense during the Vietnam War. In the case of McNamara, what he had to say was important enough to have two one-hour segments of interview. But in Garment's case, his anecdotes are not important & might only consist of several paragraphs in a Nixon-Ford biography. He is a name dropper.

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By contrast, the orderly minds that you usually have on Booknotes interviews become more clear. I guess you must have the disorderly ones in order to appreciate the good ones appropriately.

That is all, but since I have some extra space on this page, I could add my awe + wonder at the increasing number of human oddities which are covered on C-Span programming outside of the floors of Congress. For example, 2 extremist rattlemouths are Camille Paglia + Babe Buchanan. I would never watch any of their speeches, but I was interested in seeing both of them together ^{several days ago} around the table with you in a discussion of the morning news. They were both quite civil for a change, + I credit that to the force of your personality + the rules of conduct you must have laid down to them ahead of time. Even so, I couldn't watch those 2 people on your program for any more than 12 minutes. I don't think I missed anything by turning off the rest of the news hour program. Thank God for remote control.

A Beltway newsman whose views I respect is Lars-Nelson (?), but I can't stand his scruffy beard. It's obvious that all his hair, on head + face, is middle-aged with salt-and-pepper color, as shown by the color of his moustache. In contrast, it is obvious to me that he has dyed the hair on his head a dark brown, + he has dyed his beard with white dye. There are many scruffy beards among the Beltway talking heads. A notable ~~one~~ one was the small Secretary of Labor (I can't remember his name). During Pres. Clinton's first term this Secretary had an ugly beard, although I found what he had to say ~~was~~ interesting enough to ignore his face. However, as soon as he resigned to go to a New York job, he shaved off his ugly beard, + ^{his clean-cut} ~~his now less clean-cut~~ face looks good for the first time. There are several good-looking fellows in Washington.

Sincerely,

Quincy #62301