

May 4, 1967

The Editor  
New York Times Book Review.

Dear Sir:

The front page review of Lewis Mumford's *THE MITH OF THE MACHINE* in your undated issue which I surmise was that of April 30, had the good grace to give us some idea of what Mr Mumford's new book is about. The first page of Prof. Carpenter's treatment was stimulating enough. Unfortunately, on turning to his continuation on page 20, the reader was plunged into some automatic Heideggerianism which could hardly qualify as valid criticism. I have nothing against the ideas of Marshall Heidegger, and I do not deny that they deserve to be popular. But I fail to see why Lewis Mumford should be called out of date simply because he does not write and think like Marshall Heidegger.

It is entirely possible that Mumford (who probably watches TV as little as I do) does not fully appreciate the implications of the new tribalism. Perhaps it would be better if he did. But the fact remains that what Lewis Mumford has to say remains a matter of crucial importance even though it does not add up to a currently fashionable formula. When Mumford complains that value judgements are now treated as unreal and irrelevant, and when he suggests that this has led to our "demoralization", he is not just being "petulant" and he is not just an "old man annoyed with his grandchildren". Surely we do not have to look far for evidence that this is one of the most critical problems of our time. I very much enjoyed the first part of Prof. Carpenter's review, but the last part struck me as a lapse into triviality and irrelevancy brought on by passive surrender to stereotypes.

Yours sincerely

Thomas Merton.