

John Vlahos

Award-Winning Screenwriter of Television's Golden Age

A major archive of scripts, drafts and other materials by one of the leading scriptwriters of the Golden Age of television, housed in three banker's boxes, 4.5 linear feet total.

John Vlahos (1917-2004) was, along with his contemporaries Horton Foote, Reginald Rose, and Rod Serling, one of the leading screenwriters of the 1950s and 1960s, writing for such series as *The Philco Television Playhouse*, *Studio One*, *Robert Montgomery Presents*, *Goodyear Television Playhouse*, *The United States Steel Hour*, *Climax!*, *The Alcoa Hour*, Boris Karloff's *Thriller*, *Route 66*, *the Defenders*, *The Nurses*, and *Marcus Welby, M.D.*¹

His credits include 17 movie screenplays, 70 radio scripts, 52 network television live and film dramas, and more than 200 episodes for various daytime shows. Among the honors he received are the Sylvania Award in 1958 (for *Beaver Patrol*, a comedy for the *U.S. Steel Hour*) and an Emmy in 1962 (for "Killer Instinct," an episode of *The Defenders*). He also received an Ohio State Radio-TV Award for Best Documentary, a Freedom Foundation Award for Best Historic Family Series, an Institution for Education Award for Distinguished Radio Writing, and the 1959 Ford



Vlahos in 1958

¹ John Vlahos, 87; Won Emmy for Script of "The Defenders," *Los Angeles Times*, April 19, 2004, p. B9; *Variety*, Apr 26, 2004, p. 64.

Foundation Award for playwriting.²

Born in Springfield, Ohio, Vlahos worked in the family restaurant as a youth. He attended Wittenberg University and Carnegie Tech, where he majored in drama. In 1941, moved to West Coast and wrote for a series of “Range Busters” westerns for Monogram Pictures.³ During World War II, he served in the Navy in the South Pacific. After World War II, he spent seven years with Armed Forces Radio Service.⁴ He turned his hand to television in 1952, when Hal Peary, best known for his role as the Great Gildersleeve, commissioned him to write episodes of a planned series called “Call Me Papa; or, Pigeon Point.”⁵ After several years in Hollywood, Vlahos moved in 1958 to Westport, Connecticut, where he lived the rest of his life.⁶

Vlahos excelled especially in plays broadcast live. Among Vlahos’s early successes was *A Business Proposition* (1955), “a tender tale or two middle-aged people who attempt to establish a business despite tremendous odds,”⁷ and *A Bend in the Road* (1957), which he described as being “about a Protestant minister’s search for his usefulness. He’s an old man in a nation of youth and youth’s success. What can he contribute. He goes through a spiritual evaluation of himself, to the world, to himself, and to his family.”⁸ Other notable early works include *Tongues of Angels* (1958), a drama about a farmer who feigns muteness to hide his severe stutter, and *Beaver Patrol* (1958), a comedy about a retired New York businessman who assumes leadership of a cub scout troop. His Cold War drama, *The Brandenburg Gate*, set in Berlin, was produced for television three times in eight years -- first for *Motorola TV Hour* with Jack Palance and Maria Riva (1953), then with “*Climax!*” (under the title *The Largest City in Captivity*) with Franchot Tone and Viveca Lindfors (1957), and finally for the *United States Steel Hour* with Richard Kiley and Dina Merrill (1961).⁹

Among other notable works were his script for the T.V. movie *Silent Night, Lonely Night* (1969), starring Lloyd Bridges and Shirley Jones, and *Act of Reprisal* (1964), a feature film on the Cypriot conflict that starred a young Jeremy Brett. A 1991 review of a revival of the film noted “a certain lustiness and clarity in its storytelling.”¹⁰

² “John Vlahos,” *Connecticut Post*, Apr. 13, 2004,

<https://www.legacy.com/obituaries/ctpost/obituary.aspx?n=john-vlahos&pid=2126411>

³ Brainard Platt, “Tops on Airwaves,” *Dayton Daily News*, 11 Mar 1958, p. 31; Andrew McGinn, “Springfield singer had incredible range,” *Springfield News-Sun*, 16 Jun 2007, p. 5.

⁴ Gee Mitchell, “Dialing: Pay Television Criticized by CBS Network Official,” *Dayton Daily News*, 19 Feb 1956, p. 68.

⁵ *Catalog of Copyright Entries: Third series* (1952), p. 151; Harold V. Cohen, “The Drama Desk,” *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, 13 April 1953, p. 10

⁶ Dick Kleiner, “TV Scriptor John Vlahos Moves East,” *Times Record* (Troy), March 7, 1958, p. 10.

⁷ Win Finning, “Maybe Ferrer Was Tired,” *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, 19 Oct 1955, p. 31.

⁸ Charles Mercer, “Problems in Growing Old to be Dramatized on TV,” *Asbury Park Evening Press*, 4 Nov 1957, p. 14

⁹ Val Adams, “TV Show Revived by Berlin Crisis: Vlahos’ “Brandenburg Gate Sold 3d Time in 8 Years”, *New York Times*, 21 August 1961, p. 45

¹⁰ Michael Wilmington, “A Crash of Symbols in ‘Act of Reprisal,’” *Los Angeles Times*, 13 Sept 1991, p. 521.

Vlahos's play *The Golden Age of Pericles Pappas*, for which he was awarded a fellowship from the Ford Foundation, was produced at the Tulsa Theater in 1959.¹¹ His biopic on labor leader Samuel Gompers rooted his activism in the study of the Talmud.¹² He also wrote a promotional film, *The Big Decision*, for Wittenberg University, which awarded Vlahos an honorary doctorate in 1958, and he developed poetic liturgies performed at the Unitarian Church in Westport.¹³

Vlahos worked alongside the leading writers and producers of the early years of television. His agent, Lucy Kroll, also represented Horton Foote. His co-writers for the United States Steel Hour, included such luminaries as Foote, Arnold Schulman, Arthur Hailey, Tod Mosel, Rod Serling, and Ira Levin.¹⁴ He wrote episodes for the Emmy Award-winning courtroom series *The Defenders*, created by Reginald Rose. Recalling his work with Rose, Vlahos noted, "In my case I get so involved with the people, I have practically no story. He's always sending me back to put the story in."¹⁵

In 1958, TV critic Dick Kleiner described the working methods of "one of TV's best playwrights":

Vlahos' writing technique is rather remarkable. He gets an idea and he thinks about it. He lets it simmer in his mind for a time, perhaps doing a little research and making some notes, but nothing more. He considers in in this way for about a year, keeping perhaps six projects in a similar state of mental germination. Then, by the time he sits down to write it, it's practically worked out completely. It is written, he says, in a weekend.¹⁶

Vlahos's work offers insight not only into the golden age of television, but also into a range of topics in American culture during the 1950s and 1960s: cold war politics (*The Brandenburg Gate*), labor relations (*The Eternal Light*), disability (*The Tongues of Angels*), popular religion (*Untitled Contemporization of In His Steps*), Immigration and Ethnicity (*The Golden Age of Pericles Pappas*), Beatniks (*Sounding Brass*), American memory (*The Spirit of '76*), and much more. Among the produced scripts, there are a number for which no information is otherwise available on IMDB or elsewhere; these likely represent the only surviving records of some early television broadcasts.

¹¹ "Pericles Pappas: Tulsa Theater to Give Ford Foundation Drama," *Times* (Shreveport, Louisiana), 11 Oct 1959, p. 67.

¹² "Formation of AFL Dramatized," *Longview News-Journal*, 11 Dec 1966, p.96.

¹³ William A. Kinnison, *Modern Wittenberg* (Xlibris, 2011), pp. 145-156; "John Vlahos," *Connecticut Post*, Apr. 13, 2004.

¹⁴ Harvey Pack, "Final Curtain for Dramatic Show," *Arizona Republic*, 9 June 1963, p. 105.

¹⁵ Tom Stempel, *Storytellers to the Nation: A History of American Television Writing* (Syracuse University Press, 1996), p. 87.

¹⁶ Dick Kleiner, "TV Scriptor John Vlahos Moves East," *Times Record* (Troy), March 7, 1958, p. 10.

The Archive

The present archive comprises scripts and treatments for over sixty projects spanning Vlahos's entire career. Many of the projects here were produced, but there are also treatments and scripts that appear not to have been sold. Among the latter are detailed treatments for a detective series written in the late 1950s or early 1960s, and a series set during the American Revolution written in the 1970s. There are also unproduced episodes of Marcus Welby, M.D.

Many of the projects are present in multiple drafts and formats. Vlahos's award-winning play for the Ford Foundation was first conceived as a television drama. The treatment for his movie *Reprisal!* (released as *Act of Reprisal*) is a 57-page short story. A large assortment collection of rough drafts – generally in the form of dialogue only -- offer intimate insight into Vlahos's creative process, and the ways in which he develops each character through molding their distinctive voices.

An assortment of professional correspondence, contracts, notes, and reference files round out the collection.

Housed in three banker's boxes, the archive is organized in five series:

- Series I: Correspondence
- Series II: Contracts and Other Professional Files
- Series III: Manuscripts
- Series IV: Rough Drafts and Notes
- Series V: Research Files

A detailed inventory follows.

SERIES 1: CORRESPONDENCE

Barr, Anthony (Producer of *Climax!*, *Playhouse 90*, and *Studio One*)

- TLS on *Judgment Day*, 1962

Brodkin, Herb (Producer of *The Defenders*, and other shows for ABC and CBS)

- 4 TLS to Vlahos, plus one long TL (carbon) from Vlahos to Brodkin (8pp total), 1954-1958

Felton, Norman (Producer of *Studio One* and other shows)

Carpe Librum

(413) 281-0522

brad@carpelibrumbooks.com

27 Walnut Street * Williamstown, MA 01267

- TLS on *Sidekick*, 1974

Fischer, Sy (Producer)

- 2 TNS offering comments on Vlahos's treatment for *Beaver Patrol*, with a copy of the manuscript, 1961

George, George W. (Screenwriter and Producer)

- TLS on *The Miracle at Minskys*, 1962

Head, Francis (Agent)

- TLS, 1953

Hellman, Jerome (Agent)

- TLS, 1957

Kroll, Lucy (Agent)

- 2 TLS and a telegram, 1954-1955

Lowe, K. Elmo (Theatrical Producer)

- TLS, plus carbon TL from Vlahos, on *The Golden Age of Pericles Pappas*, 1959.

Lowry, W. McNeil (Ford Foundation)

- TLS on *The Golden Age of Pericles Pappas*, 1959. →

Petrakis, Harry Mark (Author)

- TLS on his novel, *A Dream of Kings*, 1966.

Sarelas, Mrs. A. F. (Hellenic Professional Society of Illinois)

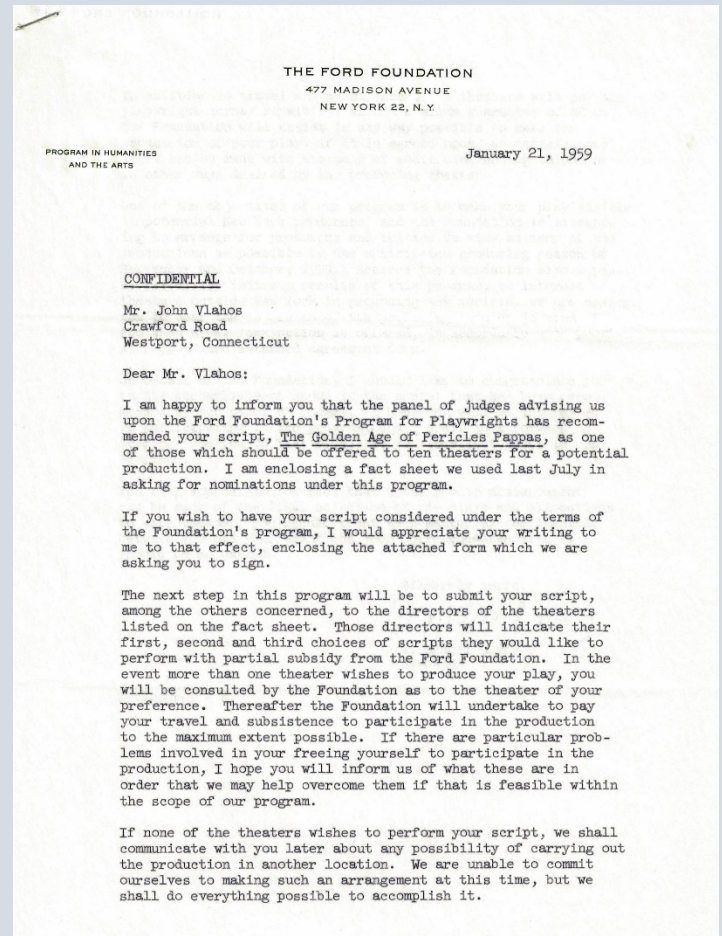
- TLS inviting Vlahos to speak, 1957

Semmelmeier, J. A. (Army buddy)

- TLS, 1955

Viehman, Theodore (Theatrical Producer)

- 4 TLS and ALS, plus carbon TL from Vlahos, all relating to the production of *The Golden Age of Pericles Pappas* by the Tulsa Little Theater, with production notes and programs, 1959

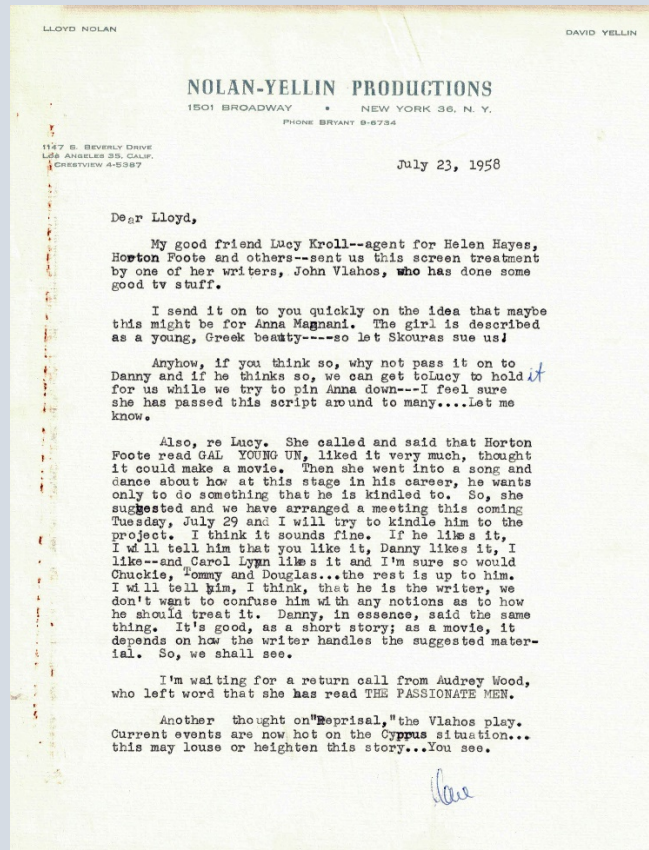


Vlahos, John

- Photocopy of pp. 2-3 of a three-page TLS to an unknown correspondent pitching a script based on *Beaver Patrol*, nd.

Yellin, David (Producer)

- TLS to Lloyd Nolan on John Vlahos, Lucy Kroll, and Horton Foote, 1958.



SERIES 2: OTHER PROFESSIONAL FILES

- Resume
- Contracts and correspondence regarding *Reprisal*, 1959-1965
- Contracts and correspondence regarding *Reprisal* / John Christian, 1964
- Contract for *The Haunter and the Haunted*, 1972
- Contracts for *Journey*, 1981
- Certificates of Registration of Copyright for five works, 1956
- Day Planner, 1963
- Check Books, 1960, 1962, 1966
- Photograph of a woman singing, inscribed on the back.

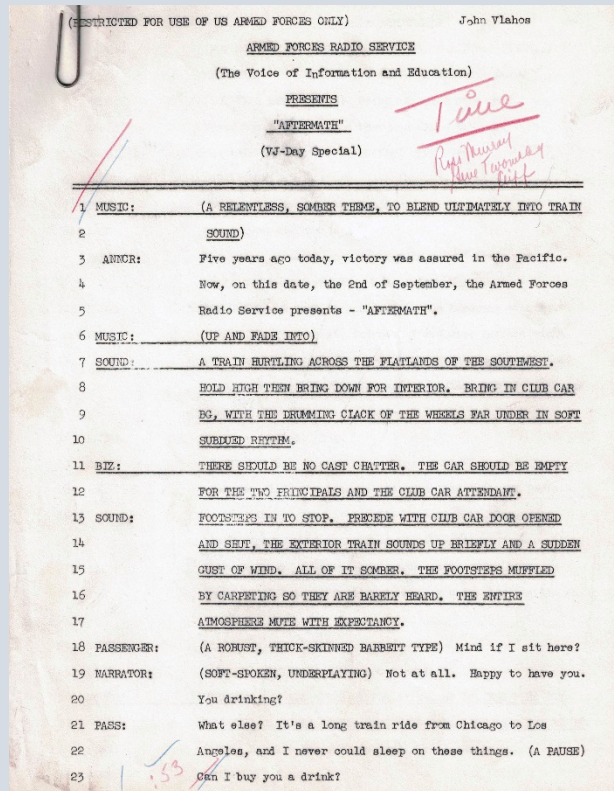
SERIES 3: MANUSCRIPTS

Anderson's Angels (with Eleanor Gunderson, W.A.S.P.)

- Screenplay, photocopy in binder, 139p.

Armed Forces Radio Service: Aftermath (V-J Day Special)

- Radio script, carbon typescript, 27p.
- Another copy, mimeographed, with time annotations



Armed Forces Radio Service: Four of a Kind

- Radio script, mimeograph, 25p.

Armed Forces Radio Service: Handicap (Anti-Communist #17)

- Radio script, mimeograph, annotations, 23p.

Armed Forces Radio Service: The Judgment Day. (Douglas of the World #26)

- Radio script, mimeograph, 26p.

Armed Forces Radio Service: The Jungle Duel. (Douglas of the World #22)

- Radio script, mimeograph, 32p.

Armed Forces Radio Service: The Mutiny. (The Pendleton Story #13)

- Radio script, mimeograph, 24p.

The Bitter Winter at Valley Forge

- Screenplay, typescript, 17+21+29p.

The Bold Approach (possibly by another writer)

- Play, typescript, about 40 pages. With envelope marked in Vlahos's hand, "P.B.'s idea of a play."

City of Children (with Hall Bartlett)

- Proposal for a television series for CBS, mimeograph typescript, 16p.

Come Away with Me, Lucille (. . . in my merry Oldsmobile!)

- Treatment for screenplay on Detroit auto production, typescript, 20p.

Dago Nick Comes Home

- Treatment, typescript, in Jaffee Agency folder, 6p.

Death, Do Us Part: A Gothic Love Story

- First draft screenplay (*Untitled, Unclassified Ghost Story*), carbon typescript, 76p.
- Screenplay, carbon typescript, 111p.

The Death Trap

- Screenplay, typescript with corrections, 15+16p.

Detective Gallery

- Treatment for a new series of mystery shorts with plot summaries of episodes, typescript, 7p.

Dr. Kildare: Second Chance (Airdate 7 December 1961)

- Screenplay in MGM covers, dated 13 July 1961, 66p.

The Elgin Hour No. 5: Hearts and Hollywood (Airdate 30 November 1954)

- Screenplay, with Lucy Kroll Agency sticker, 40+31+22p.

The Enchanted Island

- Summary Breakdown for 8-act movie, photocopy with annotations, 2p.
- Drafts, typescript with annotations, about 100p.
- Screenplay, photocopy in binder, 91p.

The Eternal Light: The Liquid Fire (Airdate: 13 November 1966)

- Screenplay on Samuel Gompers, mimeograph with NBC cover page, 46p.
- Draft, typescript, 24p.

THE ELGIN HOUR

NO. 5

NOVEMBER 30, 1954

Lucy Krull Agency

119 WEST 57TH STREET
ROOM 1212
NEW YORK 19, N. Y.

" HEARTS AND HOLLYWOOD "

by

JOHN VLAHOS

Producer Herbert Brodtkin
Director Daniel Petri
Assistant to the Producer . . . Philip Barry, Jr.
Settings Fred Stover
Technical Director Philip Levens
Associate Director James Walsh
Production Assistant Edith Hamlin

The Fun Couple

- Treatment for a screenplay, typescript with annotations, 5p.

Ghost Town

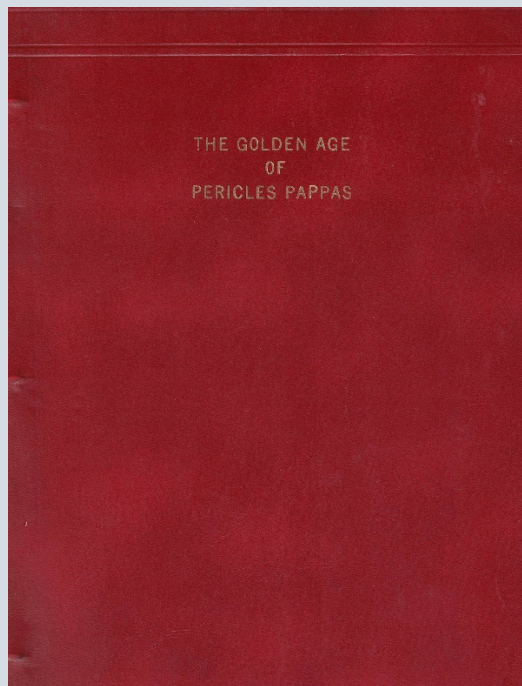
- Short story, typescript in binder, 40p.

The Gish Girls

- Treatment for screenplay on Dorothy and Lillian Gish, typescript in binder, 12p.

The Golden Age of Pericles Pappas [1957]

- NB: Originally written as a screenplay, rewritten as a three-act play that won the Ford Foundation Prize. Premiere at the Tulsa Little Theater in 1959.
- “TV – 1st Draft,” typescript, 60p.
- Play, typescript, 64p.
- Play, typescript in Lucy Kroll Agency Folder, “Copyright 1956,” 41+50+28p.
- Play, mimeograph with covers stamped “Ford Foundation Program for Playwrights,” 39+48+24p.
- Play, typescript, in red binder with Lucy Kroll Agency sticker, and annotation “1961 version,” 45+45+33p.



Goodyear Playhouse: A Business Proposition (Airdate: October 23, 1955. Starring Mildren Dunnock, Mikhail Rasumny, and Jo Van Fleet)

- Treatment, typescript, in Jaffee Agency folder, 6p.
- Screenplay, typescript, in Jaffee Agency folder, 29+17+16p.

Goodyear Playhouse: Kyria Katina: A Musical Play. (Airdate: 12 February 1956. Starring William Bendix and Viveca Lindfors)

- Screenplay, typescript, 59+7p.

Goodyear Playhouse: Starlet (Airdate: 29 January 1956. Starring Ralph Bellamy, Patsy Palmer, Jerome Thor)

- Screenplay, rough draft, typescript, annotated. 149p.
- Screenplay, 3rd Rough, typescript drafts, annotated, about 20p.

The Hallowed Halls of Longing: Rosemary in Her Own Right

- Treatment for a screenplay, photocopy in binder, 12p.

The Hunters and the Haunted; or, The House and the Brain

- Screenplay adapted from story by Edward Bulwer-Lytton, carbon typescript, 66p.

[Johnny Douglas]

- Untitled novel, carbon typescript, 121p.
- Drafts, typescript with annotations, about 150p.

Judge Priest: According to the Code

- Pilot script for a series based on the stories of Irvin S. Cobb, typescript, 17+9p.

Kelly-San

- Rough draft screenplay, typescript with annotations, about 60p.

The Leisure Trap

- Rough draft, typescript with annotations, 105p.
- Screenplay, typescript with annotations, 131p.

Lion at My Heart

- Script, rough drafts, typescript with annotations, about 80p.

Lizzie

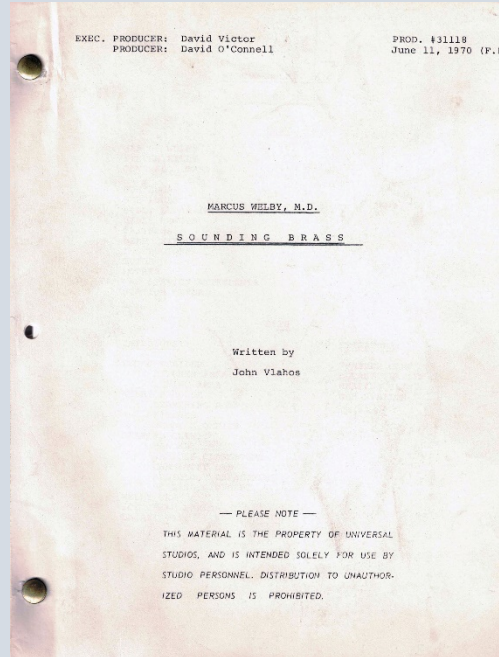
- Treatment plus scenario and musical numbers, typescript photocopy, in binder. 17+50p.
- Another draft, carbon typescript, 51p.

Lost & Found

- Multiple-viewpoint novel involving politicians, priests, and criminals, typescript photocopy, pp. 451-589

The Mapmaker: Three Feature-Length Story Projections

- Treatment, typescript with agency annotation, 4p.



Marcus Welby, M.D.: The Lazarus Story

- Treatment for an unproduced episode, typescript photocopy, 9p.

Marcus Welby, M.D.: Sounding Brass

- Screenplay, typescript photocopy with Universal Studios cover sheet, with annotations 11 June 1970, 72p.
- Draft screenplay, typescript,

Marcus Welby, M.D.: The Testing of Jordan Ames

- Treatment for an unproduced episode, carbon typescript, 10p.

Marcus Welby, M.D.: The Vrahnas Demon

- Screenplay, mimeograph typescript with Universal Studios cover sheet dated 3 July 1969, 76p.
- Screenplay, mimeograph typescript with Universal Studios cover sheet dated 7/11/69, 75p.

The Miracle at Minsky's [1955]

- Play involving strippers and revivalists, "Copyright 1955," typescript with Lucy Kroll Agency annotation in black binder, 46+40+26p.
- Screenplay, "second version" dated July 14, 1958, typescript with Lucy Kroll Agency sticker, 57+43p.
- Draft, typescript with annotations, 33+42+47p.
- Another draft, typescript, 45+49+42p.

Mr. Sandman

- Screenplay for a boxing movie, carbon typescript, 100p.

Night and the City, Episode #1

- Screenplay, carbon typescript, 45p.
- Another draft, carbon typescript, 47p.

The Nightmare Weekend

- Treatment, typescript photocopy, 9p.

Our Town

- Pilot script for a series based on the play by Thornton Wilder, typescript, 51p.

The Papa Pimentel Series

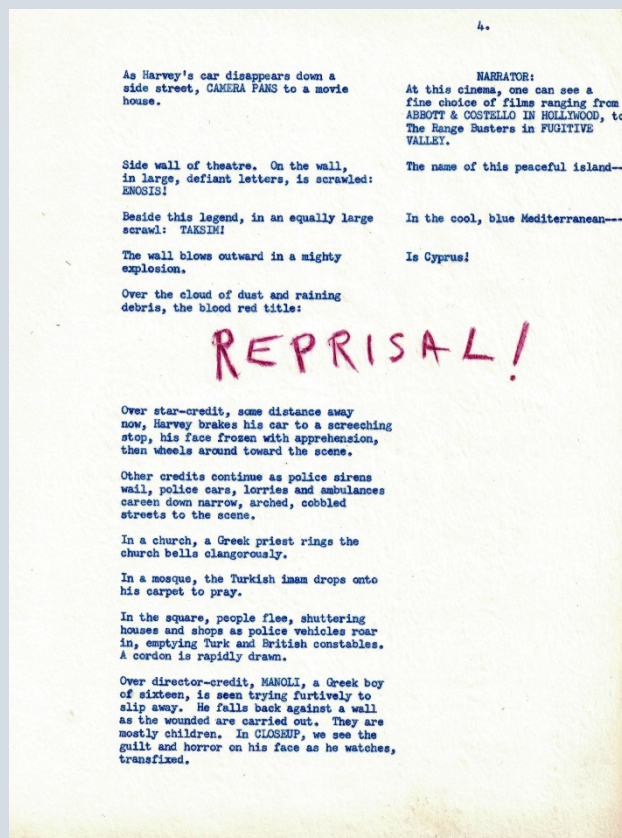
- Story ideas for a proposed new series, typescript, 6p.

Pistolero

- First draft for play, typescript, 10p.

Poquito! A Film Fable

- Story, typescript, 19p.



Reprisal!

- Filmed as *Act of Reprisal* (also released as *Antekdhikissi*) (1964), starring Ina Balin, Jeremy Brett, and Giannis Voglis
- Short story / Treatment on Cypriot Conflict, typescript with Lucy Kroll Agency sticker, in blue binder, 57p.
- Screenplay, typescript, 187p.
- Rough draft, typescript, 82p.
- Another rough draft, typescript, 128p.

The Rite of Spring: A Service for Easter Sunday

- Master Cue Script, typescript in binder, heavily annotated, 17p.

Saints in Union Suits

- Story in folder with illustrated cover, typescript photocopy in binder, 15p.

Sidekick

- Screenplay for a comic western in three acts, typescript, 17+21+10p.
- Another draft in binder, 15+17+18p.

Silent Night, Deadly Night

- TV Movie based on the play by Robert Anderson. Airdate: 16 December 1969. Starring Lloyd Bridges and Shirley Jones. Nominated for Primetime Emmy³
- Screenplay, typescript, 92p.

Sonnets

- Poems, many dated 1942, typescript and holograph manuscript, about 30p.

Sounding Brass

- Screenplay set among beatniks in Greenwich Village [unrelated to the Marcus Welby episode of the same name], mimeograph typescript, 118p.

The Spirit of '76 (with Stephen R. Callahan)

- Brief treatment for a television series, in Frank Cooper Associates folder, carbon typescript with additional copy and typewritten cast of characters, 4+p.
- Extended treatment, with synopses of 40 episodes, typescript photocopy, 22p.

The Times Square

- Treatment for a screenplay, carbon typescript, 5p.

The Tongues of Angels (Studio One in Hollywood). Airdate March 17, 1958.

- Screenplay centered on speech disorders, mimeograph typescript, 36+42+23p.

The United States Steel Hour: Beaver Patrol (Airdate: 9 April 1958. Starring Walter Slezak and Dick York)

- Treatment, carbon typescript, in Frank Cooper Associates Agency folder, 5p.

The United States Steel Hour: Brandenburg Gate (Airdate: 4 October 1961)

- Rehearsal script dated 20 September 1961, with a United States Steel Hour cover page, 37+34+35p.

Untitled (cover page missing)

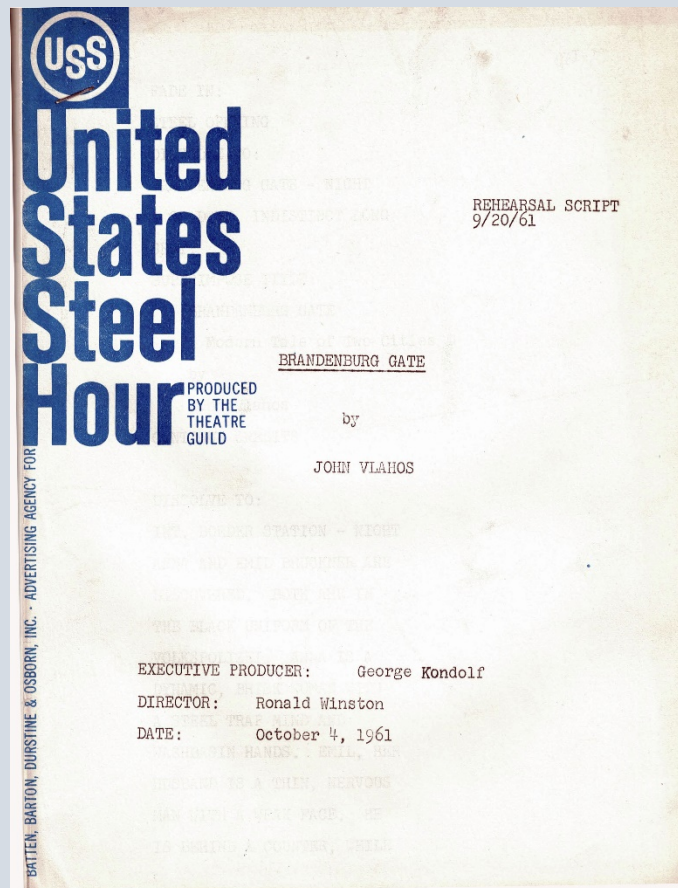
- Screenplay for a Cold War drama set during a United Nations cocktail party, typescript, about 55p.

Untitled Contemporization of In His Steps.

- Screenplay, "Second Revision," dated 29 May 1963, with a Wilbur Stark Production cover sheet, 187p.

The Watch Night

- A religious liturgy for voices, photocopy with annotations in blue binder, 17 p.



SERIES 4: ROUGH DRAFTS AND NOTES

- Hundreds of pages of rough drafts, notes, and script fragments. Not itemized.

land o goshen
well ill tell you maybew issues is great things to run with but might
lonesome iteas to be left standin on

my people have been part and parcel of the old south as it was in the
ante be lin days and on back into the colonial days for at least two
centuries I was born in a community of gentlarfolk plantation owners
luxury loving people there is i believe some huguenot blood in my
veins and some of the strains of the cavaliers also my mother was
the daughter of a rather famous soldier in the confederacy-a brevet
brigadier a kentuckian out of the blue grass regions but of virginia
descent
my people couldnt say like some that or boast theyd never had to do
a days work

i wouldnt exactly say hod maydew is as crooked as a virginia fence
but he aint quite as upstandin as a kentucky picket either

wherell you find mustard greens for bollin in washington theyll put
you in jail if you so much as shoot a squirrel
aint no one as copious with language as you are

the cat has to jump slighty briek to beat me an even so shes likely
to find me already there warmin a place for her when she lands

that was fine back in the days when hester was a pup only hees an ol
dog now

theres already too many kentucky cals bollin over in both branches of
congress an the republic seems to be pullin thru in spite of us

come on ~~over~~ by the house later / OR / these juleps was made from
a quary of spiced likker ~~and~~ no from lextington
its 32 yrs old - handsade an run thru a gun log ~~opper~~ not iron
aind never touchd it ~~at~~ when you pour a dram of it out into a glass
it beads up same as if it had soapuds down in the bottom of it - it
does for a fact

SERIES 5: RESEARCH FILES

Files of newspaper clippings and other materials used by Vlahos for ideas. Arranged topically under titles like “Beats,” “Boxing,” “Suburbia,” and Mr. Big.” Not itemized.



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