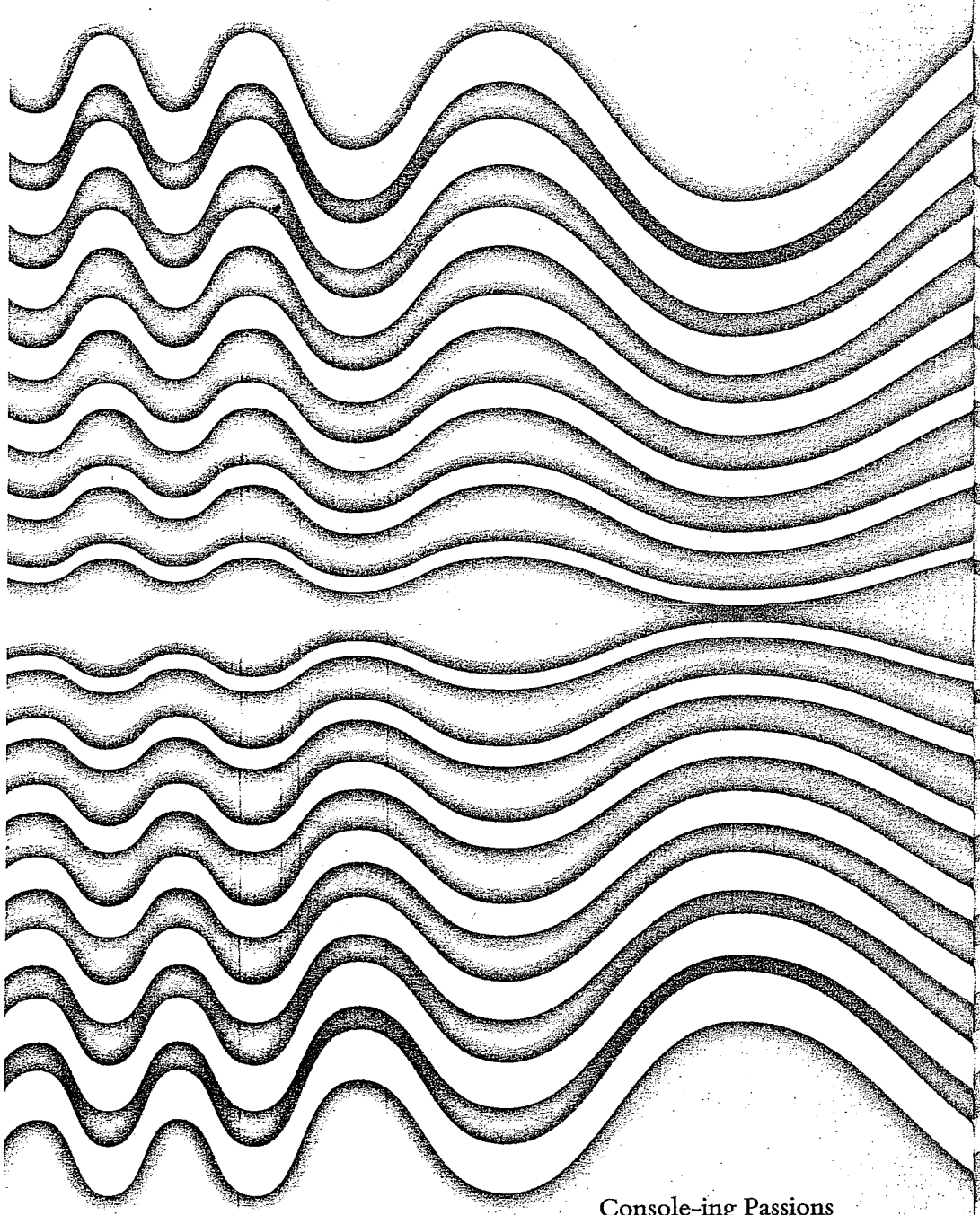

Console-ing Passions

Television and Cultural Power / Edited by Lynn Spigel

GROOVE TUBE

Sixties Television and the Youth Rebellion

Aniko Bodroghkozy

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To my mother,

Christel Pick Bodroghkozy

Introduction

Turning on the Groove Tube

In 1967 I was seven years old and enchanted by hippies. Living in a squeaky-clean Canadian suburb, I had never actually seen any real, live hippies—except on television. Yet those video images were powerful because I knew I wanted to be a hippie; I wanted to dress like them; I wanted to be around them. In the summer of that year, the so-called Summer of Love, when the hippie phenomenon burst like a psychedelic firecracker onto the North American mass media, I got my wish. Our family took a trip to Toronto, and, to satisfy my parents' curiosity and my own abiding fascination, we decided to drive through the city's much-publicized Yorkville district, a hippie haven that was Toronto's version of Haight-Ashbury. As our car inched along the congested main drag, my father demanded that we keep the windows rolled up. Outside our respectable Pontiac the sidewalks were jammed with the oddest and most bizarre examples of human wildlife my seven year old eyes had ever seen. The stoops and outdoor staircases of once-elegant houses were overrun with freakish-looking youths strumming guitars and bumming change. I remember seeing one young man sauntering down the street sporting a big, shaggy mane of red hair radiating in all directions, a fringed vest with no shirt underneath, and the biggest, craziest looped earring hanging from one ear.

I was terrified. Sliding down on the backseat, I was too distraught and afraid to look anymore. These frightening, filthy, bedraggled

specimens didn't look at all like *my* hippies. My hippies were cute and sweet and childlike. What I saw outside the car window were not flower children, certainly not the flower children I knew from television. I didn't know what they were, but I wanted nothing to do with them.

My traumatic introduction to the hippies of Yorkville did not, however, fundamentally challenge my childish fascination with the idea of hippies. On Halloween I would dress up in headband, flowers, and funny vest to go trick-or-treating as a flower child. I begged my parents to buy me a flowered miniskirt (which I got) and plastic white boots (which I didn't get) so I could enhance my hippie, go-go girl appearance. I asked my mother to part my hair in the middle rather than on the side so I would look more like hippie girls.

What image of hippies was I trying to emulate? With the hindsight of some thirty years I recognize that the only hippies I encountered on a regular basis came from our family's unreliable and often-on-the-blink Magnavox color television set. *My* hippies were TV hippies. Throughout the later 1960s they came to play with me from shows like *The Monkees, The Mod Squad, Laugh-In,* and *The Smothers Brothers Comedy Hour.* In my TV-addicted suburban world these were the "real" hippies.

Television hippies gave me not only a way of dressing and parting my hair, however. They gave me a politics. A taken-for-granted antimilitarism and support of movements for social change have formed my core-belief structure for as long as I can remember. I did not come by these beliefs from my parents. My father, a fervent anticommunist, despised any form of social and political turmoil. For someone who had survived World War II, a Russian prisoner-of-war camp, and the dislocations of being a political refugee from communist Hungary, this may have been understandable. Our divergent "structures of feeling" began clashing heatedly and passionately in the early 1970s as I moved into rebellious adolescence—and yet another television show served as the terrain on which our differing beliefs battled. Arguing over the politics of *All in the Family,* my father and I played out our own painful generation gap. My mother, on the other hand, remained politically quiescent during the sixties. But when she separated from my father in the mid-1970s, she discovered the women's liberation movement. Among her favorite shows during this time were the feminist-inflected *Mary Tyler Moore Show, Maude,* and *Rhoda.*

This book grew from my desire to understand how prime-time television figured in the social and cultural dislocations provoked by the student and youth movements of the 1960s. Scholarly pursuits often have their basis in personal questions and autobiography, so part of my motivation here includes a desire to understand the extent to which my voluminous childhood television watching helped shape my political consciousness as a "child of the sixties." How did video representations of the youth counterculture and student rebellion allow space for me, from a very early age, to align myself with the values and politics of that oppositional movement?

Much commentary about prime-time television in the 1960s suggests that the turmoil and social dislocations of the period were absent from the "Vast Wasteland." Sixties TV ran amok with flying nuns, suburban housewife witches with twitchy noses, Okies in Beverly Hills, campy superheroes in tights and capes, and bumbling espionage agents talking into their shoes. As one broadcast historian has argued, sixties programming "meant offering evenings of avoidance. At a time of racial turmoil, political murders, and a massive military intervention in Southeast Asia, Americans viewed relentlessly escapist entertainment and rigorously 'neutral' news programming."[1] To some extent this is true. Network television was a conservative medium in the business of delivering the largest bulk audiences possible to corporate advertisers. Those bulk audiences comprised largely adult and older Americans generally unsympathetic to the political and cultural insurgencies of the nation's youth. Preadolescents and children like myself, too young to have formed political allegiances, made up the other major bloc of television watchers. The teens and young adults fomenting all that turmoil were often the least likely to be watching.

Nevertheless, the childhood memories that provided the impetus for this work, and the research that grounds it, suggest something more complicated. The products of the entertainment industry, in order to be popular, must engage at some level with the lived experiences of their audiences: they need to be relevant.[2] Popular relevancy proved tricky in the United States during the late sixties and early seventies, however. As this book argues, entertainment television could not, and did not, manage to ignore or repress the protest, rebellion, experimentation, and discord going on in the nation's streets and campuses. Prime-time programming grappled with and con-

fronted (often in highly mediated ways) many of the turbulent and painful phenomena of the period. Prime time explored the hippie scene and its attendant drug culture; numerous shows attempted to engage with the explosive issue of draft resistance; countless shows dealt with campus upheavals in one way or another, often featuring at least one almost ritualistic scene of demonstrators clashing violently with police. Later in the 1960s and into the early 1970s, prime-time dramas embraced particularly touchy issues such as fictionalized versions of the My Lai massacre, the Kent State University killings, and Weatherman-type urban guerrilla bombers. Other types of television programming such as variety shows and talk shows became the sites of on-air political confrontations.

This book will trace how the American media industry—specifically entertainment television—engaged with manifestations of youth rebellion and dissent. At the level of production, how did television networks, executives, and producers respond to the challenges associated with their strategies for representing aspects of a youth revolt that were just too colorful and too dramatic to ignore, despite attendant threats posed by an entertainment medium trucking with oppositional politics? At the textual level, what kinds of ideological negotiations can we uncover in the prime-time programming that resulted? How did this most culturally conservative of entertainment media, notorious for its "lowest common denominator," "offend no one" approach to program creation, suddenly find itself turning the most incendiary political material into prime-time series fodder? At the level of reception, how did insurgent young people respond to the texts produced? As the first generation to grow up with the new medium, how did movement-affiliated youth make sense of their relationship to television? How did they respond to the programming that tried to portray their movement's preoccupations? How did they respond to the culture industry disseminating that programming? Many disaffected baby boomers in the 1960s may have preferred just to ignore television's attempts to depict their anti-establishment politics and activities, focusing their attention on the products of another arm of the culture industry, the rock music business.[3] However, evidence from the pages of the movement's underground press suggests a spirited and active process by some in the countercultural and radical student enclaves in struggling over the mechanisms of mass-media incorporation. Engagement with popular media texts—frequently in an antagonistic way—assisted some sixties rebels in thinking through their movement's fractious relationship to the dominant order and helped them to understand the workings of that order. And although politicized sixties youth were overwhelmingly hostile to the television industry, the industry did not, necessarily, return that antagonism. In its attempts to lure baby boomers back to a medium that had significantly shaped their childhoods, prime time attempted to turn itself into a "groove tube," incorporating significant amounts of (admittedly simplified and sanitized) countercultural and campus politico values and critiques. The procedure proved anything but smooth for the networks or their audiences. In the late 1960s and early 1970s, prime time turned into an arena of culture clash, political controversy, generational battle, and ideological upheaval as did so many American institutions during that tumultuous era.

Making Sense of "the Sixties"

Writing about America in the 1960s is nothing if not complicated. For instance, when we refer to "sixties youth" or "rebellious, disaffected, insurgent young people" or simply "the movement," what are we actually talking about? Certainly not all those who were in their teens and early twenties in the mid to later 1960s participated in the activities, politics, and lifestyles discussed here. The category of "sixties youth" is often taken for granted as commonsensical, obvious, and not requiring definition. We all, supposedly, know who and what we're talking about. Things aren't that simple, however. We need to map out a working definition of the social/historical category of "rebellious youth of the 1960s."

Demographics provide one way to help define this phenomenon. In the immediate aftermath of World War II the United States, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand experienced a sharp and prolonged rise in fertility rates that only began to drop off by the mid-1960s. European countries, on the other hand, went through a birthing boom of only a few years immediately after the Second World War.[4] Thus, the baby boom was largely a North American phenomenon. "Baby boomers" formed a huge demographic mass and have often been defined precisely by their size. By their sheer numbers

they have tended to shape and influence the social concerns dominant in society depending on their age at the moment. In the 1950s, when the first wave of the "boom" generation were children, concerns about family and child rearing were central issues within North American social, cultural, and political arenas. The 1960s, a period obsessed with youth, was literally awash with young people. Between 1960 and 1970 the population between the ages of eighteen and twenty-four increased by a spectacular and unprecedented 53 percent. Never had so much of the population been at the turbulent years of youth all at the same time. Historian of the baby boom generation Landon Y. Jones observes, "It is no coincidence, then, that the six years from 1964 to 1970 saw the outbreak of the most prolonged and dislocating domestic turmoil of this century. These were the same years that the first baby boomers massively entered the dangerous years." Jones presents the work of Norman Ryder, a pioneer of cohort theory in the field of demography, who argued that "throughout history the younger generation has challenged the older as it enters this life stage. The young are cultural insurrectionaries, *agents provocateurs* with no allegiance to the past. The task of the older generation is to control this 'invasion of barbarians' and shape their energies so they become contributors to society. Only then, by recruiting the young, can the culture maintain its continuity."[5] Jones goes on to argue that the vast numbers of young baby boomers overwhelmed their elders and made this process of social recruitment and continuity impossible.

This demographic definition of sixties youth has a certain explanatory power. Unfortunately it cannot account for the massive student and youth movements in countries that did not experience fertility booms. In France the youth rebellion of 1968 in alliance with French workers came very close to toppling the de Gaulle government and sparking a potential political revolution. The late sixties saw youth movements around the globe—in Japan, Mexico, Germany, and other nations.[6] On the other hand, the baby boom nation Australia was relatively quiescent during the sixties, experiencing few campus disruptions compared to the thousands on U.S. campuses.[7] Therefore, although an appeal to numbers and demographic determinism can help in defining rebellious sixties youth in the United States, it tends toward essentialism and must be used cautiously.

A baby boom definition is also problematic because not every person born during its first wave (generally considered to be between 1946 and the mid-1950s) actively engaged in campus politics (such as antiwar activity, draft resistance, or challenges to in loco parentis rules) or got involved with countercultural activities (psychedelic drug experimentation, dropping out, alternative lifestyles, acid-rock music fandom). The popular imagination tends to perceive baby boomers as generally white and middle class. Although working-class and African American couples participated in the fertility frenzy as much as did the white middle class, the first two groups tend to get erased from the picture. The working classes are often not seen as "a part of the sixties" at all except as adult reactionary hard hats responding violently and in disgust to the unpatriotic antics of the pampered and privileged children of the suburbs. Working-class baby boomers are practically nonexistent in the popular memory of the period. Typically this was not a cohort that went to university or participated in counterculture communities. Many boomer sons of the working class went to Vietnam, fought there, and died there. In the popular imagination, however, it is the disruptive activity of their luckier stateside brothers and sisters that defines "sixties youth."

John Clarke, Stuart Hall, Tony Jefferson, and Brian Roberts have delineated in their work on youth culture the differences between working-class subcultures and middle-class countercultures. Although their work focuses on the British context of youth activity, their observations make sense of the U.S. scene as well. In comparing the two groups, they observe that working-class subcultures tend to operate as a form of "gang," whereas middle-class countercultures are more diffuse, individualized "milieus" rather than the tightly knit leader-oriented subcultural group:

> Working-class sub-cultures reproduce a clear dichotomy between those aspects of group life still fully under the constraint of dominant or 'parent' institutions (family, home, school, work), and those focused on non-work hours—leisure, peer-group associations. Middle-class counter-culture milieux merge and blur distinctions between 'necessary' and 'free' time and activities. Indeed, the latter are distinguished precisely by their attempt to explore 'alternative institutions' to the central institutions of the dominant culture. . . . During the high point of the Counter-Culture, in the 1960s, the middle-class counter-culture formed a whole embryo 'alternative society',

providing the Counter-Culture with an underground, institutional base. Here, the youth of each class reproduces the position of the 'parent' classes to which they belong. Middle-class culture affords the space and opportunity for sections of it to 'drop out' of circulation. Working-class youth is persistently and constantly structured by the dominating rhythm of Saturday Night and Monday Morning.[8]

Because class is so much more hidden in the United States, subcultural youth activity may be more difficult to "see" than it is in Britain. But the structural differences set out by Clarke et al. are useful in defining aspects of a counterculture (which in this instance would include more directly political and insurgent youth groupings that often are separated off and distinguished from definitions of "the counterculture"). The point is that this is fundamentally a middle-class form of rebellion. Consequently, our definition of "sixties youth" must be limited by class.

It must also be limited by race. African American youth were highly politicized and insurgent in this period and, unlike working-class whites, were, to some extent, aligned with radicalized young middle-class whites. The civil rights and black-power movements had enormous influence on the evolving character of campus-based white youth insurgency. But although most campus politicos drew inspiration from the black movement and fought for the causes of racial equality and black empowerment, the segregationist structures so deeply embedded in American society manifested themselves here as well. The hugely influential New Left Students for a Democratic Society (SDS) had very few black members. In 1965 the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC), the major student civil rights organization, asked all its white members to leave the organization.[9] Although blacks participated in antiwar activism (with Martin Luther King Jr. coming out strongly against the war in 1967), they tended to organize separately from campus-based student groups. In relation to the hippie-oriented counterculture, many of the distinctions Clarke et al. laid out for working-class subcultures could be applied to African American youth groupings as well. But unlike working-class youth subcultures, black youths were highly politicized and dangerously insurgent. Clearly these attributes attracted many middle-class white youths to the phenomenon of black uprisings and dissent. Ultimately, however, these were two different

and separate movements. This book focuses primarily on the white, middle-class youth rebellion.

Even among white middle-class baby boomers of the period, we have to limit our field of vision. Those who participated in demonstrations and alternative lifestyles always formed a minority. However, at the time and since, this colorful lot has come to stand in for the larger category of "the youth of the sixties." This portion of the baby boom formed the leading edge for the generation—its avant-garde. And it was this segment of the baby boom that proved so fascinating to the culture industries. Television, music, cinema, even advertising showed little interest in exploring the lifestyles, values, and politics associated with the "silent generation" of baby boomer youth who remained on the sidelines or on the opposite side of all the social, political, and cultural ferment precipitated by their more vocal cogenerationists.[10] The silent generation of boomers was, at best, a rhetorical ploy for conservatives and Republicans to use as contrast to the long haired, draft-dodging, pothead freaks. Conformist sixties youth were too dull and colorless for the popular culture arena.

We also need a working definition of "the youth rebellions of the 1960s." Most historians and commentators of the period agree that the white, middle-class youth movement consisted of two distinct but inexorably related components: a politicized, university-based mobilization often called the New Left or "the movement," of which SDS was a key element; and a more diffuse, less overtly "political" phenomenon of drug-oriented, alternative, antimaterialist, community living called the counterculture. Young people at the time tended to see the two phenomena as separate. Campus politicos despaired of the "do your own thing" hippies, who eschewed engagement and struggle with established power structures, whereas the hippies tended to criticize student activists for not dropping out to engage in the only fundamental change possible: psychic transformation. The underground press, a crucial alternative institution that allowed the decentralized and often amorphous youth movement a sense of coherence, consisted mostly of papers that spoke to one or the other tendency within youth circles. Hippie-oriented papers tended to feature stories on hallucinogenic substances, spiritual matters, and rock music. Politico-oriented papers tended to feature coverage of demonstrations, establishment repression, political theorizing, and rock music. However, these delineations are rather arbitrary

and do not properly suggest the merging between these two tendencies. Activist students embraced many of the aspects of countercultural "lifestyle politics," such as drug use, engagement with the burgeoning youth music scene, and experimentation with different modes of living. Hippies, especially after becoming recipients of law-and-order disciplining, tended to move into more confrontational directions. So, although I think it important to distinguish between these two modes of youth rebelliousness in the 1960s, I think it is equally important to emphasize their common roots.

Making Sense of Sixties Youth Audiences

One of the key issues this book explores is audience reception practices. I want to reconstruct how countercultural and radical sixties youth struggled with, and attended to, their popular cultural representations in prime-time television. How does one go about doing that kind of historical reconstruction? One can, of course, interview numerous baby boomers, but I am wary of problems associated with the kinds of memory texts oral history would produce in this instance. Until very recently most attempts at "making sense of the sixties" have been initiated by individuals who participated in the period, often as active participants in the social movements that so defined the era. The memoirs and participant-observer histories that have appeared with great frequency since the mid-1980s are of enormous use, but almost inevitably the authors still have axes to grind, personal demons to exorcise, and unresolved battles to wage.[11] The era is still very much a contested terrain for boomers who, not surprisingly, will remember their youthful past in ways that help to make sense of who and where they are now. Oral histories are a less crucial resource for historians when other documents are available. One of my main resources for reconstructing the discourses circulating within youth movement circles about mass-media representations of youth dissent comes from evidence culled from the underground press.

Beginning in the mid-1960s a growing plethora of alternative newspapers, run on shoestring budgets with nonprofessional writers, began appearing in major cities and college towns. They were hawked on the streets of youth ghettos and on university campuses to readers

primarily in their teens and twenties. As what came to be called "the movement" assumed the characteristics of a provisionally coherent political conglomeration of disaffected young people, papers that spoke to and for that youth movement became a crucial information, communication, and community-building forum. By 1969 over five hundred underground papers had sprung up throughout the country, distributing anywhere from 2 million to 4.5 million copies to "radicals, hippies, racial minorities, soldiers, and curiosity-seekers."[12] The *Los Angeles Free Press,* one of the first and most widely circulated of these papers, reached a readership of almost one hundred thousand. The counterculture-oriented *East Village Other* and *Chicago Seed* reached sixty-five thousand and twenty-three thousand respectively. Although some of that readership comprised adults "slumming" safely in hippie and radical student spaces or lascivious types drawn to the *Free Press* and other papers' notorious sex ads, the vast majority of readers were aligned with the movement. Their reading of the underground press provided one way to indicate that association.

Those who wrote for the underground newspapers saw themselves not as observers of youth activism and lifestyles but as participants. David Armstrong observes in *A Trumpet to Arms: Alternative Media in America* that "*Berkeley Barb* founder Max Scherr saw the *Barb* as a propaganda vehicle and organizing tool fully as much as he did a newspaper of record. . . . The *Barb* covered most of the happenings of the middle and last sixties from the instigators' points of view."[13] Journalistic notions of objectivity, distance, balance, and the like had no place in underground press articles, which were advocatory to the extreme and often not overtly concerned with accuracy of detail.

The underground press is a particularly rich source of historical material precisely because its writers were members of the very community they covered. The voices that speak from these documents, although not unmediated reflections of readers' perspectives and experiences, serve as compelling historical documents. Like any other kind of popular press, the underground papers performed an "agenda setting" role. Issues raised in the underground press most likely resonated in some fashion among those in the youth community who did not write about their perspectives. If numerous underground press articles made causal connections between television as a medium and the rebelliousness of young people and used the theories of Mar-

shall McLuhan to explain why, then we can assume that these ideas had some currency at the time and must have circulated beyond the articles themselves. If underground papers like the *Free Press,* the *Seed,* and the *East Village Other* came to the defense of the embattled and summarily canceled Smothers Brothers variety show with petitions and letter writing campaigns, we can assume that the show was of some cultural importance to significant numbers of movement youth.

How can we make use of the kind of knowledge provided by these sources? Television historian Lynn Spigel has studied popular women's magazines and the clues provided by their articles and advertisements about the introduction of television into postwar suburban homes. She shows how these magazines engaged their readers in a frequently conflicted dialogue about the meanings of this new technology. Advertisements had to try to adopt the point of view of the potential consumer and thus can offer clues to the fears and hopes about the new medium. The knowledge provided by such documents is partial and mediated because we have no access to the everyday lives of the women who grappled with the social and familial changes wrought by television.[14]

The documents I use bear a closer relationship to their potential readership. If the underground press endorsed readers' points of view, it was not because the papers were trying to sell a product (beyond the paper itself) but because the generators of these documents did, in fact, share that viewpoint. However, underground press articles display frequently conflicted responses to questions of media co-optation. By reading underground newspapers we can see how discordant and diverse movement responses to the medium could be. There was nothing monolithic or singular about the points of view offered—even within the pages of one paper. Thus an exploration of the conflicts, anxieties, and contestations that went on within the papers themselves suggests that these issues seized the energies of radical and countercultural young people at some level.

Although these documents provide partial and always mediated access to a larger totality to which we have, finally, no real access, there remain fundamental gaps and silenced voices that reverberate in their muteness. Certain viewpoints do not speak from the pages of the underground press. The voices of women within insurgent youth groups are marginalized, if not totally absent, in the pages

of the underground press, as they were to a large extent within the movement itself.[15] The majority of writers for the underground press were young, middle-class, white males. Male perspectives prevailed in a movement that frequently made sense of its rebelliousness as a means to assert *manhood.* Macho posturing and appeals to physically aggressive acts in order to signal militancy became more prevalent in youth activism as it entered its more confrontational and revolutionist phases in the later 1960s. Although women participated in insurgent youth politics and in countercultural communities in equal numbers to men, the language of the papers frequently evacuated the presence of women. The papers' layout and visuals also tended to marginalize, demean, and silence women. Many papers were littered with images of naked, sexualized young nymphs—"hippie chick" types who represented a fantasy of feminine sexual availability in these new "liberated," "permissive," and "open" times. These images often graced the covers of underground papers to boost circulation. The *East Village Other* regularly ran its own version of a "page three girl" called "Slum Goddess." Each week the paper would feature a photo of a young woman from the neighborhood—frequently only semi-clad. The very popular underground comix served up in the papers were notoriously misogynistic in their depictions of female bodies. R. Crumb's renderings of hypersexualized nubile nymphs particularly offended early women's liberationists. Many papers also featured pages of ads for porno films advertised with masturbatory representations of buxom and beckoning feminine flesh. When women writers, in the wake of the emergent women's liberation movement, began insisting on coverage of feminist issues, male editors found ways to ridicule content they couldn't censor. An article in the *Barb* about Berkeley women who were organizing carried the headline "The Women Are Revolting." A feminist manifesto on the politics of female orgasm in the *Rat* bore the title, "Clit Flit Big Hit."[16] Although these "politico"-oriented papers could not entirely overlook the uprising in feminist politics among movement women, the more countercultural papers did their best to ignore the whole thing. The *East Village Other* showcased a scathing denunciation of women's liberation positions penned by one of its few female writers, Renfreu Neff.

Because the underground papers largely obliterate the voices of women and make little acknowledgment of their gendered experi-

ences and meaning-making endeavors, there is the threat that the historical narrative I construct will perpetuate that obliteration. In order to avoid such further silencing, this book interrogates questions of female representation in the mass culture texts discussed in the chapters that follow. For instance, I examine how young women were depicted in ways that defused the "threat" of youth rebellion. I explore how they functioned as "mediating" figures between archetypically *male* rebels and *male* establishment figures. However, this textual analysis cannot suggest how countercultural and New Left women may have read these texts. The silences in the underground press documents make it next to impossible to reconstruct how young women may have engaged with these mass-mediated constructions of themselves.

Making Sense of Theory and Method

In an article that has proven enormously influential on my thinking about this project, Stuart Hall argues for the need to situate popular culture within a historical process of social transformations.[17] Audiences for mass-produced popular culture are not passive and inert vessels that function merely to be filled with dominant, capitalist ideology inevitably encoded in such texts. Neither are these texts the straightforward property of dominant groups or classes. What we see in mass-produced popular texts, according to Hall, is a "double movement of containment and resistance."[18] Although the culture industries that produce these products have the power to "rework and reshape what they represent; and, by repetition and selection, to impose and implant such definitions of ourselves as fit more easily the description of the dominant or preferred culture," this power can be resisted, refused, and negotiated.[19] Popular culture can, therefore, function as an important site where cultural hegemony is fought for, won, rewon, and occasionally threatened. Todd Gitlin, writing about entertainment television, has argued that "major social conflicts are transported *into* the cultural system, where the hegemonic process frames them, form and content both, into compatibility with dominant systems of meanings. Alternative material is routinely *incorporated:* brought into the body of cultural production."[20] Although I argue with the smooth-running characterization of Gitlin's model—

one that leaves no room for hegemonic crisis or the *resistance* half of Hall's model—I do agree with his argument that social conflicts are brought into the sphere of popular entertainment.[21] With increasing urgency throughout the late sixties and early seventies, weekly television programs and other popular-culture sites worked on the conflicts and disturbances associated with youth rebellion. By charting a process of "incorporation," I want to explore, by looking at these texts, how that process worked. I also want to determine whether, in fact, the threatening character of this rebellion could be made to conform easily with "dominant systems of meaning." By tracing changing representations of youth disaffection and protest over a five-year period, roughly 1966 to 1971, I argue that these television programs are clues pointing to some important shifts in hegemony at the level of the social and cultural. These texts, therefore, serve as a kind of historical evidence, suggesting something about changing "structures of feeling," to use Raymond Williams's term for a culture's sense of life, its patterned way of thinking and feeling that can be located at the level of lived experience. Williams argues that we tend to notice changes in structures of feeling by the contrasts between generations:

> One generation may train its successor, with reasonable success, in the social character or the general cultural pattern, but the new generation will have its own structure of feeling, which will not appear to have come "from" anywhere. For here, most distinctly, the changing organization is enacted in the organism: the new generation responds in its own ways to the unique world it is inheriting, taking up many continuities, that can be traced, and reproducing many aspects of the organization, which can be separately described, yet feeling its whole life in certain ways differently, and shaping its creative response into a new structure of feeling.[22]

Although the elder generation did not smoothly train sixties youth "with reasonable success" to assume a pattern of social life already established, Williams's model can help describe a subtle process of social and cultural change. He argues that it is in "documentary culture" that we can most clearly get a sense of a previous culture's structure of feeling. Television, which is embedded in the everyday experiences of people within modern technological societies, is therefore a particularly useful place to trace this kind of change. These texts form a site for showcasing transformations as the structures of feeling as-

sociated with a new generation begin to be felt within the popular culture.

This study also benefits from Antonio Gramsci's theories about hegemony, particularly his argument that in order to maintain consent, hegemonic forces must, to some extent, accommodate and accede to positions associated with various subordinated formations whose consent is desired. Thus part of the hegemonic impulse is the perpetual attempt to incorporate positions, discourses, and practices that, although not necessarily in the interests of the socially and politically dominant, do not threaten their leadership positions.[23]

Particularly useful to me is Gramsci's idea of a "crisis of authority." During such a crisis the ruling elites are no longer able to naturalize their power, no longer able to lead. In effect they can only dominate, using coercive means rather than consensual methods attributable to a smoothly functioning hegemonic order. Subordinated groups no longer participate in validating the ruling classes in their positions as rulers. Dominant ideology is no longer accepted common sense. According to Gramsci, "the crisis consists precisely in the fact that the old is dying and the new cannot be born."[24] Nothing could describe what happened in the United States in the 1960s better than this. With increasing militancy as the decade progressed, young whites (both on campuses and in countercultural communities), young African Americans (both in ghettos and on campuses), women, Latinos, gays and lesbians formed insurgency movements that struck at the heart of the dominant social and political order—"the establishment"—questioning its legitimacy and revealing as myth many previously held tenets of what "America" was all about. The social order in the United States appeared to be unraveling, coming apart at the ideological seams. We can see examples of this in the steady dismantlement of prowar sentiment in the Lyndon Johnson White House or later in the increasingly antagonistic relationship between the Nixon White House and the mass media. Hegemonic forces in the political sphere no longer successfully asserted common cause with the cultural sphere. Universities as the intellectual sphere were in such disarray that they found themselves incapable of performing their ideological chores. Increasingly—as we will see especially in chapters 3 and 4—consensual strategies gave way to coercive tactics of a hegemonic system in peril. Television was intricately bound up in all this chaos. The crisis of hegemonic authority and legitimacy that wreaked

havoc through the universities, the ghettos, the military complex, and the political process also manifested itself within the popular-culture industry. If, as cultural studies scholars argue, popular culture is one of the key ideological sites where hegemony is negotiated, then during a crisis of authority television can provide a showcase of ideological breakdown and reconfiguration. By examining television during this period—as an institution, a body of texts, and a group of audiences—we can also explore the extent to which the hegemonic process, in attempting to reassert a new form of cultural leadership, needed to acquiesce to the discourses of the dissenting subordinate. How did popular television figure into the overall turmoil of the period? What was its role in hegemonic breakdown and in hegemonic reframing?[25]

Chapter 1 looks at the introduction of television into suburban homes at the very moment that the baby boom was demographically exploding. How did this relationship influence the ways sixties young people made sense of themselves as "the television generation"? The chapter considers the various ways these young people made sense of their alienation and rebellion by their suggestion that television had turned them into freaks. We look at how the theories of Marshall McLuhan were mobilized by young people in empowering ways to make sense of the generation gap. The chapter also discusses the various dissident uses of televisual technology—from trip toys to guerrilla television.

Chapter 2 examines the representation of hippies on prime-time television, charting the strategies used by the medium to "domesticate" the phenomenon after an initial period of television hippie hysteria. One particular strategy we will explore involves "feminizing" the counterculture in the figure of the "hippie chick." We will also look at how writers for the underground press reacted to these portrayals and how countercultural communities responded to the media spotlight that so intensely shone on them.

Chapter 3 looks at the most media-obsessed and teleliterate group within the burgeoning movement: the Yippies. The chapter analyzes how the Yippies believed they could actually organize disaffected youth through manipulating the media. We will also look at how contentious the Yippies' media tactics were within the movement. The chapter focuses particular attention on the televising of the Chicago Democratic Convention riots and how Yippies, network newscasters, Chicago's mayor, and movement youth struggled over

the meanings of that all-too-public moment of crisis and disarray. We will then look at how some activists saw television talk shows as a potential site to further manipulate the media and televise the struggle.

Chapter 4 documents the rise and fall of the only prime-time series to garner demonstrable youth movement support, *The Smothers Brothers Comedy Hour.* We will look at how the folksinger-comedian brothers began aligning themselves and their show more and more with antiwar and counterculture politics and how the threat this posed to network television led CBS to censor and then finally pull the show off the air. Like the televising of the Chicago Democratic Convention mêlée, we will examine how the confrontations around the Smothers Brothers show served as another venue for the playing out of an accelerating crisis of authority. The chapter examines the significant amount of attention the Smothers Brothers received in youth movement circles, the support, as well as suspicions, their case engendered.

Chapter 5 looks at another significant prime-time attempt to garner a countercultural youth audience and to appeal to youth politics—*The Mod Squad.* We look at the contentious development and production of the series and the suspicion, outrage, and, at times, grudging support the show generated in movement circles. As network television's initial attempt to do "socially relevant" dramatic programming by incorporating aspects of rebellious youth discourse, the series was part of an ideological process of negotiation. We will also look at the ways in which highly contentious and explosive issues like draft resistance and the My Lai massacre got massaged and mediated in fictionalized form in particular episodes of *The Mod Squad.* What can we say about the cultural politics of such mediations? Are they "victories" of a sort for the movement?

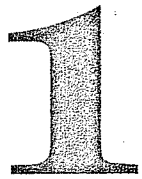
Chapter 6 examines the so-called Season of Social Relevance, the 1970/71 broadcast year, when all three broadcast networks tried to lure young, politicized viewers in an attempt to reconfigure the demographics of the viewing audience. We look at how the networks, working with *The Mod Squad* formula, performed acts of ideological negotiation by incorporating even more dissident youth discourse into entertainment programming. The chapter examines how and why "social relevance" appeared to fail and how it ultimately succeeded wildly when applied to the sitcom genre.

Chapter 7 considers the legacy of "social relevance" and the lasting impact that the sixties youth movement has had on American prime-time television. Has entertainment television lurched to the left? Have the social-change values of the 1960s become entrenched in popular entertainment, as many conservative critics have charged? In the 1980s and 1990s, how did prime time negotiate with the specter of the 1960s?

Because the chapters are not rigorously chronological and because not all readers will be equally familiar with the trajectory of events of the sixties, I have put together a narrative chronology of the years 1966 to 1971, the period under consideration in this book. I have also included in the chronology the airdates for most of the television shows discussed in these pages so that the reader can contextualize these examples of televisual culture with the social and political phenomena they were mediating.

So, without further ado, let us now turn on and tune in to the "Groove Tube."

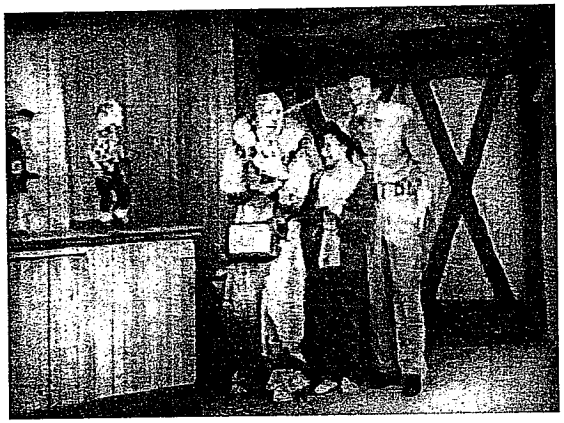
"Clarabell Was the First Yippie"



The Television Generation from *Howdy Doody* to McLuhan

In 1949 an enormous RCA Starrett television set arrived in the home of writer Donald Bowie. In his "confessions of a video kid" Bowie, who was four years old at the time, describes the momentous occasion and how the installation of the set drew children from around the neighborhood to his house. As the delivery men fiddled with the knobs, a picture came on. There was Buffalo Bob, a grown man in cowboy raiment talking to a boy puppet in similar garb. And there was the clown Clarabell squirting liquid from a seltzer bottle right into the face of "father figure" Buffalo Bob.[1] Remembers Bowie: "My friends and I were hypnotized on the spot." From the vantage point of adulthood Bowie hypothesizes that this children's series, *Howdy Doody,* "was leading us, while we were still in our single-digit years, toward adolescent rebellion."[2] Surely the lessons for the juvenile audience could only be a celebration of antisocial behavior and disrespect for adults.

Another baby boomer writer, Annie Gottlieb, also remembered bonding with television. Like Bowie, she, the members of her generation, and the new medium of television moved from "childhood" to "adolescence" together. She observed, "Television was growing up with us, slowly gaining skill at delivering the images that would make us one organism with a mass memory and mythology. When Ed hosted Elvis in 1956, TV entered its inhibited, yearning puberty along with us. I was ten, and, watching the famed manoeuvres of the



Howdy, Buffalo Bob, the Princess, and Clarabell with his subversive seltzer bottle.

Pelvis—primly censored just below the waist—I felt the first stirrings in my own."[3]

These baby boomer memories suggest a potentially subversive relationship between the medium and the first generation to come of age watching it. Bowie and Gottlieb described a symbiotic association: a television childhood learning antiestablishment values, a puberty sharing an interest in verboten sexuality. Television, as Gottlieb implied, forged baby boomers into a special community—one that recognized itself as such by the way its members all shared a common television culture.

Aging boomers reminiscing about their childhood from the vantage point of the 1980s were not, however, the only commentators who reflected on the special relationship between television and its first young viewers. A number of popular-press writers in the late 1940s and early 1950s pointed out the connection between TV and the tots. *The Nation* in a 1950 piece observed, "No Pied Piper ever proved so irresistible. If a television set is on at night and there is a child at large in the house, the two will eventually come together."[4] Television critic Robert Lewis Shayan also used the Pied Piper analogy in his *Saturday Review* piece about children and the new medium published that same year. He went on to characterize television as a genie, with its young viewers as Aladdins. Television would grant any wish, fulfill any dream—all at the touch of a dial. According to Shayan, one

of those wishes was access to the adult world. "The child wants to be 'in' on the exciting world of adult life," he argued. Television provided "the most accessible back door" to that world.[5] For these adult critics, then, the connection between fifties children and television was a cause for anxiety. There *was* something unprecedented in the relationship. But what did it mean, and where would it lead?

From the moment of television's introduction into the American home, it was discursively linked to the children. Television, a postwar technological phenomenon, and the baby boom, a postwar demographic phenomenon, both led to profound political, social, and cultural changes in the landscape of American life. Arriving in U.S. homes at about the same time in the late 1940s and 1950s, these electronic and anthropoid new members of the family circle seemed allied in fomenting social revolution.

In the 1960s the phrase "television generation," which had first been coined in the mid-1950s, would function as a site of semiotic struggle over the meanings of youth in revolt. Diverse voices—from within the rebellious youth movement itself; from academic ranks, both administrators and professorial theorists; from the television industry; and even from the nation's vice president—all attempted to make sense of young people's rejection of dominant institutions and values by examining the generation's link to television. All agreed that television was important, but few agreed on how or why. Reflecting the deep generational divide and the seemingly unbridgeable gap between the ways the disaffected young constructed the world and the ways their elders did, the discourses about the meaning of the "television generation" were equally irreconcilable. "Television" became a sign, another marker of a generational battle that ripped apart the smooth functioning of adult and establishment power in the postwar social order of the United States.

Coming of Age with Television

With the end of the Second World War and with the promise of prosperity not seen since before the stock market crash of 1929, Americans embarked on a procreation blitz that confounded demographers and social planners. The birth rate, which in the United States had been going down steadily since the 1800s, suddenly began to rival

birth rates in some Third World countries. The Great Depression had seen birth rates plunge because of the era's profound economic uncertainty. By the Second World War most able-bodied American men were in uniform, and many women were taking over the jobs those men had left. When war rationing was added to the picture, the situation did not prove conducive to the formation of families.

When the war ended, everything changed. Government propaganda and the advertising industry promised a return to normalcy, to stability. Women were encouraged to leave—or were forcibly removed from—the well-paying, often industrial, jobs they had held during the war effort. Government-sponsored advertising campaigns encouraged them to embrace domesticity and traditional modes of femininity along with maternity.[6] Yet couples in the postwar period largely embraced a domestic ideal of rigid gender roles and focus on family building as a response to the severe dislocations associated with the Depression, world war, and the new terrors of nuclear annihilation. Paired with a cold war policy preoccupied with the containment of a (communist) threat was a domestic preoccupation with containing myriad other threats to stability. "In the domestic version of containment," writes historian Elaine Tyler May, "the 'sphere of influence' was the home. Within its walls, potentially dangerous social forces of the new age might be tamed, where they could contribute to the secure and fulfilling life to which postwar women and men aspired."[7] In facilitating the creation of such homes, the federal government offered low interest loans for returning vets to pay for inexpensive, no-money-down bungalows in expanding suburbs. To the largely white and middle-class beneficiaries of this largesse, the brand-new subdivisions they moved into with their homogenous and uniform character seemed tailor-made shelters from upheaval, social struggle, and change. They also were tailor-made for the creation of nuclear families. The white, affluent baby boom generation, which precipitated so much upheaval, struggle, and demand for change in the 1960s, ironically was nurtured in an environment that found such turmoil anathema.

In the postwar period Americans linked the promotion of stability with the promotion of consumerism. If General Motors was doing well, then (at least according to the head of GM), America was doing well. American industry's return from a war-based to a consumer product–based market necessitated an expanding population

of buyers. As Vice president Richard Nixon's 1959 "kitchen debate" with Soviet Premier Nikita Khrushchev implied, American superiority over the Soviet Union lay in the U.S. population's ability and eagerness to purchase household appliances. So as "homeward bound" Americans moved into their ranch-style, prefab houses, their generation went on both a baby-making and a product-buying binge.

One of the products they bought was television. Ironically, however, this new purchase would not serve as a tool for stability. Television would prove to be a force for change and upheaval just as would the suburban boomer children who so thoroughly embraced and found themselves linked to the new medium. As birth rates skyrocketed, so did rates of first-time television purchases. In 1951 almost one quarter of American homes had televisions; by 1957 that figure had jumped to 78.6 percent. By the early 1960s the medium had achieved a near saturation rate of 92 percent.[8] The single greatest factor in determining television purchase was the presence of young children in the household. According to statistics, between the years 1952 and 1954 childless families made up 19 percent of new television households; families with teenagers accounted for 23 percent; and families with young children made up the largest percentage. Parents with children under two made up 32 percent of television purchasers.[9] This latter group comprised the parents of baby boomers. Another study showed that although entertainment was given as the primary reason for the purchase of a set, pressure from young children was also a key factor.[10]

The introduction of television into postwar homes created cultural anxieties marked by both utopian hopes and dystopian fears.[11] Many of those hopes and fears revolved around the perceived effects of the new medium on children. Cultural historian James Gilbert has argued that in the 1950s mass media such as television became linked with anxieties about social and generational change. New forms of commercialized youth-oriented popular culture seemed to be erecting barriers to mark off a new youth culture incomprehensible and potentially hostile to adult society.[12] In both the pessimistic and the optimistic arguments about television and its effects, commentators and critics couldn't help but assume that some fundamental change to the nation's young would inevitably result.

In the utopian vision of the new medium, television would bring the outside world into the home. Television sets were promoted for

their ability to be "your new window on the world" and to bring faraway places into the home theater.[13] Those touting the benefits of television for children echoed this theme. Douglas Edwards, a CBS news analyst writing in *Parents* magazine in 1951, proclaimed: "With television today, the children get a sense of participation, of belonging. Contemporary events are brought to them in their homes. Korea is more than a tiny colored nose jutting out of the broad Asiatic face into the blue sea shown on a map in a geography book. . . . The chances are thousands to one that when you were a kid you never saw a President of the United States being inaugurated, [or] the great political parties holding their national nominating conventions."[14] It is unlikely that Edwards, with his purple prose, could have imagined the impact on those same children two decades later, when television broadcast images of another war in a southeast Asian country and when the medium televised another national political convention—that of the Democrats in Chicago in 1968.

The theme of television providing children with "a sense of participation, of belonging" was particularly important. In the conformist 1950s, when fitting in and being part of the group were not only signs of proper personal adjustment but were also signs of good citizenship, having television meant fitting in. Edwards undoubtedly thought television allowed children to participate in the larger world of social and political events and that they would feel a sense of belonging to a world made smaller and more comprehensible through the new medium.

However, in the 1950s this notion of "belonging" through the purchase of a television set implied necessary and successful conformity. Baby boom children conformed by becoming television children. The advertising industry helped to construct the concept of a television generation by manufacturing parental fears that children without television would carry a "bruise deep inside."[15] One notorious ad campaign pictured woebegone children who didn't have their own TV sets. The bruise that such children bore meant being "set apart from their contemporaries."[16] In the social climate of the 1950s nothing could be worse. Thus television became one means by which to link this segment of the population together. Baby boomers would not only have their huge numbers in common; they would also have their shared rearing with the television set to knit them together. Television, according to social scientific research of the period and

according to the discourses of the advertising industry, was primarily something for the children. Children without television were pitiful outcasts among their peer group. Therefore, being a well-adjusted, "normal" child in the 1950s meant possessing and watching one's own television set. And so the television generation was born.

Even as television was touted for its ability to set off a new generation of youngsters as more worldly and sophisticated than their parents' generation, the medium was also promoted as facilitating family togetherness. Rather than setting children off as different and incomprehensible to the older generation, television would unite all its members into a unified nuclear unit characterized by harmony and shared activities. Lynn Spigel, in her examination of advertisements for early televisions in women's magazines, shows how the industry attempted to speak to postwar Americans' desires for a return to "family values." "The advertisements suggested that television would serve as a catalyst for the return to a world of domestic love and affection."[17] This promise may have been all the more seductive considering the dislocations and tensions of the war years and the immediate postwar period. Television-inspired family togetherness could be particularly useful in knitting children and adolescents firmly into the family circle. Parents and children would bond over their shared enjoyment of programming, thus eradicating any generation gaps. Television would also prevent potential juvenile delinquency by keeping "problem children" off the streets. Audience research suggested that parents believed having a television in the home kept the young ones from trouble outside. Proclaimed a mother from Atlanta: "We are closer together. We find our entertainment at home. Donna and her boyfriend sit here instead of going out now."[18] Presumably without the television Donna and her beau would be prowling dark alleys, fornicating in the backseat of a Chevy, or mugging old ladies.

Despite these utopian visions of children's protoglobal villages and family TV circles, pessimistic fears abounded. Rather than bringing the young and their parental generation together, television, a frequently circulated anxiety asserted, created an unbridgeable cultural chasm between the two. Well-known social critic David Reisman acknowledged the gap in a *New York Times* article in 1952 but sided with the TV-molded young. He was quoted arguing that "refusing to consider the possibility that there can be anything of value in the average television program amounts to an announcement on parents'

parts that they live in a different psychological and cultural generation from their children. If they cannot in good conscience share television and discuss the programs with their children . . . they should at least allow their youngsters the right to live within reason in their own cultural generation, not their parents'."[19]

This notion of a cultural divide marking off the television generation from its forebears is central to James Gilbert's book on mass media and the juvenile delinquency panic of the 1950s. The trend toward a separate, peer group–oriented, culturally autonomous "youth culture," already developing at least since the 1920s, had by the 1950s achieved an unprecedented degree of social coherence and economic power.[20] The consumer product industry had discovered youth as an identifiable market group, and, as baby boom historian Landon Jones points out, these youngsters were the first generation to be so targeted and courted by advertisers: "Marketing, and especially television, *isolated* their needs and wants from those of their parents. From the cradle, the baby boomers had been surrounded by products created especially for them, from Silly Putty to Slinkys to skateboards."[21] This isolation could appear menacing to adults. Consumer culture and mass media encouraged and even fostered styles, fads, language, and—by implication—values and attitudes that appeared to place young people outside the dominant social and moral order. Gilbert notes a study on delinquency published in 1960 suggesting that this more middle-class form of delinquency "derived in part from an emerging youth culture fostered by a communications revolution and a burgeoning youth market following World War II. Its characteristics were pleasure and hedonism, values that sharply undercut the beliefs of parents. In other words, delinquency was an issue of generational struggle."[22] Rather than bringing the postwar family together into a harmonious circle in which adult norms and values would be unquestionably accepted, commercial culture—and television in particular—drove a wedge into that circle.

Television seemed to destabilize the family circle by threatening parental authority and traditional parent-child roles. A frequently repeated worry during the 1950s was that television exposed impressionable, innocent youngsters too soon to a world of adult concerns. One study of children's viewing preferences found that by age seven children were watching a large amount of programming aimed primarily at adults. Variety shows such as Milton Berle's *Texaco Star Theater* and situation comedies such as *I Love Lucy* were particular favorites.[23] Berle even began to sign off his show with exhortations to the young ones to go promptly to bed after the show.[24]

According to media accounts, many parents expressed concern about how children were interacting with this new "guest" in the living room. Dorothy Barclay, writing in the *New York Times Magazine,* discussed the fear that television would supplant parents as the ultimate source of knowledge for youngsters: "Children get a great deal of important and accurate information from television . . . but is it too easy? Is this kind of learning more or less apt to stick? Is it too easily accepted? 'I saw it on TV' is now a statement of authority competing strongly with 'My mother told me.'"[25]

Parental authority, therefore, would be usurped by a fun, new gadget that required of children no discipline, no work, no discrimination. Television revealed a world of adult concerns and adult entertainment previously hidden from innocent eyes, but it also, potentially, threatened the whole structure of adult knowledge and wisdom as the final legitimizer of parental authority.[26]

Pessimistic commentators also viewed television as a "loudmouthed guest [who] had settled himself in a corner and [had] begun to tell raucous and unsuitable stories to the children."[27] Parental authority was threatened again because, as Barclay noted in another article in the *New York Times Magazine,* parents in the new permissive climate of child rearing were unsure how to intercede between their children and the raucous guest. Controlling a child's television choices seemed censorious, even undemocratic.[28]

These views suggest an alliance between young children and the new medium that excluded parental authority—and also that of the school system. One of the most pervasive fears (one that continues to this day) was that television took children away from their schoolwork. Time spent watching the box meant time spent not doing homework. Late evenings spent watching Uncle Miltie meant fatigued and inattentive days in the classroom.

Fears that television was exposing youngsters to an uncensored adult world and that traditional authority was being subverted by the children's relationship to the new medium led Joseph Klapper to suggest an added danger perpetuated by television. Television would result in "premature maturity."[29] Klapper, a media effects researcher from the Lazarsfeld school of communications study, worried that

not enough popular attention was being given to this danger, which had child psychiatrists deeply concerned. He and other analysts worried that television gave youngsters a distorted view of adulthood or that it helped in "creating and building in the child the concept that adults in general are frequently in trouble, frequently deceitful, mean, and, perhaps most important, very unsure of themselves and in fact incompetent to handle many of the situations which descend upon them."[30] Such portrayals may have reduced the amount of time children viewed adults as omniscient and caused them to find the real world of their elders wanting and full of shortcomings.[31]

The idea of premature maturity held within it an essentialized notion of childhood innocence that television threatened. Children would no longer be real children. In this vision "real" children were submissive to adult authority, and the boundaries between the realm of childhood and that of adulthood were clearly marked and rigidly maintained. Television's intrusion blurred those boundaries. The other side to this argument was the fear that parents would no longer be true parents because traditional notions of adult authority were supposedly being undermined along with the very right of adults to be authoritarian. If the new medium threatened to rob baby boomers of their traditional childhood, what on earth would this do to them? Leo Bogart meditated on the danger of premature maturity: "One wonders: Will reality match up to the television fantasies this generation has been nursed on? These children are in a peculiar position; experience is exhausted in advance. There is little they have not seen or done or lived through, and yet this is second-hand experience. When the experience itself comes, it is watered down, for it has already been half-lived, but never truly felt."[32]

By the mid-to-late 1960s, when the first wave of baby boomers hit college campuses, numerous answers were offered up to explain how this generation was or was not dealing with a reality that proved so different from its television fantasies. For this generation had not turned out as expected. In 1959 University of California president Clark Kerr had asserted: "The employers will love this generation. They aren't going to press any grievances. . . . There aren't going to be any riots."[33] He was mistaken. Large numbers of middle-class, white baby boomers who came to adolescence and young adulthood in this period helped cause a social, cultural, and political crisis unlike anything seen in American history since the Civil War. Indeed, the

United States from around 1966 to 1971 convulsed through a generational civil war.[34] Over and over again the question arose: how had this happened? How had this generation—the most wanted, the best housed and fed, the best educated, the most economically privileged group of young white people ever raised in this most prosperous of nations—turned into such a raucous, riotous, disrespectful, distrustful, disaffected bunch of potential revolutionaries?[35]

One answer was television. Depending on one's point of view, television was to be either praised or blamed for causing or assisting in the disaffected nature of many sixties youth. Understandably, adult commentators despaired and raged at television's effects on youth—that concern went back to the 1950s. More interesting was the fact that a significant number of disaffected young people—activists at antiwar rallies, writers for the underground press, video "guerrillas"—were also making sense of their generation's rebelliousness through its relationship to television. As the next section illustrates, activist youth, seeing their generation in revolt, looked back to their fifties childhoods spent watching *Howdy Doody,* sitcoms, game shows, and other programming. That experience served as a powerful explanatory mechanism to account for their profound alienation from and revolt against the dominant social order.

Television: Revolutionary Instigator?

This sense of shared consciousness via television was poignantly demonstrated in a speech delivered at the 1967 March on the Pentagon. Thousands of mostly young antiwar protesters had managed to swarm onto the grounds of the Pentagon and found themselves face-to-face with bayonet-wielding federal troops of their own age group. Yippie activist Stew Albert tried to appeal to the soldiers. He suggested a link between the troops and the protesters by appealing to their presumably common (masculine) history:

> We grew up in the same country, and we're about the same age. We're really brothers because we grew up listening to the same radio programs and TV programs, and we have the same ideals. It's just this fucked-up system that keeps us apart.
>
> I didn't get my ideas from Mao, Lenin or Ho Chi Minh. I got

> my ideals from the Lone Ranger. You know the Lone Ranger always fought on the side of good and against the forces of evil and injustice. He never shot to kill![36]

Albert presumed that, as the television generation, those on either side of the bayonets shared a cultural link. Their childhoods spent with broadcast media should have instilled in them similar values and ideals, including a Lone Ranger who was essentially a nonviolent crusader for social justice. Albert's vision of a generation united through radio and television ignored, of course, divisions of class and race and evacuated women from the process entirely. Television was the great unifier, used by Albert as a rhetorical trope to reach across an adult-created, artificial "system" that inappropriately divided media brothers.[37] Albert and many other New Left activists refused to see that the federal troops guarding the Pentagon, like the young men most likely to find themselves in Vietnam, came from a very different class position. They may have watched much of the same television programming; however, they most likely formed very different interpretations of what they saw.

Although it may seem odd that an antiwar activist would attempt to persuade armed soldiers that they and their antiwar cogenerationists were on the same side because of television, the rhetoric wasn't entirely absurd. We need to take into account one of the dominant ways people in this period made sense of television as a medium. Four years earlier television had provided four days of continuous, uninterrupted coverage of the assassination and funeral of President John F. Kennedy. The networks made much of their medium's ability to keep the nation together in a collective, shared experience of grief and loss.[38] One of the dominant circulated meanings of the coverage emphasized the power of the medium to forge viewers together into a unit. Nine out of ten members of the baby boom watched the coverage. As the first television generation, they were far more affected by the death of a vigorous, youthful president and its presentation on the medium with which they had grown up. The assassination served as an experience that united the generation—and the uniting process happened through the experience of watching television.[39] Thus when Stew Albert appealed to his "brothers" on the other side of the bayonets, his rhetoric took for granted the unifying powers of

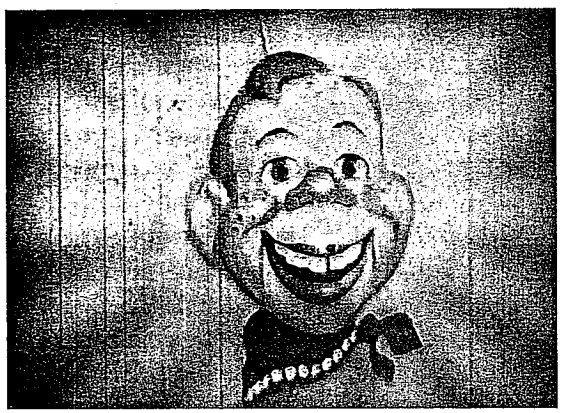
broadcast communication to instill similar experiences and values in members of the TV generation, no matter what social roles its various members occupied.

Whereas Albert invoked the television program *The Lone Ranger* to explain the values all members of his generation shared, other youthful commentators used their exposure to fifties programming to slightly different ends. Some used television to explain how many in their age group had rejected the values and lifestyles of their parents and how seemingly innocuous shows had, in fact, served subversive ends in fomenting the later full-scale rebellion.

Jeff Greenfield, graduate of the University of Wisconsin, wrote an article for the *New York Times Magazine* in 1971 as a member of the "first television generation" looking back to the programming of the 1950s.[40] Confirming Klapper's fears about premature maturity, Greenfield claimed that television had a particularly subversive influence on the young "because of what it showed us of the way our Elders really thought and spoke and acted when not conscious of the pieties with which children are to be soothed and comforted." He argued that from *I Love Lucy* and *My Little Margie* his generation learned that domestic life was dominated by dishonesty, fear, and pretence; from shows like *The Price Is Right,* baby boomers learned about greed; from the quiz show scandals they learned about the commodity exchange of wisdom and the fraudulence of that wisdom.[41]

Greenfield's article appeared to confirm what Klapper and his fellow analysts had warned: television had helped to solidify for the youth of America a disdain of the adult world. From Greenfield's perspective entertainment television of the 1950s provided an accurate representation of the hypocritical values of the older generation. Fifties sitcoms and game shows were anything but innocuous, escapist entertainment. They were instructive pieces of information that young people could use to make sense of their world—a world they did not want to perpetuate.

Eric Bonner, writing in Atlanta's underground paper the *Great Speckled Bird,* also meditated on the impact of watching fifties television. Like Greenfield, he also stated that the subjection of American youth to mass media resulted in their premature development. But whereas fifties analysts like Klapper and Bogart feared the potential effects of this process, Bonner celebrated it. He hypothesized that



"Good boy" Howdy and "father figure" Buffalo Bob; *Howdy Doody,* a terrain of contested baby boomer meanings.

whereas the maturation process had taken a good twenty years for previous generations, the youth of the sixties, through their exposure to television, had completed the process by age ten:

> Television, a system so efficient that by age ten we had gathered "it" all (IT being everything necessary to function as Americans.) But Mum and Dud [*sic*] could not see that we had a better grasp of reality than they. "*Captain Video*"? Don't be ridiculous, go watch Tee Vee, kid. . . . So we did and the TV sucked up new information from the environment and fed it to us, and we ate and ate until we burst. . . . WE WERE FORCED INTO MATURITY YEARS BEFORE OUR CULTURE REQUIRED IT, BY OUR ELECTRIC ENVIRONMENT. . . . [ellipses in original][42]

Whereas Greenfield believed that television destroyed the traditional maturation process by providing subversive representations of the world the young were to inherit, Bonner believed that television had done too good a job: ". . . we had swallowed all the red, white and blue myths that Miss Jane and Buffalo Bob could invent and we were ready to spit them back out on the world. Little Marines all!!" Unfortunately there was no place yet for these prematurely grown-up youngsters within the mature community. All they could do was to continue watching television and continue being fed the same myths. Eventually, according to Bonner's eccentric theory, having been surfeited, they burst forth in "Holy Revolt," presumably having discovered, unlike the older generation, that the myths were lies. Bonner made sense of the youth counterculture as the result of those who, through years of television viewing, had been made just "too hip, too aware to 'take over' the old insane mess."[43]

Greenfield performed a markedly different reading, specifically of the generational meaning of *Howdy Doody,* than Bonner—although they shared a desire to appropriate the popular baby boomer children's show as a vehicle to explain why the members of the Peanut Gallery were dropping acid, disrespecting police officers and other authority figures, growing their hair long, and raucously protesting their nation's war policy. For Greenfield *Howdy Doody* did not attempt to instill patriotism in its childish audience. On the contrary, the primary theme of *Howdy Doody* was that "*the villain was always a Grown-Up in Authority.*" Phineas T. Bluster and the Inspector were law-enforcement villains and figures of baleful Authority. Howdy Doody himself was a fink—telling children to wash and to listen to their parents. The clown, Clarabell, on the other hand, was a figure of liberation, embodying the spirit of freedom: "Clarabell, the first Yippie, was the true hero of the show. Where did the War Baby generation get the inspiration to hurl marshmallows at Strom Thurmond and a pie at Clark Kerr. From the works of Lenin? From a footnote in Marcuse? Nonsense. From the inspiration of that genuine free spirit, that revolutionary foe of authority and good conduct, from Clarabell."[44] Greenfield's interpretation echoes Donald Bowie's suggestion

that *Howdy Doody* was leading the young into eventual rebellion. From a different perspective Greenfield's rhetorical ploy echoed Stew Albert's argument about the significance of *The Lone Ranger.* Both were at pains to disavow their rebellion from connection with the hoary old leftist European tradition of Marxism, the Russian Revolution, or the thoughts of Chairman Mao. Their revolution did not come out of the books of leftist theorists. Their revolution sprang from good old American popular culture.

The meanings that some sixties youths made of their relationship to television directly challenged preferred views. The writers quoted above took many of the fears first expressed by child psychologists and popular-press writers in the 1950s and turned them on their heads. Would television affect children's deference to the authority of their elders? Yes, these baby boomers asserted. And how liberating that was. These young people took useful and empowering meanings from television as the medium, the institution, and the programming with which they had grown up. Television validated their right (even their need) to rebel. Television, from this viewpoint, had helped bring it all about.

Michael Shamberg provided another voice explaining how television delegitimized the adult generation. Shamberg, a "media guerrilla," was part of a movement of young activists who wanted to use video as a tool of the movement.[45] Discussing the gulf between the "media-children" and "pre-Media Americans" in his book *Guerrilla Television,* he explained how television as a medium subverted the whole notion of deference to authority for young people:

> We get too much news to accept authority based on restriction of information flow. Yet pre-Media-Americans are conditioned to trust authority because "the President knows more than we do." Nonetheless our video sense of death in Vietnam is no less vivid than the President's.
>
> Agnew's attacks on television are successful with pre-Media-Americans who are anxious because they know too much and yet believe that authority is based on someone knowing more than they do.[46]

According to Shamberg, television (specifically its corporate/capitalist structure) had succeeded in teaching the television generation to question all authority. Media-children's sophistication in "reading"

television and seeing the gaps in the flow of information separated them from their elders, who believed what they were told.

Miller Francis Jr., in the *Great Speckled Bird,* also explored the subversiveness of television in relation to Vice President Agnew's diatribe against the medium. (Agnew delivered a widely reported speech in Des Moines, Iowa, castigating the network news media for their perceived bias against the White House.)[47] Francis explained the nature of the medium in a particularly provocative way:

> After a couple of decades of exposure to the medium of television, the Amerikan [*sic*] system of corporate capitalism finally sits up and takes notice of a subversive in its midst—a child it has taken for granted as its own. . . .
>
> TV is a problem child in this context [of Agnew's attack]; indeed, television and Law & Order make strange, if not impossible bedfellows. . . .
>
> Television is probably the single most crucial unruly thread that is unravelling the whole fabric of American power both at home and abroad. . . . Enter a freak, an electronic monster that grooves not on "reason," "unity," "objectivity," "responsibility," "the negotiating table," "normality," and least of all on "the politics of progress through local compromise" but instead perversely revels in "instant gratification," "querulous criticism," "challenging and contradicting," "controversy," "the irrational," "action," "excitement," "drama," and "brutality and violence." . . . [Francis's quotes were all taken from Agnew's speech.][48]

Apparently following a strategy of "the enemy of my enemy is my friend," Francis embraced television because the Nixon administration despised it. Television, from this perspective, exhibited the same antiestablishment characteristics possessed by protesting youth —whom Nixon and Agnew also despised. Presumably the political power structure of adult America could make no sense of the two "freaks" in its midst. Born and raised together as "problem children," sixties youth and television appeared to embody the same basic values. Francis's use of television to think through the yawning ideological gap between antiauthoritarian youth and the adult power bloc was similar to Shamberg's. Both saw television as an active agent in creating the division between the generations. On one side of the TV line were those pretelevision lovers of law and order. On the other side were those reared on two decades of TV-disseminated mayhem,

shoot-'em-ups, and instantly gratified pleasure. Francis seemed less concerned than Shamberg that television as a medium and an industry was controlled by the very same corporate/capitalist system that the Nixon-Agnew administration defended and represented.

For commentators like Francis—as well as Greenfield, Bonner, Yippies such as Albert, and others—television escaped the ability of those in power to control it, just like the nation's rebellious young were incapable of being controlled. They had been raised in their suburban neighborhoods to respect those in authority, to be obedient workers who wouldn't question hierarchy, and to reproduce the conformist, sterile world created by their parents' generation. Similarly television was supposed to be the great force for cultural indoctrination. An ideological hypodermic needle, it was supposed to inject its viewers with dominant views sanctioned by the social and political order. As Greenfield observed: "Television should have been a part of the pattern of increasing control of tastes and opinion; a source not of the greatest freedom of which rulers speak when a new tool for the amplification of their voice is discovered, but a new source of blandness, and imposed acquiescence to the will of the Elders."[49] But as Greenfield further noted, the first generation weaned on television didn't turn into a bland, acquiescent lot. This development could only mean that television wasn't doing what it was supposed to be doing—any more than many children of the baby boom were doing what they were supposed to be doing. Television and the children of the tube were both subverting the social order they were supposed to uphold.

Marshall McLuhan: Guru to the Television Generation

Members of the disaffected youth generation of the 1960s, such as those quoted above, were not without assistance in their attempts to make sense of their relationship to television. Marshall McLuhan, professor and director of the Center for Culture and Technology at the University of Toronto, found himself one of the most quoted and analyzed social theorists of the 1960s. His books, especially *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man,* became best-sellers despite their often dense prose; NBC attempted an hour-long documentary to explain his theories; *Newsweek* put him on the cover of the magazine;

and the youth movement, especially those who aligned themselves more with the hippie counterculture than with the New Left, appropriated portions of his theories to validate themselves. Of all the social thinkers and theories influencing the youth movements of the 1960s, none was as pervasive as McLuhan. His name and his aphorisms, along with attempts to explain his theories, can be found generously sprinkled throughout the underground press. No other figure who was not of the movement itself received so much positive notice in the alternative newspapers that served dissident youth communities.[50]

Why McLuhan? A writer in New York's hippie-oriented *East Village Other* supplied one answer: "We, the underground, have found another wizard to enlighten our movement. Not that we give a fuck about more self-justification (our existence is justification enough) but just so we can give the establishment some food for thought, we can cram Marshall McLuhan down their throat and watch them vomit."[51] McLuhan was a weapon. An establishment-sanctioned and respected professor, McLuhan's theories—as mobilized by the youth movement—damned their elders and the entire established social system while praising insurgent youth culture and youth values as the inevitable wave of the future. Whether the movement wanted or needed self-justification is debatable. Its writers used McLuhan as though it did. To understand why McLuhan and his media theories were so attractive, we need to examine some of McLuhan's theories and how they were appropriated by sectors of the youth movement for their own ends.

McLuhan believed that the introduction of electronic media, television in particular, had radically altered all aspects of social life. Print-based Western culture, which had been dominant since the invention of movable type, had finally been replaced. The new electronic culture had more in common with oral-based, tribal cultures of the pre-Renaissance period. McLuhan's vision of electronic tribalism involved television and other media's shrinking of space and their helping to foster interdependence to such an extent that the earth would now function as a global village.

This idea of a new tribalism resonated strongly with many who identified themselves with the hippie counterculture. Hippies aligned themselves (often simplistically) with Native Americans and saw themselves as a tribe. When the hip community of the Haight-

Ashbury staged the first "Be-In" to bring together both hippies and Berkeley politicos, the organizers billed it as "a gathering of the tribes."[52] The event's famous poster featured a lone Indian astride a horse and carrying an electric guitar.

Robert Roberts's piece explaining McLuhan's importance to the movement in the *East Village Other* crystallized how hippie youth were taking up McLuhan's idea of tribes:

> We, the electric-age generation, have been the first to feel the impact of the retribalizing effect of the new multi-media environment. We grew up with television, which fed our brains with millions of black and white dots electronically arranged and rearranged into microsecond patterns and images. . . . We are in the age of gestalt and shape. We are no longer die-cast parts of a national mechanism. We are a tribe.
>
> We are the new breed of American Indian who smoke grass and hash and drop peyote as a tribal ritual. . . . We are the reincarnation of oral, pre-literate man. . . .[53]

The hippies and freaks of the East Village and of the Haight-Ashbury were, thus, harbingers of social and cultural change. Created by interaction with television, they were the shape of things to come. McLuhan had said so. They embodied not only the appearance of a tribe but the cognitive processes and values described by McLuhan as characteristic of the electronic age.

Critical for McLuhan was the distinction between the "message" of print media and the "message" of electronic media. Print was linear, one thing at a time, detached, rational, and visually motivated. Electronic media were everything-all-at-once, holistic, involving, irrational, and tactile. The dominance of one media form or the other shaped the culture as a whole, created its "bias."

Youthful appropriators of McLuhan eagerly latched onto this binary in order to make sense of their disaffection from dominant values. McLuhan, seeing his theory apparently manifesting itself concretely in the guise of the youth movement, was more than happy to provide the appropriate explanation. In *The Medium is the Massage,* a picture-filled, bite-sized overview of his major theoretical points, McLuhan observed: "Youth instinctively understands the present environment—the electric drama. It lives mythically and in depth. This is the reason for the great alienation between generations."[54]

The adult generation remained print-mired. We have already seen McLuhanite media guerrilla Michael Shamberg work with this binary. At another point Shamberg noted: "The 1960s were a Pearl Harbor of the senses. Whole new technologies conditioned us from birth to relate to a world which was not that of our parents' childhood. It came as a sneak attack because print-man, impervious to his own bias, was unable to perceive that any time there is a radical shift in the dominant communications medium of a culture, there's going to be a radical shift in that culture."[55] The radical shift in the culture was a shift toward "Orientalism."[56] Irrationality, non-linearity, holistic approaches to constructing reality—all these both McLuhan and counterculture youth attributed to Eastern cultures. Sixties youth, in their rejection of the corporate-consumerist culture of Western late capitalism, embraced versions of Eastern philosophy. Particularly among participants in the psychedelic community, those philosophies seemed to provide a more appropriate way to make sense of a hallucinogenic experience.

Of crucial importance here is the neat fit between McLuhan's description of the new electronic culture and the hippies' perception of their drug-inspired counterculture. Although not all those who aligned themselves with the youth movement embraced the psychedelicism of the hippie lifestyle, it is no exaggeration to assert that youth culture as a whole, from the SDS politicos on the campuses to the suburban "weekend hippie" in middle America, identified drug use as a key component of youth culture.[57] Pot, magic mushrooms, peyote buttons, mescaline, Orange Sunshine LSD—all these mind-altering drugs were a defining element of what the youth rebellion meant. More to the point, drug use facilitated the rejection of Western rationalism. The essence of an LSD trip for many acidheads was the embrace of irrationalism, the heightening of one's tactile sense, the feeling of being at one with the world and one's fellow trippers. Drug culture heightened for young people the very cultural attributes McLuhan believed television had ushered in. A female student at Columbia, quoted by *Newsweek,* clarified the connection by explaining that reading McLuhan was like taking LSD: "It can turn you on. . . . LSD doesn't mean anything until you consume it—likewise McLuhan."[58]

Tactility was one of the new cultural attributes McLuhan believed television had ushered in. With almost perverse logic McLuhan

claimed that television, as an "extension of man," extended one's sense of touch, not one's sense of vision.[59] Miller Francis Jr. seized on this notion to differentiate his generation from the previous one: "A generation raised on assimilation of the electronic experience of television is not a visual (Marcuse's 'one-dimensional man') generation but is instead a generation plunged into a depth relationship with every facet of their world."[60] Robert Roberts also saw the empowering qualities of tactility over vision: "We are a tactile generation who groove on touching. . . . We grow our hair long because we don't need visual distinctions any longer."[61]

Another writer for the *Bird* zeroed in on McLuhan's observations that television was moving society away from print culture and all that it signified. The writer, Dennis Jarrett, examined the issue by quoting the ponderings of John Densmore, one of the members of the rock group the Doors. Densmore noted that today's young people were not a reading generation; they dug what was happening because "they just take it, like McLuhan says—the whole thing." Jarrett went on to explain:

> That means two things: 1) That we're not a reading generation, and 2) that we accept irrationality in language without fussing around for hidden meanings. In this regard, Densmore points out that when Jim Morrison sings "meet me at the back of the blue bus," he doesn't know, literally, any more about that blue bus than you do. Yet the blue bus functions as an image. This is almost impossible for anyone of the Brooks & Warren generation (you know who you are) to understand. . . .
>
> McLuhan in *The Gutenberg Galaxy, The Mechanical Bride,* and *Understanding Media* discusses, if that's the right word, exactly the kind of statement John Densmore made. Why are we getting away from the printed word? Why are we forming tribes? Why are we open to the irrational?[62]

It seemed that significant numbers of sixties youth were "open" to all manner of things incomprehensible to the older generation. McLuhan was useful because he explained the cultural and perceptual chasm that divided youth from everyone else in a way that appeared to favor youth culture and youth values and that proclaimed that given time and a few more television generations, youth culture and values would prevail.

But that was still in the future. In the 1960s the young people of the baby boom were still the only segment of the population molded by television into new tribal creatures. Consequently, they were mutants. Echoing Miller Francis's yoking together of television and its youthful progeny as freaks and problem children, Robert Roberts saw the children of the electric age as "hideous offspring, reared on a diet of super-technology, and now rejected as deformities. We are the mutants who've been bombarded by speed-of-electron media and metamorphozed [*sic*] into a tribal society that the establishment, ironically finds repulsive."[63]

The establishment did indeed find the tribalized youth movement repulsive. According to a Lou Harris poll, "college protesters" were the most despised group in America, more detested than prostitutes, atheists, and homosexuals.[64] Marshall McLuhan was in a small minority of authoritative adult voices who seemed to speak in positive tones about the nation's rebellious young people. Other critics also wanted to explain how the pampered tots of the fifties had turned into the hellions of the sixties. Many, like McLuhan, pointed to television. Their ideas, however, would have had few empowering possibilities for sixties rebels. We need to examine this discourse, however, in order to show how television could embody such contradictory meanings by differently situated commentators. This discourse also shows the many ways the medium was constructed as a culprit to explain youth rebellion, the generation gap, and sociopolitical upheaval.

Blaming Television

Many observers of the youth movement commented on the impact of television in creating rebelliousness among the young, but S. I. Hayakawa made a veritable career of it. Hayakawa was both a noted semanticist and president of San Francisco State during its bloody and violent four-month student strike. Ruthlessly prevailing over the strikers, Hayakawa, with his trademark tam-o'-shanter, became a national hero in some circles.[65] His opinions about how television had caused youth unrest circulated widely.

TV Guide, in two separate editorials, quoted from an extensively publicized speech he delivered at the convention of the American

Psychological Association in 1969. In the speech Hayakawa blamed the sheer volume of television consumed by young people throughout their lives for the mayhem they were wreaking on the social order. By the time they reached eighteen years American youth had watched at least twenty-two thousand hours of television, he proclaimed.[66] Other commentators picked up on this statistic as if it alone explained the problem. Hayakawa declared that all this viewing activity was essentially a passive experience. Young people sat absorbing rather than interacting. All that passive absorbing resulted in a generation that could not relate to parents, the older generation ("the establishment"), or anyone but themselves.[67]

Hayakawa's theory of television spectatorship and the young differed in notable ways from McLuhan's. McLuhan said that television was highly participatory—far more than print. With its low definition, television as a medium required viewers to fill in the gaps, make meaningful a random series of flickering dots. McLuhan and Hayakawa came to the same general conclusion—the experience of television watching had made young people rebel against the established social order. The difference was that one saw the experience as active and empowering, and the other saw it as passive and destructive. One saw the resultant rebellion as salutary to the culture, the other as frightening and regressive.

McLuhan and his young acolytes weren't the only ones who saw television watching as a participatory rather than a passive activity. John Sloan Dickey, retiring president of Dartmouth College, who had been evicted from his office during a recent student occupation of the administration building, took a generally positive tone. He said that young people became participants in knowing society's imperfections by seeing them on television. "Kids see this now and act in it. They're participants. Television makes it real, personal, not just book stuff. And that makes it much more important for them to act."[68] In a sense Dickey's view seemed more consistent and logical. Active spectators became active agents. Hayakawa's theory rested on the conclusion that an essentially dull, idle, and indolent state of being before a television set would result in frenzied, out-of-control turmoil in the streets.

Vice President Spiro T. Agnew, continuing his attack on television, also felt the need to explain how the medium had caused youth to

take to the streets in demonstrations. In a special cover story in *TV Guide* Agnew quoted many "experts," including Hayakawa, to bolster his thesis. At one point he asked: "How much of the terrible impatience of so many young people—evident in the virulence of their protests—can be traced to the disparity between the real world and that Epicurean world inside the television set where the proper combination of pills and cars and cigarettes and deodorants can bring relief from suffering and instant gratification of all their material wants and desires?"[69]

Widespread was this idea that impatience for social justice and an end to the war in Vietnam (NOW!) emerged from the lessons of commercial television. Eliot Daley, a television producer, also pondered this point in *TV Guide*. The young were impatient because television had taught them that things did not take time: "Every problem had a solution. Every program had a conclusion. There were no alternatives to explore (no time for that). There were no human idiosyncrasies to consider (power or deceit will prevail). Opinions, rights, feelings of others? Irrelevant. Due process of law? What a laugh!"[70] On the one hand, television's ability to reveal realistically society's imperfections had galvanized young people into protest and rebellion. On the other hand, television's Epicurean fantasy world of instant solutions had done the same thing. For these commentators television as a sign held within its bounds some rather contradictory causative meanings.

One issue that brought unanimity to anxious adult commentators was the connection between television commercials and the youth drug scene. Many believed that implicitly (and often explicitly) advertisements broadcast messages of instant bliss through the consumption of a particular product—often a drug. For Hayakawa commercial television subverted the Protestant ethic of "study, patience and hard work in learning a trade or profession before you may enjoy what the world has to offer." But, paradoxically, commercial television had revealed that material possessions could not offer bliss and contentment. Thus, young people were turning their backs on America's consumerist paradise and seeking nirvana through mind-altering substances. Hayakawa found this a dangerous rejection because the young people were rejecting "not the culture itself but merely the culture as depicted by Madison Avenue and the networks."[71] Hayakawa wanted to have it both ways. He wanted to

damn youth rebels for swallowing the message of instant gratification broadcast by commercial television, and he wanted to damn youth for rejecting a culture that manufactured such messages.

Whether embracing or renouncing those messages, young people had turned to drugs because of what television taught them, according to these critics. As we have already seen, McLuhan's theories, as used by some young people, suggested a link between the psychedelic drug experience and television as a perception-altering technology. For some acidheads this was an empowering way to make sense of their activities.

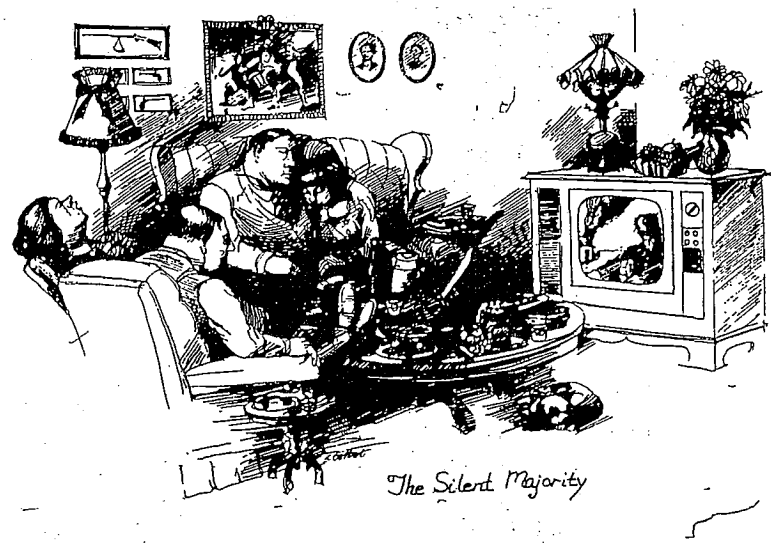
Other critics found the link more frightening. Eliot Daley blamed television more than the duped/doped youth, arguing that the medium was essentially a drug pusher:

> Teen-agers are the shock troops of a culture hooked on drugs. At a $100,000,000 annual clip, many TV commercials encourage us to expect miracles from drugs. The young apparently have been convinced. Soaring after Utopia or Nirvana or Ultimate Reality, their crash landings have made lurid news.
>
> . . . We thought we could buy temporary relief indefinitely and would never have to grapple with the roots of our dissatisfaction. Now we're all reaping the whirlwind.[72]

Hayakawa argued for a link between LSD and television viewing that, predictably, was diametrically opposite to that suggested by McLuhan: "The kinship of LSD and the other drug experiences is glaringly obvious: both depend on turning on and passively waiting for something beautiful to happen."[73]

This fear about television as a form of drug addiction was certainly nothing new. In relation to the young this theme goes back to the early 1950s. Lynn Spigel discovered a cartoon in a 1950 *Ladies' Home Journal* warning about "telebugeye." The cartoon shows a young child looking like she is strung out on heroin as she gazes at a TV western.[74] In the late 1970s Marie Winn, in her best-selling book *The Plug-In Drug,* argued for the need to wean youngsters from their television addiction. In a chapter on the first television generation, she attempted to show, as Hayakawa and others had before her, that too much television watching was symptomatic of rampant drug use among the youth.

For these critics television asserted a baleful influence on the



Adult America zoned out before TV images of war. An *East Village Other* comic of older-generation cluelessness.

youth of America. Adults, however, seemed to have escaped its mind-warping capabilities. Agnew, in an observation that suggested more about the validity of the generation gap than he may have intended, noted: "The adult who matured intellectually and went to work before television became such a pervasive presence in the home may still be able to take his prime-time TV shows as he does his movies—as a form of entertainment and escapism from the humdrum of daily life."[75] The vice president apparently missed the fact that the disaffected young people of the period were rebelling against everything that represented the humdrum of daily life within the dominant social order. Frequent cartoon representations of adult America appearing in the "comix" of underground newspapers depicted them zoned out in front of a television set. The image of a balding, beer-bellied suburban male sprawling before a television that spewed forth images of mayhem became almost iconic of the older, uncomprehending generation.

This brings us to an interesting paradox. As I have tried to show, young people aligned with the youth movement, as well as alarmed adults, used the perceived link between television and its first genera-

tion of young viewers to explain the current state of the TV generation. On the other hand, this generation had by this point abandoned the medium to a considerable extent as a major source of information and entertainment. (Yippies Abbie Hoffman and Jerry Rubin were notable exceptions.) Harlan Ellison, noted science fiction writer and regular TV critic for the Los Angeles underground paper the *L.A. Free Press,* explained the situation this way:

> Walking down the streets these days and nights are members of the Television Generation. Kids who were born with TV, were babysat by TV, were weaned on TV, dug TV and finally rejected TV. . . .
>
> But their parents, the older folks, the ones who brought the world down whatever road it is that's put us in this place at this time—they sit and watch situation comedies. Does this tell us something? . . . The mass is living in a fairyland where occasionally a gripe or discouraging word is heard. . . . The mass sits and sucks its thumb and watches Lucy and Doris and Granny Clampett and the world burns around them.[76]

The kids had rejected the content of television, leaving it and its irrelevant programming to their elders. Like teenagers and young adults of previous and succeeding generations, they watched less television than any other age group. For members of the student protest movement or the hippie counterculture, art films and rock music were the preeminent arenas of cultural consumption. Any self-respecting head or campus politico would be looked at askance were she or he to exhibit a too-hardy interest in the products of the Vast Wasteland. Hip and activist young people rejected television as a commercial, network-dominated industry hopelessly corrupted by the values of the establishment. The censorship and heavy-handed cancellation of *The Smothers Brothers Comedy Hour,* the only network program to succeed in engaging these young people, provided tangible evidence of the medium's corruption.[77]

Groove Tube: Trip Toys and Guerrilla Video

The "message" of the medium may have been too unhip and too corrupted with the discourses of the established social and political order for young people to engage willingly with its network-dominated

form to any great degree. The technology of television was another matter. As a stroboscopic aid to enhance an altered state of consciousness, contentless television was frequently celebrated within the hip community. At the same time, the development of low-cost, mass-marketed, portable video equipment allowed counterculture types, as well as politicos, to proclaim that the movement would finally be in a position to create its own (revolutionary) video content, bypassing establishment channels of distribution and control. Thus, as spectators, heads and freaks could use the tube for some psychedelic, subversive fun. As putative producers, "video guerrillas" envisioned using the medium for political organizing, consciousness raising, and community building.

Robert Roberts rhapsodized in the *East Village Other* about television's "millions of black and white dots" and their perpetual electronic rearrangements into patterns and images. This view of the medium eradicated content (and implicitly the ideological interpellations that went with it), allowing for a free play of video signifiers, unanchored by any final meaning or signification. D. A. Latimer, in the *East Village Other,* proclaimed television "the most potent consciousness-altering force in history" and, referencing McLuhan, argued that "any head who has watched eight hours of TV while stoned will bear [McLuhan] out: television is Cool, it involves the viewer on every level of consciousness; from verbal to nonverbal sensory conduits, visual and aural."[78] Television as television, therefore, could be the ultimate trip toy.

The *East Village Other,* reprinting a piece from the hippie-oriented *San Francisco Oracle,* instructed readers on proper freaked-out use of their television sets. The writer argued that through his readings of McLuhan he had discovered the meditational uses of television. To turn the set into a meditation device, one first had to eradicate the surfeit of content transmitted by the television industry. Once that was accomplished, the viewer would be able to perceive the stroboscopic nature of the medium and its mandala-like patterns so familiar to psychedelic substance users. He then provided concrete instructions:

> In a darkened room, turn on your TV set. Find a full channel. Adjust the brightness control all the way to bright (to the right). Adjust the contrast control (to the left). Adjust the vertical hold and verti-

cal linearity controls all the way to the left or right. Tune the channel selector to an empty channel. Readjust for maximum brightness as necessary—maximum retinal color results from maximum bombardment of the retina. Concentrate on sending your meditations out from your ashram to mine. Thank you. "We now return control of your TV set to you."[79]

This detailed strategy to eradicate content in favor of foregrounding the visual components of the medium certainly seemed to indicate a rejection of television programming as information and entertainment. The offerings of the broadcast networks were what got in the way of a useful engagement with the formal properties of the medium. Tripped-out viewers' abilities to play with, distort, readjust and finally deny broadcasters their power to impose their content suggests a knowing refusal to be delivered up to the preferred viewing techniques of the medium.

A reporter for *TV Guide,* exploring the television habits of the hip residents of the Haight-Ashbury, found similar practices. In an interview with Ed Sanders—poet, musician, and member of the band The Fugs—this "spokesman" for the community talked about watching *Gunsmoke* with the sound off and a Beatles or Fugs record playing. Sanders called it "free mixed media." Poster artist Peter Max concurred that this was the proper way to watch television. "You've got yourself a self-produced show. It's grand. The visual sense is pleased by the screen, the aural by the records, the physical by the couch or whatever you're on, while the taste buds are satisfied by whatever you're smoking."[80] By turning TV into a "groove tube," Sanders and Max were suggesting empowering ways by which hip youth could use the medium for their own pleasures. As children of McLuhan, Haight-Ashbury's young would predictably use it in a fashion that turned the technology into an extension of their psychedelically enhanced perceptual senses.

This was only a first step in seizing control of the medium. As *EVO*'s D. A. Latimer pointed out, television was a "powerful psychedelic force," "emphatically a head gimmick, all of the best features of strobes and lights and hallucinations in one box." Television was also a force with a "prediliction [*sic*] for mind-fucking"; therefore, the psychedelic community needed to use it for more humanity-serving ends.[81]

Members of the hip community attempted such a project with an early venture called "Channel One." Created by Ken Shapiro and Lane Sarasohn, Channel One was a video theater and "psychedelic shrine" set up in the Lower East Side in 1967. The theater housed a number of black-and-white televisions and seating for about sixty, mimicking a theater-in-the-round set up. The environment was supposed to suggest the comforts of one's own living room. Shapiro and Sarasohn created short production pieces directly targeting a counterculture audience. "We concentrate on humor, psychedelic satire," Shapiro explained in Latimer's *EVO* piece. "The heads are a gorgeous subculture, with their own language, their own jokes—and since so little of it can be broadcast over regular media, drugs and sex and such, it gives us a whole world of totally new material to work with. We like to think we're providing heads with their own CBS."[82]

The potential for creating alternative video productions outside the dominant network media channels blossomed in 1968 with the introduction of portable half-inch video recording equipment into the U.S. market. The affordable Sony Portapak helped create a video art movement in the 1960s and 1970s. One branch of this movement flowered amid the high-culture art world of galleries, museums, performance art, and "happenings" and received funding from the Rockefeller Foundation and the National Endowment for the Arts. The other branch, without foundation money, blossomed amid countercultural and student politico groupings.[83]

Beginning in 1969 and continuing into the new decade, the underground press featured numerous articles rhapsodizing about the revolutionary possibilities of grassroots video production. Videotape as a technological tool would transform the social order, ushering in an era of true participatory democracy through "feedback" and "process." Video collectives began forming around the country with names like "Video Freex," "Video Free America," "Global Village," "Ant Farm," "Raindance," and others. Michael Shamberg, a founder of Raindance, found himself in the paradoxical position of having written the video revolutionaries' bible, *Guerrilla Television,* which was both theoretical tract and how-to manual, but having published it through the CBS subsidiary Holt, Rinehart, and Winston. In 1969 some CBS executives, including network vice president Michael Dann, exhibited a quickly aborted interest in the productions of the video guerrillas. The network provided Video Freex with a

The book cover of Michael Shamberg's how-to manual for video revolutionaries.

$60,000 budget to produce some experimental programming for the network. At a public presentation in a Greenwich Village loft "stuffed with oodles of sound and video equipment," the CBS brass encountered what *EVO*'s Allan Katzman described as "committed chaos." Rather than taped programming filled with "information and entertainment," the executives got "spontaneity and fun," along with a complete disregard for standards of "professionalism." Dann mumbled a "rather apologetic and tolerant thank you speech," and the network representatives beat a hasty retreat.[84]

The incident merely reinforced to the attendant freaks and Freex that their approach to the medium was antithetical to that of network television. In *Guerrilla Television* Shamberg warned, "It is the very structure and context of broadcast TV which are co-opting. Instead of politicizing people with mass-TV, Guerrilla Television seeks to media-ize people against it." Attempting to use the channels of network television could only be counterproductive, resulting in

video guerrillas getting caught in the hegemonic signifying webs of institutional power. Shamberg went on:

> When I first began working in alternative television I predicted that about a year later we would have a chance to air some of our tape, but only after TV labeled it something like "Crazy Experimental Far-Out Videotape Makers" so that somehow it would [be] set apart from broadcast-TV instead of posing a real challenge to its structure.
>
> Sure enough, eighteen months after I said that, we were asked to contribute tape to a show called "The Television Revolution."[85]

As guerrillas, underground video politicos had to avoid and evade the dominant institutions and their strategic ability to label and, thereby, capture. Foreshadowing the theorizing of Michel de Certeau on the tactics used by the weak to negotiate imposed systems, Shamberg warned his fellow video guerrillas: "It's impossible to vary your tactics each time, which is classic guerrilla strategy, if the people you must work with have pigeon holed you in a pre-determined category. The legitimacy you need to build a base of community and economic support may be unattainable if an alien press has already manufactured your image. The moment you surrender control of your media image, you're captured" (33).

The movement's video makers ended up cultivating a thoroughly distrustful and suspicious relationship to network television. Network broadcasters shared this antagonism and refused to show independent video pieces, typically on aesthetic, political, and technological grounds. William Boddy notes that the exclusion from the airwaves helped to "unite diverse independent producers in common marginality, creating a surprisingly close-knit community which took up the tasks not only of production, but also of distribution, exhibition, critical exegesis and publicity of the new work."[86]

Patricia Mellencamp emphasizes the importance of decentralized systems of distribution and exhibition to the underground video movement. Process was privileged over product. The video collective Ant Farm was emblematic of the approach. A kind of communal family, Ant Farm comprised environmental activists, artists, builders, and actors, along with "university trained media freaks and hippies interested in balancing the environment by total transformation of existing social and economic systems."[87] Emphatically nonhierarchi-

cal, and devoted to collective work methods, the group used psychedelic drugs to unleash creative energies. Ant Farm, like a number of other video collectives, took its show on the road, touring university campuses in a video-rigged van, which Mellencamp compares to the early Soviet agitprop trains that toured postrevolutionary Russia attempting to educate the peasant masses in communist ideas and principles. "Like the Soviets," Mellencamp notes, "but without Marx, projects [like Ant Farm] encouraged audiences to participate in productions, as well as preaching the new visions of society" (53). Ant Farm traveled the campus circuit in a "customized media van with antennae, silver dome, TV window, inflatable shower stall, kitchen, ice, inflatable shelter for five, solar water heater, portapak and video playback system."[88]

Both media historian William Boddy and theorist Patricia Mellencamp point out the prevalence of video utopianism among practitioners of guerrilla television. Mellencamp notes the technological determinism that animated the video collectives. As followers of McLuhan, whose media theories were wholly instrumentalist in approach, this should come as no surprise. Mellencamp explains video activists' idealism: " 'Video' would bring global salvation via access, circumventing institutions and going directly to individuals of conscience—the people" (53).

"Feedback" was the key. Network television provided unidirectional, one-way, hegemonic communication from the top down. Alternative television was two-way, easily accessible, and worked from the bottom up. An article in the *Great Speckled Bird* heralded the inauguration of the Atlanta Video Collective, a group of people who had scraped together some video equipment and wanted to get more people together, along with ideas, equipment, money, projects to tape, and places to exhibit the tapes. Articulating a utopian vision of the transformative possibilities of feedback, the article proclaimed: "Video tape is a start in the process of turning channels 2/5/11/17/43 upside down, but, like TV didn't turn out to be little movies in the home, video tape isn't just cheap, accessible TV. The difference is feedback; to see, hear, experience people (and ourselves) in struggle (life, play, revolution) and know that you have some chance of affecting what will be in the next cycle (video feedback). . . . [Video feedback] can be part of the liberation struggle; from sexism, racism, and imperialism."[89]

Many commentators emphasized the inherently revolutionary quality of video feedback, yet these same commentators tended to fall back on visions of guerrilla video as a tool in fostering participatory democracy. This concept, a cornerstone of the early New Left and Students for a Democratic Society, had by the close of the decade and the early 1970s been dismissed by many of the more radical revolutionists within student politico circles as fundamentally liberal and incompatible with revolutionary vangardism. Many of the video guerrillas mouthed the revolutionism of the Weathermen yet in their writings kept slipping back into less apocalyptic rhetoric. An article in San Francisco's *Good Times* first heralded videotape as "a new phase in the revolutionary process" for the TV generation, who were described as "the revolutionary people." Yet later in the piece the author asserted that video recorders and tape would make possible true democratic participation and that feedback would lead to the return of the town meeting of ancient Greek democracies.[90]

Other commentators in the underground press assumed, with euphoric abandon, that the corporate colossus of mass media, along with the dominant social and political order, could be easily felled by the new technology. An *East Village Other* writer enthused: "Count to three and SHAZAM, society will be transformed—the establishment communications network will have been bypassed."[91]

Cable television also held out the promise of transforming the social order along decentralized, democratic lines. In a page-one story in 1971 the *Los Angeles Free Press* asserted the potential of community access cable allowing for cheap production by local groups and organizations. The proliferation of channels would give alternative, movement-oriented video collectives and political groups access to the airwaves, bypassing network dominance and allowing for a democratization of television. The article noted that because cable franchising was under the jurisdiction of local governments and because few cities had yet been cabled, it would be easier for local groups to exert pressure on the proposed franchises. Furthermore,

> if we force cable operators to install systems now that are technologically capable of meeting community needs, we can later go on to create a TV that will tear down the walls that the media barons build to keep out the dispossessed, the thoughtful, the angered.
>
> Cable TV per se is not revolutionary, but real popular control of in-

formation is. Until we have the power to define our reality, we will never escape or destroy the image of reality created by the massive communications industry. Cable power to the people![92]

These video visionaries may have been a bit naive about the potentials of technology *as* technology to usher in fundamental social and political change. They were not at all naive, however, about the institutional powers arrayed against their projects of pluralizing mass disseminated televisual discourse. Over and over again these members of the television generation pointed out how the oligopolistic structure of network television limited diversity of expression and how the capitalist and corporate nature of the network system distorted and silenced the counterhegemonic discourses and actions of movement activists.

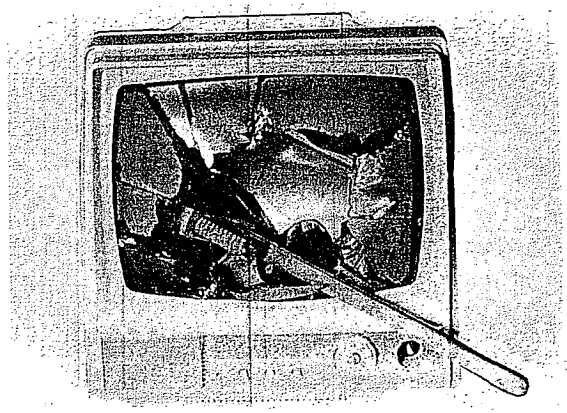
In the 1970s cable entrepreneurs appropriated aspects of video guerrilla rhetoric about democratizing the medium and seizing control away from network behemoths. Cable, they ballyhooed, would be interactive and two-way. More recently, of course, similar rhetoric has been used by Internet providers. Boddy observes:

> The rhetorical similarities between the technological visions of some video guerrillas and the entrepreneurs of the booming cable industry in the 1970s seem disquieting in retrospect. The wishful thinking about the autonomy of technology and the refusal of history and politics among independent video makers may have inadvertently enlisted them as the avant garde for an (un)reconstructed communications industry only too happy to lead a "media revolution" which would leave existing power relations untouched."[93]

Video guerrillas seemed to have assumed that by practicing their televisual counterpolitics outside the institutions of network television and by using two-way, feedback approaches this would somehow be enough to, "SHAZAM!," transform the dominant social order. Of course, it didn't happen. But on the other hand, the fact that the emergent cable industry felt a need to mobilize countercultural discourse in its appeals to potential subscribers suggests some form of negotiation with those positions on the part of the communications industry. Cable franchisers were forced to include community access stations as part of their packages. Certainly, these channels and their programming would never live up to the utopian visions of change

A comic vision from the *East Village Other* of how the revolution might appear on prime time's *The Mod Squad* and *Julia*.

Just as many underground newspapers peddled female flesh in the name of sexual liberation, so too did video guerrillas. From an illustration in *Guerrilla Television*.



End page of Michael Shamberg's *Guerrilla Television*. Smash the television, smash the State.

prophesied by those video revolutionaries. In the end, however, they were correct to view television as a key site of struggle for the movement, even if many within the movement had long since given up on the medium.

Herein lies the great paradox of the first television generation. Despite the clear recognition by many movement commentators that coming of age with the medium had worked some fundamental transformation on the ways that sixties youth constructed reality and relations to authority, except for the video guerrillas, McLuhanites, and Yippies (whose television activism will be discussed in chapter 3) most campus New Leftists and countercultural heads and freaks tended to avoid engagement with television to any great extent. Many of the era's young people actively rejected television as a useful source of information, amusement, or edification. Some found ways to eradicate network content and subvert "appropriate" uses of the medium in favor of foregrounding its formal properties when they did turn on the set—and themselves. Many also embraced their childhood histories with the medium and the ways in which *Howdy Doody* and other programs had inadvertently promoted their rebelliousness. Even as they turned the tube's programming off in droves, they still recognized their inescapable link to the medium. Television, as they saw it, was at least partly responsible for turning them into freaks,

for causing them to embrace the values of the East as they rejected the values of Western consumer capitalism, for pointing out that the adult social order was nothing to look up to or emulate. Even hostile critics such as S. I. Hayakawa and Vice President Agnew could not deny the power of television in molding the members of this generation. They would forever be the children of television. As such, many would also find it impossible to ignore how the medium constructed their movement, their social and political disaffection and subversions, their alternative lifestyles, their idealism, and their threat to the established order.

Plastic Hippies

2 The Counterculture on TV

In the mid-1960s American bohemia began to undergo a strange metamorphosis. The angst-filled, existential Beats began giving way to a new community of dropouts and rebels against the system. As Beat enclaves such as New York's Greenwich Village and San Francisco's North Beach began their gentrification process, new neighborhoods of nonconformists began popping up in low-rent districts like the East Village, the Haight-Ashbury, and in similar urban areas around the nation. These new bohemians shared certain common threads with their Beat precursors. Both were deeply critical of and disengaged from the values of white, middle-class, suburban family life. Both embraced philosophies and worldviews associated with Eastern mysticism. And both emphasized the importance of mind-altering drugs in achieving personal transcendence. The Beats, at this time primarily men and a few women well into their thirties at least, tended to look down on these new initiates into bohemia. The young kids, most still in their teens and early twenties, from comfortable homes, and with money either in their pockets or available from mom and pop via Western Union, weren't considered "hip" by the Beats. Derisively they were dismissed as "hippies."[1]

In the space of a few years, however, these new bohemians would bring into being the most widespread and influential counterculture ever to appear on the American sociocultural landscape. Hippie communities spread to almost every major American city—and to many smaller ones as well. Hippie slang, hippie dress, hippie lifestyle