the revolution wasn't televised

sixties television and social conflict

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contents

part three: nation and citizenship

introduction

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In the late 1960s, Gil Scott Heron's "The Revolution Will Not Be Televised" blasted its way to a number one hit on the AM charts, assuring the nation that television was a medium of hopeless consensus, aimed at the white majority and suited only to reproducing the lackluster shop-a-day world of happy homebodies. Proclaiming that one day "*Green Acres*, [the] *Beverly Hillbillies*, and *Hooterville Junction* will no longer be so damn relevant," Heron sang of a better world, better in part because, as he said in his famous last line, rather than being on TV, the "revolution will be live."

Of course, television has always promised to be even bigger than life, and its penchant for producing an illusion of liveness has convinced many that its pictures are "real" and capable of capturing events, even revolutionary events, as they unfold. Still, Heron did have a point, because even though numerous revolutions were televised in the 1960s (think of the coverage of Watts, the Democratic Party Convention in Chicago, or the 1968 uprising in

Paris), television preferred to label such rebellions as senseless "riots" staged by unruly mobs who reveled in self-destructive violence (and, obviously, the coverage of the 1992 "Los Angeles Riots" adheres to this tradition). So too, the networks presented the social movements of the 1960s less as a break with television's general entertainment logic than as part of the flow of its "something for everyone" programming philosophy, from the "zany" military comedy of *Gomer Pyle USMC* to the Vietnam protest music of Joan Baez that played, after considerable doses of network censorship, on *The Smothers Brothers Comedy Hour* at the end of the decade.

As Heron's hit single suggests, the 1960s is most notable for its culture vs. counter-culture, "us vs. them" logic, and within this set of oppositions, mass media—especially television—was almost always *them*. This opposition not only structured the logic of popular culture in that period, but it also runs through the more recent popular nostalgia for the decade. Given the fact that many historians of the 1960s lived through the time, it is perhaps no coincidence that these oppositions often permeate scholarly studies of the decade. Although nostalgia and history can never be clearly distinguished or separately defined, it does seem important to revisit the decade with some critical distance from the "us vs. them" paradigm, and to investigate how culture might be conceptualized in a less cartoonish way. This book, which is devoted to looking at television programs in the context of larger social, political, and cultural forces, attempts to understand the struggles that took place over representation on the nation's most popular communications medium.

So popular was this medium that by 1960, just twelve years after the networks began to offer complete prime-time schedules, roughly 89 percent of the population had at least one television set. Over the course of the decade many households were busy exchanging their worn-out consoles for newer, groovier models like the Westinghouse "Jet Set" advertised in a 1966 issue of *TV Guide* as one of the fashionable "tote-alongs" designed to give each family member a portable receiver, custom-made for their own moveable viewing feast. But despite the emphasis on motion, by all estimations the average American was actually going fewer places because they were sitting in front of the set for about five hours a day. Indeed, by 1960 television was the country's dominant form of entertainment and information. The speculations regarding its centrality in American households and public life—speculations that had been so much part of the popular culture of the 1950s—were now less and less the stuff of science fiction and more and more a practical reality of everyday experience.

By the latter half of the 1950s and throughout the 1960s, television—as a media institution—was in a period that might be called "classical," a period

in which production, distribution, and exhibition practices were standardized (albeit with some variation) and remained intact at least until the early 1970s. By the mid 1950s, the previous production center of New York (famous for "live," theatrically-based TV) gave way to Hollywood, where major film studios, independent telefilm companies, and talent agencies like MCA grew to become the central forces behind prime-time production. Programs were produced by these Hollywood companies; distributed nationally and often owned or co-owned by the networks; sponsored by major corporate advertisers and their Madison Avenue representatives; regulated by the Federal Communications Commission (FCC); and received in the private homes of citizens across the country. The television industry furthermore established clearly standardized patterns of exchange, using the nationwide audience measurements of one company, the A.C. Nielsen Corporation, for "box office" data that it traded with sponsors who in effect financed the system. And, on the audience side, *TV Guide*, which became a national magazine in 1952, served as a source of scheduling information, and, perhaps more importantly, as a site of critical and fan discourse that bound individuals together—at least in their imaginations—as a "national audience" of TV watchers.

In short, the 1960s saw the consolidation of what documentarian Michael Moore has more recently called a "TV Nation." However, as numerous essays in this volume suggest—from Victoria Johnson's exploration of the long-standing cultural denigration of Lawrence Welk's "middle-American" do-gooder image to Roberta Pearson's investigation of the Native American response to the short-lived western *Custer*—nationalism was not a simple matter. Instead, numerous struggles took place in defense of specific group identities. Even as the networks attempted to standardize their affiliate markets and transform regional and ethnic differences into the common denominator of a "national audience," they were often met by resistance at the local level.

Despite these instances, however, the television industry maintained a buoyant optimism about the medium's ability to bring together huge audiences across the nation and, as ABC Vice President Donald Coyle put it, fulfill "its natural function as a giant pump fueling the machine of consumer demand, stepping up the flow of goods and services to keep living standards high and the economy expanding." Even more, Coyle asserted that television could do for the rest of the world what it was doing for the United States. His enthusiasm was encouraged, no doubt, by the fervent internationalism of the Kennedy administration's "New Frontier," which, in the spirit of the economic and cultural colonialism of Cold War policy, presented America's will to conquer foreign markets as the benign growth of the "Free World." With the 1962 launching of Telstar, the United States became the first nation to

orbit a commercial communications satellite; that same year, foreign syndication sales for off-network programming exceeded domestic sales for the very first time. As the purchase of television sets around the world grew at a feverish pace, industry executives had reason to anticipate an even more lucrative future.

Given its attempts to homogenize consumption habits and address different audiences with a unified appeal, it is no surprise that television standardized its product into program types such as the sitcom, the western, and the variety show. These genres, which developed their televisual forms over the course of the 1950s, had clear narrative patterns that creative staff knew how to generate and that audiences could seek out, depending on what they wanted to watch (and with whom) on a given night. They also had relatively clear production costs and standards, although the profit margin for any single television series was never quite reliable. Why, for example, was *Mr. Ed*, which featured a man and his talking horse, a hit while *My Mother the Car*, which showcased a man and his talking auto, a relative failure? In the long run, who is to say why a wisecracking horse who watches TV is more profitable than a chatty car radio inhabited by the ghostly voice of someone's dead mother? Pondering these questions of taste and popular pleasure—as networks and producers always do—means accepting the fact that entertainment is not a predictable industry. For this reason, a major producer like Screen Gems, with the economies of scale that allowed for a margin of risk, saw fit to produce series in a variety of genres from sitcoms such as *The Donna Reed Show* to police dramas such as *Naked City*, knowing that some would flop and some would prevail. More generally, even within the formulaic codes of genre production, there was always a certain amount of innovation, for as Mark Alvey points out, any industry needs to vary its output, if only for purposes of product differentiation. Yet as many other essays in this book demonstrate, changes in television programming over the course of the decade were also attributable to forces outside of these production economies.

The purpose of these essays is to show just how important those outside forces were in shaping program content, form, and audience interpretations. Some of these forces existed within the institutional framework of broadcasting itself, but as the authors demonstrate, the broadcast institution was in turn affected by—and had affects on—the politics and rhetoric of other social institutions, including the institutional mechanisms by which audiences made their voices heard.

Indeed, in the land of the New Frontier, numerous pressures came to bear on television that were not immediately in the purview of the industry leaders themselves. While, for example, the industry pumped up its export market in ways that often coincided with the government's goals of economic expansion overseas, sometimes their efforts actually conflicted with the government's cultural struggles to gain ideological (and not just economic) supremacy as the arbiter of a "Free World." As William Boddy shows in his article on Senator Thomas Dodd's violence hearings, political leaders worried about the way excessive violence in shows like *The Untouchables* would portray Americans overseas, and they chided the industry for its portrayal of U.S. values and attitudes.

More generally, as Steven Classen, Aniko Bodroghkozy, Roberta Pearson, and Lynn Spigel demonstrate, African American, New Left, and Native American movements all made their voices heard, both behind the scenes and on the screen. Sometimes this generated reactionary responses from conservative broadcasters, network executives, or even local governments. Television was often a site of struggle between contending social factions, but it also served as a barometer of changing social mores. As Julie D'Acci shows in her chapter on TV's first action heroine, Honey West, social movements were often incorporated into entertainment programming even when there was no direct media activism involved. In this case, notions of sexual liberation and even nascent feminism were crucial to the construction of Honey's character, as ABC sought ways to keep pace with the sexual revolution.

Above all, then, while the industry no doubt had a good deal of power over the course that television would take, it is also clear that, like all technological systems, this "giant pump" was fueled by larger social, political, and cultural forces. Television was subject to intense debates and struggles—over "taste," over its national and international purpose, and over its social role in addressing the concerns of increasingly fragmented audience segments composed of radical youth, "new" women, politicized civil rights groups, and resistant conservatives who challenged what they saw as television's moral decline.

By the end of the decade, these struggles did not die down—but the broadcast institution did find new ways to manage them. On the one hand, as numerous critics have demonstrated, the networks found ways to make conflict seem "tasteful" and even morally valuable in "quality" programs like *The Mary Tyler Moore Show* (which engaged certain aspects of the feminist movement) and *All in the Family* (which dealt with a litany of "too hot to handle" issues including such topics as racism, homosexuality, and Vietnam). On the other hand, however, many of the conflicts of the 1960s—especially the disappointments about television's insipid commercialism and its failure in its role as public servant—resurfaced in the policy debates concerning the emerging cable industry, a point Thomas Streeter demonstrates in his article

on the "blue sky" scenarios through which people imagined new and better possibilities for cable. But as Streeter also points out, in the end cable eventually came to look more and more like commercial TV.

At a time when we are witnessing the "Disneyfication" of broadcasting and the "Turnerization" of cable, it does seem wise to acknowledge that although social and cultural struggles like the ones considered here are certainly important in transforming their local historical contexts, they do not often succeed in the grand historical sense of "revolution." In this regard, it is worth considering in some more detail how we might account for relationships among media, culture, and society. What types of theories and methods do we have at our disposal to understand these relationships as well as the ways they change over time? And why should we write and read this kind of media history in the first place?

looking backward: thinking about theory and method

It seems appropriate that a book on 1960s television should appear at this moment, if only because the 1960s saw the rise of television criticism as a distinct "professionalized" and increasingly academic field. A new breed of intellectual found inspiration in the work of literary critic-turned-media guru Marshall McLuhan, who made serious contemplation about TV attractive — or even, as he might say, "cool." By mid-decade, the Canadian scholar had become the darling of the New York glitterati and was portrayed as the prince of pop criticism in mainstream media. Meanwhile, on the opposite coast, from his San Diego beach house, Herbert Marcuse was launching savage barbs at the consciousness industry. Allied to radical political figures like Angela Davis, Marcuse came to represent the opposite end of the spectrum in 1960s media criticism. Nevertheless, he too would become something of a pop icon—an irony no doubt attributable to the regime of repressive tolerance. Meanwhile, from a more humanist tradition, literary and art critics such as Leslie Fielder and Susan Sontag began to demand that the popular arts be examined with the same "seriousness" as the so-called "high arts." As the aesthetic distinctions between high and low were increasingly relativised and challenged over the decade (especially with such movements as POPism and Minimalism, and with the advent of critical terms like "anti-art" and "non-art" being bandied around), it became increasingly possible to apply literary and art criticism to television. It was during the 1960s that the National Academy of Television Arts and Sciences began to publish *Television Quarterly*, which often included literary critics' interpretations of television programs. Television criticism multiplied throughout the decade as the medium became the centerpiece for wide-ranging debates over art, education, taste, and the meaning of culture.

Over the course of the 1970s and through the present, as television studies grew into a field (or more accurately a "plot") of academia, the questions of taste, art, nationalism, and culture that fascinated reformers and critics of the 1960s have been connected to issues of family life and domesticity—the very topics that first engaged the social scientists and market researchers in the 1950s. Just as these topics have become intertwined, so too have methodological approaches—a development that is no doubt due in large part to the interdisciplinary focus and neo-Marxist underpinnings of Cultural Studies. In addition, the glaring absence of women TV critics in the 1960s was met over the course of the 1970s by a new feminist-inspired critique of television, largely drawn from activist groups and later from film theory. Looked at from a feminist and Marxist-informed perspective, the issues that fascinated critics in the first two decades seem more and more connected to one another. So now we typically speak of the need to consider the micro-processes of everyday life in relation to macro-structures such as nationalism, globalism, and public art. Moreover, as the technologies themselves have changed, and as television becomes more and more global, critics like Hamid Naficy, Marie Gillespie, Ien Ang, David Morley, and Kevin Robins have argued that we need to study the local contexts, or "spaces of identity" (of family, region, ethnicity, etc.) in relation to the global environment.

As with this new work on globalism that moves back and forth between spatial contexts, the authors in this volume, who are more concerned with time, suggest the importance of moving back and forth between past and present. Even while we often challenge the New Frontier's "enlightenment" notions of history as a road to progress, the acts of writing and reading history still have a social purpose. At the risk of recycling the often cited but consistently compelling ideas of Walter Benjamin, it seems more useful to insist that remembering the past can serve to "shock" us out of the present. For even if the revolution wasn't televised, and even if it never will be, looking back at '60s television can serve to shake up our present day conceptions of communications technologies, conceptions which all too often give technology the power to revolutionize the world while the whole world sits back on its collective easy chair and watches for change, as if change were the same as a station break.

Today, as in the decade under study, U.S. power at home and around the globe manifests itself in many forms, media being one of the most important. At a time when communication is increasingly privitized and commercialized by global conglomerates, it seems especially important to reflect on the mechanisms of power and struggle through which people have and might still speak to one another in a more democratic fashion. As Raymond Williams suggested in the early 1970s, we need to imagine new and better uses

for telecommunications and to find ways of making these aspirations a practical reality.

For their part, historians and critics, such as the ones in this book, need to write about those people in the past who did imagine better ways to use technology and who did partake in activist movements that tried to change the face of broadcasting. Historians ought to think about these "micro" struggles just as much as they ought to critique the "macro" power of the television industry. One the prime lessons of this book—and a central paradox at the heart of '60s TV—is that television was often used as a tool for silencing vocal minorities while purporting to give voice to the ever elusive "silent majority."

Of course, despite the uneven power relations between media elites and their detractors, and despite the oligopoly power exerted by the networks and their numerous institutional supports, there are always moments of opportunity that escape the "logic" of the system itself. What, for example, made it possible for Gil Scott Heron to sing his political, anti-broadcasting, black power anthem in a nation led by a conservative administration and in a broadcast system that—despite all the charges of media liberalism—was primarily conservative as well? In fact, one of the prime reasons this song did flourish was because of the media competition between radio and television at the time. Radio—even the AM stations on which the tune soared to popularity—was finding a new liberal youth audience after losing the mass audience to television. So, ironically, even if the revolution would not be televised, it seemed possible to broadcast it through other channels, and even make it into a hit single. This is not to say that Heron's tune was understood as "revolutionary" by all AM listeners, nor is it to argue that we should just be happy and not worry because laissez-faire capitalism, the "marketplace of ideas," and good old media competition will correct all ideological and political evils. Instead, this example suggests that there are ways in which power must accommodate dissent, if only to remain powerful.

Furthermore, Heron's music shows us how the rapidly shifting sands of culture and politics can transform the marginal into the mainstream. Only a few years later, in the midst of Watergate, Heron would be harmonizing with newspaper and television headlines when he sang, "Haldeman, Ehrlichman, Mitchell, and Dean; it follows a pattern if you dig what I mean." In 1974, the opposition suddenly seemed popular and powerful. It was a moment inextricably connected to years of organizing and struggle in the streets, but it was also a moment at which those working within the culture industries who sympathized with oppositional movements saw the opportunity to promote the politics of change and to justify their work to superiors by touting its popular appeal.

As this case demonstrates, media institutions can sustain their power only

by constantly courting innovation and popularity. As George Lipsitz has suggested about popular music, even while mass media serve to homogenize the local traditions and values of various racialized and ethnicized groups, the mass media often also circulate these same traditions and values so that they reach the ears of people who would not normally hear them. In short, it seems more productive to understand the ways in which powerful media institutions must transmit certain types of popular knowledge that ultimately disrupt the logic of their own functional requirements for economic stability.

This cultural dynamic, which is generally theorized through Antonio Gramsci's concept of hegemony, is used consistently throughout this book. The concept of hegemony shows us how powerful institutions like media are involved in a perpetual struggle (never fully won, always ongoing) to incorporate social conflict and reach popular consensus. Such notions have moved media historians and critics away from the "conspiratorial" view that mass media are simply opium for the masses—which in more contemporary television lingo translates into "the plug in drug" argument. Instead, the concept of hegemony emphasizes the social conflicts involved in cultural processes, and as such, serves as a mode of explaining the way television responded to and perpetuated these conflicts in the 1960s. As Todd Gitlin first applied the concept to American media, hegemony becomes a way to understand how the networks negotiated between the will for social change and the opposing urge for stasis by incorporating revolutionary ideas into the more consensual fictions of television.

How we interpret this process is of course up for grabs. While some critics might insist that hegemonic processes of incorporation simply rob revolutionary movements of their political meaning, others, like Lipsitz, are more interested in how revolutionary impulses seem to stubbornly resist total incorporation and re-emerge in new ways in a continual pursuit to be heard. There are, of course, limits. For as Gramsci argued, when cultural hegemony doesn't work, when dissent cannot be incorporated into the logics of ruling elites, the state calls in the overtly repressive forces at its disposal. For television, as Aniko Bodroghkozy points out, this means censorship, or, in the case of the *Smothers Brothers*, cancellation. Still, as Bodroghkozy also claims, the cancellation itself provoked an outpouring of public debate voiced in both the underground and the popular press. In retrospect, then, while it seems evident that the revolution (if we can call it that) wasn't televised, it is also true that there is still much to be learned about television's role in mediating—and even at times promoting—social change.

That said, the ways in which media historians make connections between media, society, and culture, and the ways they explain change over time,

remain difficult and generally under-theorized problems. While almost everybody seems to assume that television affects and reflects social change, it is clear that we really don't know how to explain the relationships among media texts and social contexts in ways that are very convincing. As Horace Newcomb suggests with regard to the Western, even the most thoughtful work on this issue often relies on tautological reasoning that reduces complex social events to a set of narrow meanings and structures that the critic then matches and fits with meanings and structures he or she claims the television program contains. This book does not provide an answer for this ultimately philosophical question, but it does present some tools for thinking through these problems in relation to the case at hand. And, we hope, it generates some possibilities for future work on this and other cases.

All of the essays share a conviction that television cannot be understood in isolation from its various contexts, even while in a media culture those contexts are not always grounded by shared traditions or even physical locations. Often instead, contexts are what Benedict Anderson, in his work on nationalism, calls "imagined communities." Here, these imagined communities are not only ones of nation, but also generation, taste, region, and other "demographic" communities that television's institutional processes (such as ratings) and symbolic practices (such as programs, ads, even TV set design) help to construct. Through this notion of context, the authors stress the importance of looking at culture as a deeply social, productive force. In this regard, they continue with traditions in Cultural Studies that move away from thinking about texts as mere "reflections" on the social order, and instead think about texts as sites where meaning is made in their interaction with their various publics.

Another way to put this is to say that these essays move away from the either/or logic of the "structuralist" vs. "culturalist" debates in media sociology. The structuralists have generally assumed that a society and its cultural products change only when institutional structures (such as housing policies or media ownership) change. Conversely, the culturalists would argue that the structure of social institutions and society itself changes only when the ruling ideas of that society (its ideology as generated by media like television) change. This either/or logic puts all its weight in one camp and fundamentally turns into the chicken and the egg question, "which comes first, structural change or cultural change?"

However, as much of the work in Cultural Studies has taught us, culture and structure need to be seen in more holistic ways. From this perspective, while it may be true, for example, that media ownership does influence the types of products made, it is also the case that cultural perspectives about "ownership" in turn influence the structural form that social institutions

take. (For example, culturally-based ideas of exclusive possessiveness in western capitalism generate institutional practices like zoning laws that give way to racist housing policies or copyright laws, which in turn generate legal disputes over sampling in rap and hip-hop). So rather than ask the chicken or egg question—"which comes first, structure or culture?"—these essays assume that the two are always in dialectical tension with one another. That said, it still is the case that some authors in this volume stress structure while others emphasize culture—a situation which probably has more to do with the discursive conventions of writing about media than with any necessary "truth." In other words, while these essays do not escape the logic of privileging one term over the other, they all do share a conviction that in the last analysis culture and structure cannot really be separated.

The authors in this volume also share the conviction that prime-time television affords us a distinctive opportunity to explore significant social issues at a time when representation was being increasingly defined as a key political issue that helped constitute group identities (such as hippies, new women, or Black Power) forged in opposition to "mainstream" culture. Valuable contributions have already been made regarding television's role in reporting some of the turbulent events of the decade, for example: Todd Gitlin's analysis of network news portrayals of the New Left, Daniel Hallin's re-assessment of Vietnam coverage during America's first "uncensored war," and Barbie Zelizer's critique of the struggles for cultural and professional authority among journalists who covered the Kennedy assassination. As opposed to this focus on actuality programming, this volume is one of the few to explore the cultural, social, and political implications of popular entertainment series during the period.

In choosing to speak of popular television series, this book assumes that prime-time programs were not mere escapism, but were centrally involved in sustaining, interrogating, and even transforming social relations and cultural affinities throughout the decade. In distinction to those people who might say, "hey, that's just entertainment," we see the concept of entertainment itself as a cultural construct which exists only because our society has formed certain conventional ways for thinking and speaking about what topics constitute "real knowledge," and in what forms this kind of knowledge should be distributed. In the discursive framework of television, entertainment has always existed as a concept only in relation to its opposite: information. Through this binary opposition, the media have naturalized the idea that entertainment is about fiction while news is about science, and audiences come to expect that entertainment is created and packaged in fictional genres while news is just reported through the objective, scientific lens of the camera. But, as the essays in this volume suggest, the lines between science and

fiction, news and entertainment, are never clear. For example, what makes the Vietnam war entertaining when it is discussed on *The Smothers Brothers Comedy Hour*, as opposed to "objective" scientific information when it appears on the *Huntley-Brinkley Report*? Both program types used certain *fictional conventions* to transmit knowledge about the war that audiences had come to expect. The *Smothers Brothers* used the convention of a vaudeville comedy team composed of a straight man and a buffoon to convey one perspective on the war. Although certainly not a variety show, *The Huntley-Brinkley Report* recalled many of the conventions of a vaudevillian duo, while filmed reports from distant locales invoked realist conventions of Hollywood cinema. Or, to approach this problem from another direction, as Roberta Pearson does, what made ABC's *Custer* series entertaining to some audiences, while for the Native American movement the series was an historical travesty filled with "mis-formation" about their Native American culture? While of course broadcast journalists have professional standards for telling the truth, and they usually do try to do so, our point here (and one that other scholars have made before us) is that the news is a genre just as much as comedies or westerns are. News uses certain conventionalized forms for mediating knowledge that relativize its status as truth. As such cases demonstrate, the categories of entertainment and information are themselves historical (as opposed to universally true) categories, and thus open to change.

At the time of this writing, television entertainment still has a kitsch status, and 1960s popular television is still largely conceptualized as "Wasteland," (or, in some circles, "Camp,"), fare. The following essays, however, build on a critical tradition that sees television—whether TV news or TV comedy—as centrally contributing to our sense of the historical past, the immediate present, and possible futures.

design

As a whole, then, this book contains a broad range of essays that accentuate various aspects of television's institutional structures and cultural forms, and which together articulate the interconnections between and among them. The first section, "Home Fronts and New Frontiers," emphasizes social change through scientific engineering. Here, authors consider how the "science"—or science fictions—of child-rearing, female sexuality, dating, domestic science, and even space science influenced (and sometimes was influenced by) the representation of family life. These essays also detail how television produced certain kinds of stories that drew on the larger media contexts (such as music, comic books, magazines, radio, advice books) of the times. This "intertextual" approach allows for an examination of the way

popular texts reinforce, but also sometimes contradict, one another. It provides a fuller understanding of the "discursive fields" in which programs were developed by creative staff and interpreted by audiences.

The first two articles look at the relationship between public and private agendas in the New Frontier, particularly in terms of how the nation's goals in space science provided a new set of metaphors for representations of family life—and especially the family activity of watching TV. Jeffrey Sconce's analysis of the science fiction/horror anthology *The Outer Limits* situates the program in relation to the history of speculative fiction about electronic media and their link to the world beyond the grave. He shows how the program represented television as an alienating evil machine that caused the death of human consciousness, and he looks at how various episodes linked this grim view of television to such consciousness flatteners as nuclear war and suburban complacency. Next, Lynn Spigel examines the racism and sexism at the heart of the televised space race. She considers how both mainstream news coverage and fiction TV represented space as a "final frontier" to be colonized by the white suburban family. Conversely, critics in African American media usually spoke of the journey to outer space as one more example of "white flight" that left blacks back on earth to grapple with poverty in inner cities.

The next three articles analyze television programs in relation to the explosive debates about the new sexuality. All of these articles demonstrate that the so called "sexual revolution" did not simply amount to a period of freedom or enlightenment for all; rather, the sexual revolution was a "discourse" through which it became possible to generate a new set of statements about what were perceived to be "normal" or "deviant" modes of power and pleasure for men and women. Julie D'Acci's examination of *Honey West* shows how scientific studies of female sexuality (most notably the Kinsey Report) and popular discourses on "sex and the single girl" informed the stylization of TV's first "swinging" female detective. She argues that while ABC attempted to attract a younger and hipper audience with this sexy action heroine, the producers and network were nervous about Honey's explosive sexuality, and they tamed her down for a family medium. The result, D'Acci shows, was a contradictory program that, for a variety of reasons, was quickly canceled and had little immediate influence on TV's portrayal of women characters. Moya Luckett's analysis of *The Patty Duke Show* continues with the theme of "sex and the single girl," but explores it in relation to psychological and market research on teenage girls. She particularly shows how the program's narrative motif of doubling (its "gimmick" of having Duke play the twin roles of Patty, an out-of-control American teenager, and Cathy, her more lady-like British cousin) served both to foreground and resolve contradictions about femininity in '60s America. In particular, this doubling motif highlighted the

contradiction between social demands for women to channel their sexual/emotional needs into heterosexual marriage, and girls' preference to remain in a homosocial (all girl) culture where they had more sexual, emotional, and social autonomy. Finally, Henry Jenkins examines *Dennis the Menace* in the context of the new permissive child-rearing methods most typically associated with Dr. Benjamin Spock. He argues that Dennis's "bad boy" character (as well as the child-rearing literature itself) expressed misogynist ideas about masculine freedom from and contempt for the "feminine" sphere of domesticity. Furthermore, he argues, Dennis's willful male persona, and the freedom he symbolized, should be seen as popular entertainment's response to widespread anxieties about the perceived breakdown of men's authority at work and at home.

The second section focuses on "Institutions of Culture," showing how policy debates, industrial practices, and organized pressure groups all played a role in shaping the everyday experience of watching television. Mark Alvey establishes the industrial background, explaining the institutional practices that generated the possibilities and also delineated the boundaries for creative production during the period. He demonstrates how the networks, Hollywood studios, independent production companies, and talent agencies organized a highly profitable system, but one that was also dependent upon a certain amount of "regulated innovation" in order to sustain the popular appeal of its programming. William Boddy's discussion of Senate hearings on violence in television programming reveals some of the tension points within the Hollywood system, involving outside pressure groups and federal concerns over program violence. While these pressure groups and government officials typically presented themselves as guardians of children, Boddy shows how these advocates often used the violence issue for their own political purposes. Joseph Turow analyzes another dimension of these struggles over program content in his essay on the way the American Medical Association (AMA) teamed up with the producers of medical dramas to become script consultants for the shows. According to Turow, the AMA did so in order to shape a positive image of doctors and private health care at a time of growing national debate over the merits of private vs. socialized medicine. Turow additionally demonstrates that while the AMA used this liaison in an attempt to secure popular consent for its profession, the producers of medical dramas used the AMA "seal of approval" to legitimate their programs as a form of high "science" with pedagogical value.

Later in the decade, as the cracks in the traditional structures of authority began to manifest themselves in numerous institutions, new and different struggles emerged. Now comedy sketches and popular songs associated with the antiwar and civil rights movements would become the object of intense

struggle, a point that Aniko Bodroghkozy demonstrates through her reading of corporate censorship memos regarding *The Smothers Brothers Comedy Hour* as well as her textual analysis of the program's increasingly political content over the course of its network run. Finally, Thomas Streeter shows how, at the end of the decade, numerous parties with different concerns participated in a series of policy debates concerning the emerging cable industry. Streeter argues that these groups were bound by a set of rules for speaking about cable that he calls "the discourse of the new technologies." This discourse, which drew on a history of utopian speculation about telecommunications, governed the very terms in which people could imagine and speak about cable, and in many ways it took on a kind of life of its own, quite apart from what the individual speakers meant when they engaged it.

The final section, "Nation and Citizenship," examines how notions of the TV nation were mobilized by network prime-time television. At the same time, it investigates how various citizens groups in local, regionally identified communities responded to these nationalized representations. In the land of the "New Frontier," where the myth of westward expansion was re-channeled to suit the "progressive" spirit of the space age, the American vernacular was being redefined. In turn, marginalized groups who did not share (or were not included) in the New Frontier's "expansive" spirit often resisted this nationalized, network consumer culture, attempting to retain their sense (however fantasized) of local place and group identity.

Michael Curtin's essay deals with the early part of the decade, showing how the dream of global satellite TV was promoted by the Kennedy administration in its efforts to consolidate its influence over the vast, variegated, and culturally diverse "community" of the Free World. Positioning itself as the symbol for a modern, cosmopolitan, worldly culture, the Kennedy circle explicitly contrasted itself with the supposedly provincial ways of middle America. The resentments engendered by this strategy would come home to roost later in the decade in the figure of the "silent majority," but Vicky Johnson shows how *The Lawrence Welk Show* operated throughout the 1960s to promote and sustain a midwestern-inspired sense of community identity that attempted to conserve traditions of the American "frontier myth" and, in complex ways, redefine these in relation to the progressive spirit of the New Frontier. Despite the image of good old community harmony that the bubbly band leader portrayed with his "Welk family" singalongs and square dance steps, the heartland, as all regions of the country, was sorely divided by the cultural revolutions of the 1960s, and the program often exhibited tensions between generations, regions, and races. Like Johnson, Horace Newcomb is interested in the redefinition of America's "frontier myth," as it was established in the television western. Newcomb shows how the Old West became a

setting for the negotiation of contemporary social problems after the war, problems that especially revolved around changing styles of manhood and the meaning of heroism. Also dealing in part with the western, Steven Classen's work details one of the most innovative civil rights campaigns, mounted by college students in Jackson, Mississippi, who agitated against the "whites only" theaters in the town by asking stars of popular television shows like *Bonanza* not to show up for local promotional appearances scheduled for segregated theaters. The pressure they brought to bear on the racist town hierarchy hinged, unexpectedly, on the pleasures they were able to deny white television viewers disappointed by the perceived disloyalty of their favorite stars. This local agitation campaign also had important political implications for future struggles in Jackson, the home of the notoriously racist television station WLBT, whose license was eventually revoked in a precedent-setting case that had wide-reaching implications for the public's right to be heard at the FCC. As Roberta Pearson shows, the Native American movement—which positioned itself in contrast to white society but which also wished to distinguish itself from African American civil rights campaigns—organized their forces against television in somewhat different ways. One of the first major issues to become the subject of collective strategy debates among Indian tribes was ABC's curious decision in 1967 to develop the series *Custer*, a program that seemed starkly contrary to broader social trends regarding race, politics, and representation. Pearson combines an analysis of the movement's responses to ABC with a textual analysis of the programs themselves that shows how the series evolved in relation to prior conventions of the Custer mythology in comics and adventure books. Finally, Herman Gray reflects on the ways contemporary television programs like *I'll Fly Away* remember the civil rights movement. In the process he explores the intertextual nature of memory itself, showing how these recent nostalgia programs recycle images from 1960s television and other '60s media. Television's failure to portray African Americans outside the conventional image of what Gray calls the "civil rights subject" continues to limit our nation's ability to come to terms with issues of race and difference.

As the contemporary penchant for nostalgia reminds us, the 1960s is in many respects not over—at least in the cultural imagination. In this regard, like any other decade, the 1960s does not start or end in a neatly packaged ten-year time period. Obviously, the social, cultural, and political climate of one decade often persists into the next. Depending on their subject, then, for some authors the 1960s begins in the mid-1950s, while for others it blends into the present.

The impact of the past on the present is especially important in our case, since the 1960s set a climate of debate about television that still informs the

way we imagine the medium and its overall value. Indeed, it seems likely that one of the reasons that 1960s entertainment genres are barely studied is the continued cultural biases against 1960s Hollywood TV that the "Vast Wasteland" speech made into a federal case. Public service intellectuals like Newton Minow—who in fact just published a book that extends his Wasteland critique and reform agenda to contemporary children's television—still hold the fort on the question of television's status in American culture, and still view culture with a capital "C." Meanwhile, conservative House Leader Newt Gingrich tries to pull the plug on public television and attacks its culture with a capital "C" ethos. So today, television continues to fare badly on either side of the fence. Either liberal cultural elites damn its over-commercialization, conservative tax payers cut its public functions out of the budget, or, in the case of former Vice President Quayle and now President Clinton, politicians use it as a scapegoat for all sorts of social dilemmas from welfare mothers to rampant violence.

Life magazine recently published an issue that presents a huge close-up of a child's innocent face with numerous words depicting social evils written across the margins—words such as "violence," "incest," "abuse," "alienation," and "television." That television is made equal to a list of social pathologies is so naturalized by this point in history that most readers probably won't even notice that television is not the same kind of thing as rape or violence. In a nation where millions grew up on *Sesame Street*, we would assume that the people at *Life* would know (as the famous *Sesame Street* ditty put it) "one of these things is not like the other." Then again, perhaps the people at *Life* have never watched *Sesame Street*—which is, after all, one of the most positive children's programs on television and which is, of course, a result of the more pro-social activist imagination that was spurred by the era of the Vast Wasteland.

Although Minow himself was calling for social change on television, the Wasteland critique was taken up in such a way that it universalized the utter "badness" of television, and turned that into the McLuhanite notion that television is a high-tech prosthesis evolving from the structures of the human psyche—what he called "an extension of man." Only now, mixed up with the tropes of the Wasteland, it becomes "an extension of man at his worst." In other words, even while Minow did not intend it this way, the Wasteland metaphor was transformed from his reformist agenda into an "essentialist" property of the medium, so that in the minds of many critics, television, a priori, was (and still is) simply a desolate, evil machine that replicates the lowest depths of the human spirit.

Indeed, the rhetoric of the Vast Wasteland typically manifests itself in a demonization of television that resonates in the political, intellectual, and

popular culture of our times. This demonization has become a form of narcissism in the extreme, where all one has to do is scoff at television to appear more socially responsible and culturally "in the know" than the people who watch it. (To be sure, narcissism has also been known to manifest among those self-styled popular intellectuals like McLuhan who secure their own authority as media gurus by saying that everything is, so to speak, "cool," and toss out the project of strategic reform altogether by assuming that the technology generates change by itself).

For such reasons, an exploration of 1960s programming, its institutional foundations, its social contexts, and its reception by audiences, can help to denaturalize some of the reigning cultural and political myths by which television has become the whipping post for problems that people themselves perpetuate in government, at home, and in their local communities. This book, then, attempts to move past the Wasteland logic that keeps us from looking seriously at the ways our most popular communication medium engaged with the social conflicts of the 1960s. We do this not to retrieve some romantic version of the decade filled by counterculture rebels or artistically "golden" programs, but rather to provide a "shock of recognition" in the present.

This history reminds us that the revolution may never be televised, but this is not because television is in itself incapable of imagining constructive social change. Rather, the revolution will not be televised because our reigning belief systems about television make it impossible for us to imagine the medium as a tool for anything but social and cultural depravity. One of the central lessons to be learned from 1960s television, then, is that the debilitating rhetoric on the medium which flourished in that period still informs the way we speak and think about television, even in the so called high-tech age of the information superhighway. It is in the hopes of getting off this road to nowhere and onto something more engaging that we offer this collection of essays.

part one

home fronts and new frontiers

Elizabeth Montgomery in *Bewitched*