

AND THEY LAUGHED: TV, SATIRE, AND SOCIAL CHANGE IN 1968 AMERICA

by

MATTHEW J. DANELO

(Under the Direction of Janice Hume)

ABSTRACT

This is a historical study of political satire in comedy variety shows on American television in the year 1968. It analyzes the dialogic content of episodes of non-narrative television shows that aired that year, with a primary focus on *The Carol Burnett Show*, *Rowan & Martin's Laugh-In*, and *The Smothers' Brothers Comedy Hour*. The year 1968 was a particularly tumultuous one in American cultural history, and therefore provided a cross sectional representation of cultural change. While analyzing the dialogic properties of these media texts through a Bakhtinian theoretical lens, three interconnected themes emerged. They were issues of race, gender, and sexuality; issues of war and politics; and issues of cultural changes in youth. These themes emerged in humorous sketches and jokes, which were utterances that reflected cultural shifts in the broad American viewership at that time.

INDEX WORDS: Satire, comedy, television, history, Bakhtin, 1968, Laugh-In, Smothers brothers, Carol Burnett, gender, race, war, politics, youth culture, generation gap

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DEDICATION

My parents first introduced me to popular culture when I was young and they played for me the soundtrack of the 1960s on “Forty-Fives.” We’d sing those songs as loudly as we could, and they’d tell me stories from their youth. They still sing those songs together, and they tell those same stories. I hope they never stop.

Mom and Pop, this is for you.

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PREFACE

In October 2012, when drinking coffee and watching *This Week with George Stephanopoulos* on a Sunday morning, I realized that as long as candidates ran for president in America those working at *Saturday Night Live* would enjoy a special kind of tenured employment. The 2012 race between President Barack Obama and Massachusetts Governor Mitt Romney was the most contentious and vitriolic in my lifetime – narrowly edging out the previous one for that title. And just a few days after one of the most important debates in that campaign, a panel of distinguished media pundits on *This Week* participated in a roundtable discussion, not of what had transpired between candidates a few days earlier, but instead of how past presidential debates had been satirized on SNL.¹ On this panel sat the former Speaker of the House of Representatives who was a republican, a former democratic Senator who had previously run for president, two ABC News correspondents, a presidential campaign manager, a presidential historian, and *The Washington Post's* George Will.²

Some may argue that to bookend panelists such as Newt Gingrich and Chris Dodd with clips starring comedians Phil Hartman and Dana Carvey made the real politicians easier to listen to, and possibly more sensible. Of course satire in mass media has a track record as an important cultural participant in communication surrounding current events.³ What was different here was its elevated placement, the fact that it was discussed parallel to actual news, and the seriousness with which that panel engaged the topic.

After the peculiarity of seeing Gingrich and Dodd go back and forth over who-did-the-best-debate-impression-of-what-candidate, the discussion segued to a discussion of the efficacy of presidential debates in electoral politics. The previous discussion of the efficacy of Hartman's and Carvey's impression skills had apparently been settled.

Ultimately I was fine with what transpired. As one who studies popular culture and political satire, I believe value exists in this type of discussion. Its conversational place in the American electoral process is by all means relevant. Well known is the contribution comedienne Tina Fey made in 2008 to the narrative surrounding vice-presidential candidate Sarah Palin – similar to the contribution Chevy Chase made to Gerald Ford's public perception with his 1976 caricature of the former president on SNL as a bumbling klutz.⁴ Jon Stewart's and Stephen Colbert's respective and collaborative contributions to political discourse are now as relevant as the SNL debate impersonations discussed on *This Week*.⁵

While media consumers derive legitimate news content from sketches on television comedy shows, American news organizations aren't necessarily throwing in the towel quite yet.⁶ Though they could potentially save a lot of money over at 30 Rockefeller Plaza if Brian Williams stepped down as managing editor of *NBC Nightly News* and simply handed the reigns over to long-time SNL producer Lorne Michaels. Maybe that would be better?

The legitimizing of television comedy as a vehicle for news content by mainstream, network news is the most striking point here. It is doubtful that broadcast news legends such as Walter Cronkite, Edward R. Murrow, or David Brinkley would have taken time to discuss the content of *Rowan & Martin's Laugh-In*, *The Smothers*

Brothers' Comedy Hour, or *The Carol Burnett Show* a generation before.⁷ At that time, comedians dabbled in the news, but newspeople did not dabble in comedy.

Just because satire was not discussed on the news, or consumed across multiple mass media platforms as it is today, does not mean that it was less important and influential during the golden age of broadcast journalism in the 1960s. As this dissertation will illustrate, satire existed in a mass media context and supplemented the relationship Americans created with news anchors like Cronkite, Murrow, and Brinkley. It had its own soapbox, far enough away from the anchors' desks, but close enough to relate with the same viewership.

In the decades preceding the cultural explosion of “infotainment” through shows like *Saturday Night Live*, *The Daily Show with Jon Stewart*, and *The Colbert Report*, political humor was found mostly in monologues on late night television and in sketches on prime-time variety shows. It was not discussed on the evening news or Sunday morning political talk shows. The topics addressed were generally not done humorously, nor was the satire in other programs part of the nightly news rundown.

Things are different today, especially with multiple media options. During the height of the television era, families gathered around the only set in the house to watch one of three or four programming options, and mostly for a couple hours in the evening. At that time, some comedy shows focused on what had previously been considered relevant for the news department. Comedians like Carol Burnett, Dan Rowan, Dick Martin, and the Smothers brothers paved the way for Lorne Michaels's SNL, Fey, Stewart, Colbert, and others. Without them, a foundational precedent wouldn't have been

set for the discussion I witnessed on *This Week*. Without them it's possible now we wouldn't find politics so entertaining.

¹ This Week with George Stephanopolous, "Panel III: Do Presidential Debates Change Elections?" ABC News, <http://abcnews.go.com/ThisWeek/video/panel-iii-debates-change-elections-17475471>.

² The panel included Rep. Newt Gingrich, Sen. Chris Dodd, Martha Raditz, Jake Tapper, Donna Brazile, Richard Norton Smith, and George Will.

³ Barry A. Hollander. "Late-Night Learning: Do entertainment programs increase political campaign knowledge for young viewers?" *Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media* 49(4), 2005, 402–415.

⁴ Jeff Labrecque, "The best of 'Saturday Night Live' political debates, from Chevy Chase to Tina Fey," *Entertainment Weekly*, October 15, 2012, <http://popwatch.ew.com/2012/10/15/saturday-night-live-political-debates>

⁵ Matthew E. Popkin. "The Role and Impact of *The Daily Show with Jon Stewart*: Taking Satire Seriously On A 'Daily Show' Basis." *Student Pulse* 4, no. 9 (2012). Retrieved from: <http://www.studentpulse.com/a?id=693>

⁶ Hollander, 402–415.

⁷ Walter Cronkite did report a story about CBS president Robert Wood's decision to cancel "The Smothers Brothers Comedy Hour," on April 4, 1969. However Cronkite did not go into contextual detail about the controversy surrounding its cancellation, nor did he offer any commentary on it. "CBS Evening News – Friday, April 4, 1969," Vanderbilt Television News Archive.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The emphasis that matters is that there are, essentially, no “ordinary” activities, if by “ordinary” we meant the absence of creative interpretation and effort.
– Raymond Williams, “The Long Revolution,” 1961¹

In the 1960s, as Edward R. Murrow was wrapping up his career as a broadcast journalist, and Walter Cronkite and David Brinkley were at the height of theirs, almost all American families owned at least one television.² The newness of the connectivity TV provided brought them together with shared viewing experiences that contributed to the feeling of a national culture.³ In the late 1960s, while broadcast news offered increasing coverage to viewers, more Americans were using television as their primary news source.⁴ Also thriving during prime time hours was the largely defunct genre of television known as “variety” – a mix of Vaudevillian sketches, musical performances, and stand-up comedy. After watching the news, audiences kept their televisions turned to one of three broadcast networks for that evening’s entertainment options.⁵

While the form of network news shows had changed little, the content of the news was becoming more investigative. That decade the country experienced a radical shift in national ideals, political policies, and demographics. By many accounts the late 1960s – and specifically the year 1968 – were a time of unprecedented global upheaval, and particularly in America. A certain mythology surrounds this time and is often peppered with tales of fantastical drug experimentation, patriotic battles for civil rights, less-

patriotic protests against the Vietnam War (depending on whom you ask), and the collective mourning of the deaths of prominent Americans such as the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. and New York Senator Robert F. Kennedy.⁶ In this single year nightly news stories, more than ever before, addressed the “crisis of authority” plaguing a generation of American leaders ill-equipped to deal with their constituents growing distrust of government.⁷ People turned on their televisions to see serious and dependable news anchormen who showed up right on time to tell them what happened. After that barrage of harsh reality, they stayed tuned to watch others who were just as dependable, but much sillier.

Satire was not new then, but was different than it is now, thus providing the purpose for this dissertation. The topics satire addressed in 1968, and how that was done, were part of a dramatic preface to how modern television satirists do what they do now. Satire’s influence and relevance are timeless. Just like today when we turn on the TV or surf the Internet to cope with political nonsense by laughing at those in power, in 1968 audiences tuned into *The Smothers Brothers Comedy Hour*, *Rowan & Martin’s Laugh-In*, *The Carol Burnett Show*, and other variety programs. Hosts and cast members told irreverent jokes and acted in sketches that pushed the boundaries of appropriateness, yet paralleled the issues of the day. Experimentation-as-escapism was necessary for some. Nineteen sixty-eight was consistently arrested by tragic news, and therefore in need of an adrenalized dosage of comedy.

That Year

1968.

Richard Nixon said this about America that year at a campaign rally:

If I were to pick a time in the whole history of man in which to live, and a place in which to live, I'd pick the United States of America, 1968. This is the place, this is the time, and never forget it.⁸

Of course, he would go on to say that exact same thing on at least two other occasions, in 1969 and 1973.⁹ At the beginning of 1968 Richard Nixon was not yet, as far as we know, a crook. He was also not yet President of the United States, nor was he even a candidate, even though it was an election year and unlike in the present day, campaigning did not really start until March of that year.

That year began with the election of Alexander Dubček, a moderate candidate in communist Czechoslovakia, and the first successful heart transplant in America. After that events fluctuated between socially surprising and culturally horrifying. The Tet Offensive in Vietnam in January confirmed what many average television viewers already suspected: that American troops were not deployed in only an advisory capacity. Then came news stories that showed President Lyndon Johnson and his administration had lied about their progress in keeping communism at bay in Southeast Asia.¹⁰ More Americans and Vietnamese continued to die while fighting for unclear motives in a war that half of Americans would deem as unnecessary by the end of that year's second month.¹¹

Anger boiled over in several major cities from the compounding frustration of too many people of color having been killed while fighting for equal rights as American citizens. One of those who died on the front lines that year was Martin Luther King Jr.

Sen. Robert F. Kennedy – popular presidential candidate, hope to struggling minorities, and the personification of the inspiration instilled by his late brother – was also assassinated.

A growing population of vocal, disenchanted youth was angry. Police resorted to brutal tactics in attempts to squash anti-war rallies on college campuses that mimicked widely publicized student protests in Paris, Prague, and Mexico City that year. At one point the panicked mayor of Chicago sanctioned authoritarian violence at the 1968 Democratic National Convention, viewed by Americans via live news broadcasts.

Organized politics was equally chaotic. The presidential election that year was a free-for-all. President Johnson decided against running for re-election, and at one point there were four democrats, five republicans, and one independent running against each other. The electoral system whittled it down to three. The American people then narrowed it down to one: Richard Nixon.

And the moderate Czech leader, Alexander Dubček? He was deposed when his country was invaded by the Soviet Union 19 days after going on television and telling his people that the Soviet Union would most definitely not invade them.

That December, O.J. Simpson won the Heisman Trophy and did so garnering the largest number of votes a college player has received to this day.

That summer Saddam Hussein came to power in Iraq.

That spring, twentysomethings got naked in the Broadway musical “Hair”, and Harry Belafonte, a black singer, and Petula Clark, a white singer, held hands on national television. That fall, a white captain (Kirk) and a black lieutenant (Uhura) would boldly go so far as to kiss on national television on “Star Trek”.

Black Power infiltrated the Olympics when two American track and field medalists raised their fists during “The Star Spangled Banner.”

A black man won the U.S. Open.

A lesbian won Wimbledon.

Thousands of American men burned their draft cards. Some American women burned bras, girdles, pantyhose, high heels, and other assorted objects of feminine material mystique.

Three Americans orbited the moon.

And Elvis came back with a TV special.

Much has been written about this decade, and that year in particular. Most of the histories of the 1960s, especially those dealing with the involvement of media, agree that the fruit born from the sixties resulted from seeds planted in the forties and fifties.¹²

From 1941 to 1945, citizens banded together both in spirit and in literal military unison to defeat enemies on multiple fronts during World War II. There was a prevailing idea – probably perpetuated by the pride of many who fought in and lived through the war – that America existed as a great society where everyone pulled themselves up by their bootstraps and took care of their own individual needs. Certain cultural changes in the 1960s challenged this ideal and made possible the potential for different life choices.¹³ Prior to World War II, the United States had suffered through the Great

Depression. The generation that came of age at that time had drastically limited life choices.

In the 1950s, to a lesser degree, the same military success story was retold through the Korean War. However, most of that decade Americans at home enjoyed a peaceful economic boom that gave way to a rising middle class. This focus on domesticity slowed some of the progress women had made after being called to the workforce during WWII. Men re-joined the civilian workforce and most women stayed home with their children and tended to household duties.¹⁴ As national attention turned inward away from the theaters of Europe and the South Pacific, a new generation matured. The 1960s began with young Americans coming of age at a time when they were not being called to defend the nation in the way their parents had. The United States was in a sort-of-but-not-official war in Vietnam, and “the enemy” was not as clearly defined as wars in prior decades. There was also no direct national threat to the shores of the USA stemming from Southeast Asia.

In 1961, the word “lifestyle” became part of the American vernacular.¹⁵ Its conjoining of “life,” that which made up a set of circumstances, and “style,” the exterior choices made when presenting oneself, promoted the notion that life could be changed by exercising free will. The idea that creating a better individual set of circumstances could lead to more lifestyle options for others contributed to spreading a certain kind of social awareness.¹⁶

In the case of black Americans, this hope translated to the attainability of basic recognition as individuals. Their struggle for civil freedom would soar to national awareness in the 1960s with the passage of the Civil Rights Act in 1964, and then later

that decade with riotous anger that some admonished, but others justified as too little too late. During the 1960s the non-violent ways of Martin Luther King, Jr. were at odds with other leaders in the African-American community, such as Huey Newton of the Black Panthers and Malcolm X of the Nation of Islam. By the time James Earl Ray assassinated King on April 4, 1968 a combustible anger simmering in mostly black neighborhoods in Washington, D.C., Detroit, Los Angeles, and other major cities took form in violent outbursts that some called riots. Not all African-Americans expressed themselves this way, but enough did for television cameras to capture the result of this frustration and broadcast it into the living rooms of predominantly white audiences.

Plainly put, this was a chaotic time. That year cultural frenzy was at its peak. Looking back at it through different lenses of analysis gives historians, scholars, and others more clarity about the events that took place.¹⁷ It also reveals the origins of some social trends in media that exist today, specifically when investigating the way mass media played a role in both shaping and reflecting American culture.

Some people thought 1968 was the beginning of the end of traditional, American society. Others looked at the onslaught of tragedy that year and saw the potential for humor. Many in that second group worked in television.

They Saw It on TV

Home. In school. At a bar. At work. Shopping for groceries. About to run some errands. About to get on a train. These are all potential answers to the question, “Where were you when John F. Kennedy was shot?” – a question for which almost every American alive in November 1963 has an answer. A cultural cartographer could use that experience as a point of origin when mapping out any type of history of America in the 1960s because of how its news was shared. Many remember trying to get to a television as fast as possible, because they wanted information immediately.

Certain historic events of the 1960s are visually documented and mentally preserved because of television. By the year of John F. Kennedy’s assassination, television had emerged as the mass medium of choice and about 92 percent of all American families owned at least one set.¹⁸ Americans shared that experience through television and, as the decade progressed, they shared other experiences as well, including Civil Rights marches and speeches by Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., the efforts of labor activist Cesar Chavez to unite migrant farm workers, the steadfast determination of segregationist Alabama Gov. George Wallace, and NASA’s triumphant race to the moon. Because of the rise of this visual medium, the way history was framed is rooted in taped evidence of these and other stories. For many affected by influential moments throughout the sixties, taped replays became powerful homages and honorable eulogies, a way to revisit the past.¹⁹

Television scholars have identified distinct periods in the evolution of television, and most agree that the medium was at its peak of influence during the era of networks.²⁰ From the 1950s to the 1980s the “Big Three” (ABC, NBC, and CBS) dominated the

airwaves and held the attention of about 90 percent of viewers. This is the era that still has the greatest hold on the present idea of what television should be.²¹ The late 1960s was the apex of that era, especially with respect to broadcast news. One out of every four TV viewers regularly watched the evening news. Twice as many said they believed the news on television to be more truthful than the news in print.²²

Because television content was determined by audience ratings, simple interaction with television on a micro scale became highly influential on a macro one. When individuals or families decided what programs to watch, they were measured in ratings that influenced decision-makers and content shapers who stood guard at the gates of future television programming. This gave viewers in the 1960s quite a say regarding what kind of content would be available for consumption and, in one sense, established a pathway to a type of “cultural citizenship.”²³ Simply turning the dial from one channel to another fulfilled the voting duties of these “citizens of media,” who elected what shows remained on air.²⁴

There are some media scholars, such as Marshall McLuhan, Joshua Meyrowitz, and Neil Postman, who would disagree with the idea that television could enhance the citizenship of viewers.²⁵ In the mid-1980s, it was Postman who suggested that since its inception television has dumbed down society and stunted the intellectual participation of those who watch it.²⁶ Others have said that not only has it encouraged a general feeling of malaise among viewers, but it also has imposed specific de-motivational effects on the viewing electorate.²⁷ In other words, some believe that TV makes people lazy and less likely to participate in society. However, that’s not giving viewers enough credit.²⁸ Cultural scholar Raymond Williams was one of the first academics to write about the

fusion of television and culture. In the early 1970s, he asked whether it was reasonable to ascribe so much power to any type of emerging technology that it becomes the sole cause for any effect, and suggested that it is one of several factors for contributing to the evolution of a culture.²⁹

They cast ballots by switching stations, and this media consuming electorate could just as easily have made their voices heard by turning the television off.³⁰ Instead they watched more than ever the news of the escalating war in Vietnam, as those in charge of public policy tripped over the faulty logic of their Pentagon-approved talking points, and the daily images reinforced an ominous future for every young man of draft age. They could've turned off the TV, but they didn't. Not only did they keep the television on, but they also watched programs other than news broadcasts that provided additional news-related content.

Thinking of a television as an effects-only-producing box doesn't take into account the personal agency of viewers. Television contributed to shaping an environment that was the complete opposite of the print medium, specifically with how it relied more on the presentation of visual images to communicate rather than the structural arrangement of words.³¹ To say more than this, that it took over as the primary influencer of the thoughts and minds of those who watched it, is to go too far.

The notion that media have a single, linear effect on consumers glosses over the idea that consumers are more than just sponge-like receptacles. Audiences don't just receive information, they also process it and shape how they feel about it in their minds. Media consumers are actively involved in shaping other cultural and social trends that influence those who create and produce media content. Often media scholars do not take

into account the multiple ways social or cultural nuances are present when analyzing the relationship of a medium's message with its audience.³²

Entertaining Politics

The majority of TV viewers in the early 1960s were young. The boom of babies born during the previous decade of post-war procreating resulted in the largest age group in the country coming of age at the same time television was at its zenith. Forty-one percent of all Americans were under the age of 20 in 1965.³³ Eighteen to 20 year-olds drafted to fight in Vietnam did not yet have the right to vote – a major point of contention in anti-war protests at that time. The youth of America was growing in number and in the persuasive power they held over those who created the TV shows they watched.

In the late sixties, television became the leading medium for political news, thus gaining cultural and political influence. Additionally, the editorial content of prime-time talk shows and comedy variety hours began focusing on current events in an attempt to use humor as a way of making sense of the news. The fact is that news media are often viewed and studied as if always the most important source of political information, and that's simply not the case.³⁴

At the height of television news viewership in the late 1960s, the level of political content in entertainment programming escalated. These shows presented news and politics in a different way. Actors and comedians became conduits for information alongside traditional network news anchors. Scholars have suggested that one of the reasons these television audiences of the late 1960s – and specifically the year 1968 – were drawn to comedy and variety programs was because of the politicized programming that was the first of its kind.³⁵ Discussing tumultuous political and social events in a “non-newsy” manner allowed them to be more palpable for American viewers who were quickly becoming divided by a growing generation gap and shifting political ideology.³⁶

This is, of course, no surprise to modern television audiences, especially when it comes to politics and how it's satirized today. Though the chicken-egg question of "Which came first, the viewers' thoughts, or the implantation of those thoughts by the media?" is often batted about in academic circles, it is clear that when television was coming into its own it had definite influence on audiences in a way new media platforms often do.³⁷ The fact is that even though viewers in 1968 claimed to constantly brace themselves, readying for the impact of the next national tragedy, their habitual actions of tuning in regularly to nightly news broadcasts communicate that they wanted information, good or bad. The more viewers were saturated by the news, the more they became desensitized to the reality the news presented.³⁸ The barrage of televised messages numbed the sting of the information injection in a way no other medium had done before.

Humor made the bad news easier to imbibe as it often has throughout history. It also made those imbibing it think more about its underlying messages. Satire has certain qualities that have not changed in centuries. Its use has been shown to inform, incite, and persuade audiences of all different cultures throughout many different eras. It is a rhetorical tool often viewed as a non-traditional way of disseminating information, and rightly so. No other communicative tactic can combine education and humor in a way that both bucks authority and brings about a special kind of audience engagement.

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- ¹ Raymond Williams. *The Long Revolution* (Peterborough, CA: Broadview Press, 1961, 2001), 54.
- ² David R. Farber, *Age of Great Dreams: America in the 1960s* (New York, NY: Hill and Wang, 1994), 52.
- ³ Farber, 50.
- ⁴ Daniel C. Hallin. "Sound bite news: Television coverage of elections, 1968-1988." *Journal of Communication* 42(2), 1992, 5.
- ⁵ Those networks were the America Broadcasting Company (ABC), Columbia Broadcasting System (CBS), and the National Broadcasting Company (NBC).
- ⁶ Farber, 265-267.
- ⁷ Aniko Bodroghkozy. "*The Smothers Brothers Comedy Hour* and the Youth Rebellion," in *The Revolution Wasn't Televised*, ed. by Lynn Spigel and Michael Curtain (New York, NY: Routledge, 1997), 208-209. In a footnote in this essay Bodroghkozy points out that philosopher Antonio Gramsci used this phrase to mark the moment when dominant ideology ceases making sense to the subordinate class, and the ruling class then resorts to coercion instead of the previously consensual methods used to maintain dominance.
- ⁸ 1968 with Tom Brokaw, (2007; New York, NY: A&E Home Video, 2008) DVD.
- ⁹ The other two times Nixon said this were in remarks to participants in the 1969 Senate Youth Program (<http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=2252>), and in the commencement address he gave at Florida Technological University in Orlando, FL on June 8, 1973.
- ¹⁰ Bodroghkozy, 209.
- ¹¹ According to a Gallup Poll conducted in February 1968.
- ¹² Todd Gitlin, *The Sixties: Years of hope, days of rage* (New York, NY: 1993), 13.
- ¹³ Howard Brick. *Age of Contradiction: American thought & culture in the 1960s* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1998) xiii.
- ¹⁴ Ibid.
- ¹⁵ Farber, 55.
- ¹⁶ Ibid. Farber discusses the idea that more public conversation – particularly that surrounding the Civil Rights movement led to prevailing thought among other groups – women, youths, etc. – that social change was possibly through similar methods.
- ¹⁷ Farber, 267.
- ¹⁸ Farber, 52.
- ¹⁹ Michael Eric Dyson. *April 4, 1968* (New York, NY: Basic Civitas Books, 2008), 30.
- ²⁰ Amanda D. Lotz. *The Television Will be Revolutionized* (New York, NY: University Press, 2007).
- ²¹ Geoffrey Baym. *From Cronkite to Colbert: The Evolution of Broadcast News*. (Boulder, CO: Paradigm Publishers, 2010), 9.
- ²² Baym, 10.
- ²³ Paul Achter. "Representing America: News Parody and Cultural Citizenship." Conference Papers -- National Communication Association (January 2008): 1; John

Hartley. "Television, Nation and Indigenous Media." *Television & New Media* 5, no. 1 (2004), 7-25.

²⁴ John Hartley, *Uses of Television* (Oxford, UK: Routledge, 1999), 157. Hartley uses the term "citizens of media" to underscore the point that viewers of television at any time participate in the creation of content by choosing what to watch.

²⁵ Margot Hardenbergh. "The Death of Television," *ETC: A Review of General Semantics* 67, no. 2 (2010), 170-176.

²⁶ Neil Postman. *Amusing Ourselves to Death* (New York, NY: Penguin Books, 1985).

²⁷ Pippa Norris. *The Virtuous Circle: Political communication in post-industrial societies* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2000); and Robert D. Putnam. *Bowling Alone: The collapse and revival of American community* (New York, NY: Simon & Schuster, 2000).

²⁸ Matt Quayle. "The Method of the Medium is in Motion." *ETC: A Review Of General Semantics* 67, no. 3 (July 2010): 300-310.

²⁹ Raymond Williams. *Television: Technology and Cultural Form* (New York, NY: Routledge Classics, 2003), 1-2.

³⁰ Terry Anderson. *The Movement and the Sixties: Protests in America from Greensboro to Wounded Knee* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 1995), 209.

³¹ Hardenbergh, 171.

³² Horace M. Newcomb. "On the Dialogic Aspects of Mass Communication." *Critical Studies In Mass Communication* 1(1), 1984, 34-50.

³³ Farber, 57.

³⁴ Jeffery P. Jones. "A Cultural Approach to the Study of Media Citizenship." *Social Semiotics* 16 (2), 2006, 365-383.

³⁵ Richard Corliss, "Happy Days Are Here Again," *Television: The Critical View*, 3rd ed., ed. by Horace Newcomb (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1982), 66.

³⁶ *Ibid.*

³⁷ Jeffrey P. Jones. *Entertaining Politics: Satiric television and political engagement*, 2nd ed. (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2010), 23-25.

³⁸ David Marc. *Comic Visions: Television comedy and American culture* (Hoboken, NJ: Wiley-Blackwell, 1997), 8.

CHAPTER 2

SATIRE

Yes, I am proud; I must be proud to see Men not afraid of God, afraid of me: Safe from the Bar, the Pulpit, and the Throne, Yet touch'd and sham'd by Ridicule alone.
 – Alexander Pope, “Epilogue to the Satires,” 1738

There is a formula to funny. Humor is not accidental, no matter how it seems, especially if it also aims to be popular. What appears to be a quick-witted retort, random physical act, or an intuitive response is always the reciprocal product of other forces at work. The conduit of the laughter-inducing message is influenced and shaped by outside forces. A joke is generally an organic microcosm of the situation it addresses.¹

It's best to think of both humor and satire as products of recipes. The ingredients must function cohesively to balance each other for audiences to find the final dish palatable. And different television audiences have different tastes. As George Schlatter, producer of *Rowan & Martin's Laugh-In*, said in 2012:

There is a science to joke telling. You have to have the attention of the audience, you have to have the intellectual as well as physical participation of the audience, and you must have an audible indication of their acceptance of you, and if you don't hear that every ten seconds, you're dying.²

Schlatter added that comedians are like other performers in that they need affirmation. Laughter to them is like applause for an actor, or an ovation for a singer.³ Much like the

way cultural citizenship influences TV ratings, the reaction of laughter gives audiences a subtle power over a satirical joke. So, when constructing a joke, not only must the technical aspects be present, so should a confident delivery mechanism. For a joke to succeed, both its elements and the joker's ability to read the intended audience are equally important. This basic principle is foundational in all types of humor, and especially in satirical humor.⁴

Satirical humor's unique identity is found in its relationship with the cultural context in which it is presented. Regular jokes generally have one purpose: to make the audience laugh. Satirical jokes have dual purposes: to make the audience laugh while informing them through criticism. Within the genre of satire, subgenres include social satire and political satire. Social satire focuses on society and its cultural interactions, such as daily life idiosyncrasies. Political satire consists of jokes told at the expense of those in authority, the "rulers," though it can also extend towards those who are ruled.⁵

Satirists can't help including their own ideologies when telling jokes, because opinion is foundational to the nature of satire. It's an act of commentary, after all. A commentator's beliefs about what necessitates change are what drive the joke's telling in the first place. A spectrum of ideology is evident throughout satire's history. Its fundamental traits trace back to classical origins and have changed little even though the format of how satire is presented has evolved significantly.

Constructing Satire

In the mid-twentieth century, Russian literary scholar Mikhail Bakhtin spent some time checking out European carnivals. What drew people to them, he wondered. What was it about their revelry that was enticing? What performances resonated with amusement-seekers? One thing he noticed was the way carnival attendees were drawn to performers who mocked those in authority. Most of the time this was done by creating a caricature of someone, and over-emphasizing certain traits to the point that the representation was almost grotesque. The isolation of these specifics elated audiences.⁶ The irony for the people was seeing powerful figures parodied and potentially embarrassed.⁷ For instance a less-than-eloquent politician might be portrayed as a mute. An overweight leader may be referenced only by his or her obesity. Who was ridiculed was clear, according to Bakhtin, as were the political or cultural reasons why those particular people were chosen.

Certain criteria must be met in order for humor to be considered satire. The difference between Chevy Chase's clumsy version of Gerald R. Ford on *Saturday Night Live* in 1975 and his tripping and falling as a random character in any other sketch, is the specificity of the target. Chase was showing the President of the United States to be clumsy, not some arbitrary character. The caricature drove the scene and its action.

This is one of the reasons why satire is effective. The butt of the jokes, whether an individual or group, is clear.⁸ The situation is reduced to simple terms.⁹ Audiences shouldn't have to stretch to figure out what is being made fun of, which makes it easier for them to understand the joke's message.¹⁰ This is true in both political and social satire. Both apply reductionist perspectives to their subjects by stereotyping to the point

where only the traits ridiculed seem to make up the whole of what is presented. To force an audience to over-analyze a sketch is to give it leeway to miss a punch line.

This is why modern political satire stands as one of the more prominent types of humor on television. Politicians are visible wielders of power in today's culture, therefore the most likely self-aggrandizing targets to be reduced to basic preconceptions through comedy.¹¹ In modern society, they're among those who make decisions that influence and affect audiences, and therefore are subject to targeting by popular mass media satirists.

Another reason satire can be effective exists in the very nature of its performance. By swaddling jokes in the blankets of drama a satirist can get away with things that would normally be considered inappropriate or out of bounds. For example, satire presented within the narrative structure of a sketch, play, or film is often more popular with audiences than jokes told alone.¹² These parameters make convenient fictions that are influenced by actual events, and employ stereotypes rather than realistic representations.¹³ The stereotype has roots in reality, so enough of a bridge exists for an audience to cross over, just for that moment, and accept the stereotype as truth for the sake of going along with the joke.¹⁴ Sometime stereotypes can linger, influencing audiences, and sometimes they are forgotten.¹⁵ It depends on the audience. It depends on the satirist.

Also relevant to what constitutes satire are individual traits found within its structural framework. Several scholars have identified a number of qualities necessary to define a piece of comedy as satire, and often their lists overlap.¹⁶ In the mid-1980s one of them, English professor George A. Test, compiled a list of four traits often acknowledged as the most agreed upon building blocks of satirical humor in literature.¹⁷

1. **Aggression** – Satirists are assertive and purposeful, and attack perceived wrongs or inconsistencies within a system or society. Purposeful aggression acts as fuel to the fires, igniting satire with sharp comments on particular issues. This is the initial trait that drives a satirist to write a joke.¹⁸
2. **Judgment** – Satire has definite biases towards its intended targets. Jokes are obviously one-sided, though not always politically partisan, yet satire is not ambiguous in its ideology. Negative is negative, and positive is positive. There is no gray area.
3. **Play** – A “fun factor” exists in order to establish a relationship with the audience. If a joke is too dark, or heavy-handed, the audience could miss both its humor and point. It could come off as mean, or bullying. Often this happens when a satirist tries to force a serious message into a humorous situation, rather than finding the humor that already exists and letting it naturally highlight a particular issue.¹⁹
4. **Laughter** – This is the intended reaction to the joke. Ultimately this is the goal for any satirist. If a joke works it will make audiences less affected by the shock of being made aware that an injustice exists, while still pointing it out and informing them. While a joke writer cannot ultimately be held responsible for how various audience members perceive his or her intended message, knowing their collective states of mind is important for effective communication. Laughter can demonstrate popular acknowledgement and acceptance of the message.

Test noted that while most comedy contains some of these elements, in order for a piece to be deemed “satirical” it must contain all four of them. For instance a piece of literature – or in the case of media analysis, a media text such as a film or TV show – could be humorous, but might be lacking in judgment, or only be mildly aggressive.²⁰ A joke may be witty but without a specific target.²¹ Often satire can be confused with parody, which is the act taking over the style of someone’s communication in a ludicrous manner.²² The same goes for irony, the use of a double meaning in a joke.²³ However parody and irony can both be infused into satirical humor. Satirists can wield many comedic weapons, though every weapon brandished is not necessarily satirical when used in another context.

Satire: From the Stage to Small Screen

The origins of satire can be traced to the ancient stages. Its basic form was established during the period of early Greek drama known as “Old Comedy.” Examples of authority being ridiculed can be seen in some surviving plays from this era, most which were written by Aristophanes.²⁴ Through Roman times it evolved into two forms attributed to the poets Horace and Juvenile. Horatian satire was lighter and generally good-natured, while still targeting specific leaders and policies. Juvenilian satire was much more biting, heavily sarcastic, and sometimes even mean. The primary objective of both was to improve society.²⁵

A major change that marked the transition from Old Comedy to New Comedy was how writers depended less on a particular dramatic technique known as a “parabasis.” The parabasis was used as an informative tool to clue the audience in on context, or the backstory, surrounding certain situations in a play. Often a parabasis was delivered either via monologue or by a chorus, and spoken directly to the audience breaking the invisible “fourth wall,” the theatrical divide that separates the actors and their stage from the audience.²⁶ In a way, the parabasis is similar to how a modern television news anchor, or even a modern satirist who poses as one, presents real drama to viewers.

As the popularity of drama increased in classical culture, audiences subsequently became more comfortable with the way drama presented information, and any relevant material formerly explained in the parabasis began to be delivered en scene by the characters themselves. It became less necessary for a chorus or monologue to explain a performance to audiences that got more of the jokes with fewer clues.

Horace once opined about how satire should be viewed: “The satirist, speaking out freely, seeks to laugh men out of their follies.”²⁷ This was in response to his critics and not a specific academic manifesto, though his recorded retort stands as one of the first established theories of satire – it’s all in good fun, and not meant to be taken too seriously.²⁸ Diomedes Grammaticus, a Roman grammarian who rose to prominence about a quarter century after Horace died, took an opposing view. He called the practice of satire, “defamatory and composted to carp at human vices.” Diomedes’s view was strictly moralist. He did not believe that playfulness was an excuse for what he saw as disrespect.²⁹

Later scholars have analyzed satire as literature in accordance with traits of major literary periods. Renaissance scholars noticed a return to the classical traditions of both Horace and Juvenile during that era.³⁰ They note that sixteenth-century Elizabethan writers used satire to itemize complaints, thus making their barbs too efficient, absent of wit, and repetitively boring.³¹ Eighteenth-century British literature saw an increase in attacks on both lawmakers and their motives. For example, it was during this time that Jonathan Swift produced two of the most famous examples of political satire. His *Gulliver’s Travels* was a Horatian literary epic so entertaining and fanciful to many readers that they did not even recognize it as a satirical piece that mocked the state of European government, religious intolerance and the corruptibility of those in charge. Yet Swift’s essay *A Modest Proposal*, in which he bluntly but wryly suggested the English solve their hunger problems by eating Irish babies, was viewed as horrific by many who missed its irony. Critics at that time denounced satire, and particularly Swift, as destructive to an orderly way of life.³² Yet, scholars have since noted that this was a time

of popularity for satire, and historical periods of polarization often result in seminal works like Swift's.³³

The nineteenth century saw the meteoric rise of newspapers and magazines. Just as the format of literature was adjusted in order to fit increasingly mass circulated print media, so did the ways in which satire was presented. Newspapers as early as the American Revolution featured satirical cartoons with grotesque caricatures of powerful figures like King George III.³⁴ Editorial cartoons became staples in both international and American newspapers after that, and still exist to the present day.³⁵ In the nineteenth and twentieth centuries satire also found its way into American newspaper opinion columns. It became a sarcastic editorial tool for columnists to use when attempting to persuade readers while entertaining them.³⁶

Thomas Nast took up this mantle at the turn of the twentieth century. He was a columnist and editorial cartoonist in New York City who was the scourge of corrupt politicians, and beloved by many readers for his frank depictions of class distinctions.³⁷ Nast was influential with bringing awareness to corruption in New York City, and specifically that of politician William “Boss” Tweed, a city official at Tammany Hall. Among some of the lasting images his cartoons contributed to the pop culture lexicon are the modern version of Santa Claus – with the red suit, black boots, and white beard – and the elephant as the symbol for the Republican Party.³⁸

A modern day social satirist, whose work has been nationally syndicated for several recent decades, is Dave Barry. Barry started writing humor columns in his native Pennsylvania before establishing himself as a syndicated columnist for *The Miami Herald*. Barry's columns were observational, social satire. They mostly focused on

common people and “every day problems.” He didn’t directly address those in power, though he often pointed to a breakdown in a leadership. Barry chose these situations because he felt his satire would refract that which was often taken for granted, and show frustrating situations for what they really reflected.³⁹

As political satire evolved, so did social satire. The knack for lampooning regular people and everyday situations developed as politics became more intertwined with society, and as mass media began to cover more of both.⁴⁰ While political satire tended to focus more on leaders and lawmakers, social satire focused on the effects of those causes in every day situations. For instance, in the mid-1960s an American television comedy sketch might have mentioned Civil Rights issues. If it focused on the inability for lawmakers to pass comprehensive Civil Rights legislation, it would be political satire. But, if it focused on how the lives of black Americans were affected by the lack of such laws, then it was social satire.

The idea that satire has thrived in the face of – and sometimes because of – threatened censorship or political reprisal is easy to overlook for those who enjoy modern free speech protection.⁴¹ However, censorship and critical backlash have historically been hurdles for popular satirists to jump, even as recently as mid-twentieth century America when writers for TV shows like *The Smothers Brothers Comedy Hour* faced the following ultimatum: stop being controversial or be fired. Psychotherapist Sigmund Freud – modern culture’s arbiter between what we do, and why we do what we do – wrote in 1899, “...the stricter the censorship the more far-reaching will be the disguise and the more ingenious too may be the means employed for putting the reader on the

scent of true meaning.”⁴² At that time he wasn’t talking about how satire related to millions through television, but he could have been.

Political Satire's Evolution

Bakhtin addressed why certain rituals, which seem perfectly acceptable, become abhorrent when presented with frivolity and laughter. In the early twentieth century, he observed, at length, a carnival celebration prior to the beginning of Lent and noted how the order of religious norms was mocked. That which was deemed sacred was profaned, order was turned into chaos, and nobody seemed to care. The structure of the event was such that those in attendance joined in activities they never would have dared under non-carnival circumstances. The social rules were flipped.

In order for a humorist to write jokes about politics, he or she must first be informed about the political process and its players. Historically, those leading satiric discourse kept close watch on political goings on in their communities, and viewed them through the lenses of their own foundational or partisan beliefs.⁴³ Satire developed across the political spectrum with certain traits forming on different sides. Conservative satirists have generally joked about the stripping away of tradition, while liberal satirists advocated more revolutionary change.⁴⁴

In modern American politics, conservatives are viewed as more stringent in the fundamentals of their beliefs than liberals. For example, they generally adhere to a literal interpretation of the Constitution, whereas liberals see the document as more fluid as culture has changed since it was first drafted.⁴⁵ Recently, conservative political campaigns have fought more targeted cultural battles than liberals in the hopes of mobilizing like-minded voters for social reasons.⁴⁶ One example is 2008 campaign against California's Proposition 8, which if passed it would have recognized same-sex civil unions in that state.

Current satire on American television, including that presented on *The Daily Show*, *The Colbert Report*, or *Saturday Night Live*, defies the rules of traditional information dissemination as set by most broadcast journalism standards established in the 1950s and 1960s. The very nature of satire is at odds with the conventional, linear way of how traditional news has been delivered. This may be why few conservative satirists exist, and none are currently as popular on television as Stewart, Colbert, and the SNL crew. Conservatism has difficulty grappling with the notion that satire both informs and entertains because, according to their ideology, the two should not comeingle.

This also presents a paradox for some conservative TV viewers who watch satire. Many do not take seriously messages couched in satirical form because laughter accompanies them. This could be another reason why satire is often associated more with liberals than conservatives. When given a choice between traditional news coverage and satirical coverage – even though scholarship shows that sometimes satire is more effective in communicating a message than traditional news – conservatives would trade the efficacy in satire for the familiar comfort of the mainstream broadcast structure.⁴⁷

This is not to say conservatives are not funny, or that their ideology does not allow for them to value humor. It also does not discount the notion that conservatives may embrace certain forms of satire for its humorous elements alone, and divorce themselves from its political motives. In that case, for them it ceases to be satire, according to Test. Since it doesn't inform it's only entertainment.

A 2008 study surveyed 300 respondents of equal partisanship to see how they responded to certain types of jokes. The researchers' hypothesized that conservatives would be drawn to more traditional jokes with a structured lead-in, stereotypical

characters, and rhythmically delivered punch line, while liberals would respond favorably to more abstract humor. Their hypothesis was disproven. The data showed that the liberals responded more favorably to the traditional jokes, and the conservatives responded favorably to both types of jokes. Therefore conservatives were shown to be more amenable to humor than liberals, just as long as it was kept separate from the distribution of information.⁴⁸

A columnist for *The New York Times* commented on this study, pointing out that one of the reasons the hypothesis might have been flawed was because social scientists exist in a world that's predominantly liberal. (The statistic he gave was one in seven – conservatives to liberals – though his source was neither cited, nor mentioned.) He pointed out that water cooler talk consisting of the constant evisceration of conservatives could be a factor in assuming they didn't appreciate humor, never thinking that they simply viewed humor differently than liberals.⁴⁹

The popularity of political satire on television is a newer phenomenon simply because of the youth of TV as a medium when compared with literary texts. However, the ideology behind it is not. Modern satire on television seems to only have increased in its public discourse, but that doesn't mean that all television news will soon become satirized versions of current events. Just because one type of mediated content is popular, does not mean that it will replace an existing one.⁵⁰ However, in order for television satire to remain popular it is necessary that viewers continue to believe change is possible within that which is lampooned. Satire's goal of influencing society can only be accomplished when audiences can first fathom actual improvement. Otherwise the informative aspect of a satirist's message is null.⁵¹

Jon Stewart, host of *The Daily Show*, is well known for his personal liberal politics, though he claims that his fake news broadcast is not influenced by any particular ideology. Stewart exists as a satirical representation of traditional news anchors, so it makes sense he would target most of his aggression towards actual news anchors. But because news often covers political figures, that has allowed him certain flexibility with wielding the ideology of satire, and when he has allowed it to correlate with his own personal ideology. For instance, after September 11, 2001 Stewart focused much of his satire on cable news and how he thought it wasn't living up to its potential "fourth estate" responsibilities as government watchdogs. Maybe he felt it necessary to go soft on politicians as a result of the widespread patriotism/jingoism that followed the attack on America. Or, maybe, he felt that the best use of the show's influence was to scrutinize what he saw as a response more hyperbolic than that of politicians.⁵² Whatever the reason, by the second anniversary of the tragedy – before America even invaded Iraq – Stewart had a change of heart and was back to targeting political figures as before, as well as those in the mainstream press.⁵³

Modern TV satirists are the new Horaces, Juveniles, and Swifts, and with the widespread adaptation of online media it is now easier for new satirists to emerge via multiple platforms. Because of the rise of digital technology as a mass medium, rookie satirists can define their own audience parameters and easily cut satirical riffs based on any level of political leaders they choose.⁵⁴ Bloggers can publish or broadcast their jokes online, making them accessible to millions. However, clips of original programming are often circulated on the Internet only after originally broadcast on television.

Recent scholarship has noted the informative nature of modern satire, specifically on television. One study of the 1992 presidential election suggested that viewers of late night talk shows, which are steeped in satire in the form of monologues and skits, had an increased awareness of the politics surrounding that election. Similarly, a Pew poll in 2008 showed that viewers of *The Daily Show with Jon Stewart* also knew more about politics than those who did not regularly view the program. However, while modern television satire does inform, its main goal is still to entertain. Without primarily being funny its informational potency cannot be guaranteed.⁵⁵

The pleasure audiences derive from satire is ultimately found in its wit.⁵⁶ They must understand its humor in order for the joke to make sense. If audiences aren't laughing then they aren't learning, which reiterates two of Test's four tenants of satire: Play and Laughter. These four tenants are all necessary to inform an audience, while also suggesting the potential for change.

Historically the power to enact that change has not been within satirists' grasp. They can only identify and push for it. With the rise of satire on television in the twentieth century, the boundaries of influence have changed. No matter who or what is targeted, satirists will always stake out their strategic vantage point out on moral high ground.⁵⁷ With the rise of television, it became more possible for satire to be didactic, funny, and instrumental all at the same time.

Modern Political Satire on Television

Just before the 2008 presidential election, when the real Sarah Palin appeared on *Saturday Night Live*, the damage to her vice-presidential aspirations had already been done. About a month and a half prior, as soon as Tina Fey put her hair in an up-do and appropriated a hybrid Mid-west/Canadian accent, her caricature of Palin carved in stone the perception most swing voters would carry with them to the polls. Palin had made a bold and popular debut that summer, but research has since shown that these SNL parodies were decisive blows to the 2008 republican presidential ticket.⁵⁸ That's the power of satire.

When Bill Clinton was a presidential candidate in early 1992, he was known as "Slick Willy," the smooth-talking governor who couldn't keep his pants zipped. But, when he appeared on FOX's *The Arsenio Hall Show* that summer, he became a regular person who could laugh at his own mistakes. Then he put on some Ray Bans, picked up a saxophone, and played "Heartbreak Hotel." Clinton came off as a cool dude, and it appeared to be effortless. At that moment he nailed what would be the first of several major career resurgences to come. That's the political power of television.

Throughout most of 1968, whenever Lyndon Johnson and Richard Nixon were referenced on NBC's popular sketch comedy show *Rowan & Martin's Laugh-In*, they were often punch lines. Then on September 16, 1968, shortly before he won the Presidential election, Nixon appeared on the show and delivered one of its most famous catch-phrases: "Sock it to me." Many still remembered Nixon's most iconic television moment up until that point, when he suffered one of the worst cases of flop sweats during his 1960 debate with John F. Kennedy. Some say this *Laugh-In* appearance humanized

him in a sea of opponents during this particularly chaotic year in American history. It definitely didn't hurt him. Nixon won the election and this was one of the few times he ever showed America that he had a sense of humor. That's the potential power of political satire on television.

Some scholars have argued that specific humor targeting the personality and character traits of politicians encourages viewers to ignore larger issues.⁵⁹ However, many others have noted that the role of satire is essential in helping sustain a public, democratic culture that educates an audience, while entertaining it.⁶⁰ In modern American political culture, popular satirists interact with the electoral process through shows like *The Daily Show* or *Saturday Night Live*. The telling of jokes with issue-focused approaches lightens that which weighs heavily on audience members who are surprisingly diverse. Conventional wisdom might suggest that the average audience of *The Daily Show* is similar in appearance and affectation to its host, "birds of a feather." However, the audience profile of both *The Daily Show* and its partner in late-night satire *The Colbert Report* shows viewers to be both racially and politically diverse.⁶¹ More than ever different types of people are interacting with satire on TV.

The influence of humor adds to viewers' already-established knowledge basis. Some scholars have addressed the powerful contribution of entertainment programs to the public's political knowledge.⁶² The shows' combinations of humor and information communicated through a visual medium add a layer to what is broadcast on the evening news. Recent evidence of this impact can be seen in the sway Fey's Palin impersonations had on 2008 voters.⁶³ Her first appearance alone garnered 14.3 million viewers to both NBC's website and Hulu.com,⁶⁴ and it quickly became the most watched viral video on

YouTube at that time.⁶⁵ That avalanche of viewership contributed to widespread perceptions of Palin that affected her during that election.

The Fey-as-Palin cultural phenomenon had a definite process of evolution from its initial broadcast to its current iconic status. First, it would not have been as popular if its viewing was not dependent on the combination of both television and digital media. Though the clip originated on television, the convergence of these two media platforms gave the sketches multiple lives as they were replayed over and over again online.⁶⁶ Second, and perhaps more important as it determines the initial popularity of the sketch, Fey's impersonation would not have been as influential if audiences had not laughed at it. Stewart's and Colbert's broadcasts would also cease if so did the laughter at their jokes.

Much research has been done on the subject of satire, and its history, but there is very little about American television satire prior to the introduction of *Saturday Night Live* in 1975. In this dissertation I hope to offer an understanding of satire on television that has not yet been uncovered. My goal is to focus on 1968, a very dynamic year in American history – one that also intersects with a quintessential time in the scope of television's maturity. Interpretations of this subject can add new understanding to the foundations of political satire on television, which can then be used as the basis for future research questions about shared cultural experiences.

There is a formula to funny. A recipe. And in order to understand its complexities, one must understand the chemistry of how its ingredients blend. The traits identified here were used to construct the elements of satire on television in 1968, just as they are today. And just like current audiences, viewers that year got a taste of how and what those programs meant to a culture facing dramatic social change.

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- ¹ Christie Davies. *Jokes and Targets* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2011), 277.
- ² Schlatter is quoted in Yael Kohen, *We Killed: The rise of women in American Comedy* (New York: Sarah Crichton Books, 2012), 17.
- ³ *Ibid.*
- ⁴ Ted Gournelos & Viveca Greene (Eds.). *A Decade of Dark Humor: How comedy, irony, and satire shaped post-9/11 America* (Oxford, MS: University Press of Mississippi, 2011), Introduction; Dustin Griffin. *Satire: A Critical Reintroduction* (Lexington, KY: University of Kentucky Press, 1994), 71.
- ⁵ Matthew Hodgart. *Satire* (New York, NY: McGraw-Hill, 1969), 74-76.
- ⁶ Peter Petro. *Modern Satire: Four Studies* (New York, NY: Mouton Publishers, 1982), 15.
- ⁷ Petro, 10-12; Hodgart), 74-76.
- ⁸ Petro, 17.
- ⁹ Hodgart, 115. Here he points out that one of the best examples of this is the classic *Gulliver's Travels* where Jonathan Swift literally reduces members of the ruling class to minimal proportions when portraying them as the diminutive "Lilliputians."
- ¹⁰ Edward W. Rosenheim. *Swift and the Satirist's Art* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1974), 276.
- ¹¹ Hodgart, 7.
- ¹² David Marc. *Comic Visions: Television Comedy and American Culture* (Hoboken, NJ: Wiley-Blackwell, 1997), 14.
- ¹³ Davies, 5.
- ¹⁴ Davies, 9.
- ¹⁵ *Ibid.*
- ¹⁶ Petro, 1982; Hodgart, 1969; Rosenheim, 1974; Griffin, 1994.
- ¹⁷ George A. Test. *Satire: Spirit and Art* (Gainesville, FL: University Press of Florida, 1986), 16-33.
- ¹⁸ Hodgart, 11-12.
- ¹⁹ A specific example of this is noted in the following text Aniko Bodroghkozy. "The Smothers Brothers Comedy Hour and the Youth Rebellion," in *The Revolution Wasn't Televised*, ed. by Lynn Spigel and Michael Curtain (New York, NY: Routledge, 1997), 149.
- ²⁰ Test, 33.
- ²¹ Hodgart, 111.
- ²² Hodgart, 122.
- ²³ Hodgart, 130.
- ²⁴ K.J. Dover (ed.). *Aristophanes: Clouds* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 1970), Introduction – X.
- ²⁵ Lisa Colletta. "Political Satire and Postmodern Irony in the Age of Stephen Colbert and Jon Stewart." *The Journal of Popular Culture*, (42) 5, 2009, 860.
- ²⁶ The playwright Aristophanes is credited with ushering in this change with his play *Lysistrata*. It contains a smaller Greek chorus than was usual at that time, and is noted for the abrupt way the characters address the audience (especially the female characters).

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- ²⁷ Griffin, 6.
- ²⁸ Griffin, 7.
- ²⁹ Griffin, 9; C.A. Van Rooy. *Studies in Classical Satire and Related Literary Theory* (Leiden, NL: Brill, 1965), xii-xiii.
- ³⁰ Griffin, 12-13.
- ³¹ Griffin, 10.
- ³² Griffin, 24.
- ³³ Hodgart, 39.
- ³⁴ Frederic Austin Ogg. "Newspaper satire during the American revolution." *New England Magazine*, May 1904, 366-376. *Readers' Guide Retrospective: 1890-1982* (H.W. Wilson).
- ³⁵ Marianne Doezema. "Satire on Stone: The Political Cartoons of Joseph Keppler." *American Quarterly*, 41(2), 1989, 376-381.
- ³⁶ Charles R. Gruner. "Editorial Satire as Persuasion: and Experiment" *Journalism Quarterly* 44(4), 1967, 727-730.
- ³⁷ Donald Dewey. *The Art of Ill Will: The Story of American Political Cartoons* (New York, NY: New York University Press, 2007), 14-18.
- ³⁸ Ibid.
- ³⁹ Katherine E. Sheffield. "Dave Barry's Serious Political Satire: An Analysis of Dave Barry Hits Below the Beltway." *Studies In American Humor* (3) 18, July 2008, 39-58.
- ⁴⁰ Hodgart, 7-12.
- ⁴¹ Griffin, 139.
- ⁴² Sigmund Freud. *The Interpretations of Dreams*, trans James Strachey (London, UK: Lowe and Brydone, 1954), 142.
- ⁴³ Victoria L. Crittenden, Lucas M. Hopkins, and J.M. Simmons, "Satirists as Opinion Leaders: Is Social Media Redefining Roles?" *Journal of Public Affairs* 11, no. 3 (2011): 178.
- ⁴⁴ Griffin, 149.
- ⁴⁵ William Hogeland. "Founding Fathers, Founding Villians," *Boston Review*, September/October 2012, 36-42.
- ⁴⁶ Marilyn Roberts and Spencer Tinkham. "Special Topics: Reflections on the 2004 Election Cycle," *American Academy of Advertising Conference Proceedings*, 2005, 164. This study suggests that one reason President Bush's campaign in 2004 was more successful than Sen. John Kerry's, was because it was targeted towards specific social and cultural issues that hit at the foundation of conservatives' belief systems.
- ⁴⁷ Colletta, 866.
- ⁴⁸ Rachel Durfee. "Knock Knock: Who's Funnier? Republicans or Democrats?" *Popular Science*, November 2008. <http://www.popsoci.com/rachel-durfee/article/2008-11/knock-knock-whos-funnier-republicans-or-democrats>.
- ⁴⁹ John Tierney. "Obama and McCain Walk Into a Bar..." *The New York Times*, November 4, 2008. http://www.nytimes.com/2008/11/04/science/04tierney.html?_r=0
- ⁵⁰ Mikhail Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1984).
- ⁵¹ Colletta, 859.

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- ⁵² Jeffrey P. Jones. "More Than 'Fart Noises and Funny Faces': The Daily Show's Coverage of the US Recession," *Popular Communication*, (8)3, 2010, 167.
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CHAPTER 3

THEORY & METHOD

“A conversation is a dialogue, not a monologue.”

– Truman Capote, author

“I think success is connecting with an audience who understands you, and having a dialogue with them.”

– Lena Dunham, Television Actress/Director/Producer/Writer

A guy walks into a bar...is how it the dialogue begins.

He’s at that bar to meet some friends, but notices a woman when ordering a drink.

She distracts him from whatever he’s thinking. It’s a positive distraction. Based on a quick superficial deduction of her at that moment, he decides to talk with her and mentally runs through his conversational options.

“Come here often?” No. That’s too cliché.

“How YOU doin’?” No. He’s not Joey Tribbiani from *Friends*.

“Damn. This bar is packed.” No. That’s not even a question.

Finally, he settles on: “Hey. You having a good night?” Yes. That’s perfect. It’s a question that almost requires a simple answer from her, to which he can follow up. Her response will prompt him on how he should proceed.

The guy chooses his words wisely, and the conversation goes well, though it could not have. She might not have been responsive to his carefully selected inquiry. He might not have even seen her. And, if either had gone to another bar, this particular

conversation wouldn't have happened. Instead, he made a series of choices that led him there at the moment. At the same time, she made her own choices that led her there as well.

Other factors contributed to this conversation. For instance the music at the bar was loud enough to provide the right kind of soundtrack, but not so loud that dialogue wasn't an option. The guy happened to shave off his stubble before coming to the bar. The woman liked men who were freshly clean-shaven. The woman had green eyes. The guy found this trait attractive. Several layers of personal, cultural, and environmental factors embedded in this social situation were activated upon the guy's initial utterance of "Hey. You having a good night?"

In that respect, this conversation is like all dialogues. All participants enter a dialogic scenario bringing with them their own psychology. Affected by their environment, they draw on it while interacting – whether they realize it or not.¹ This happens in dialogue among people, as well as with media.

Dialogic Theory (Outside of the Bar...)

This type of dialogic reciprocation does not just occur in bars (though they are generally interesting and entertaining environments in which to witness conversations). Dialogic scenarios also appear in popular media. Films, video games, movies, music, magazines, advertisements, and more are reflexive examples of how dialogue exists within our culture.² Investigating a society as tied to multi-media consumption as ours without taking seriously these cultural products would be a mistake.³

Take television, for example. Just like the guy chose to walk into a bar, viewers choose to turn on their TVs, thus opening themselves to possibilities of dialogic interaction between them and whatever show they're watching. What makes a television example unique is that a show can be watched by multiple viewers creating a shared experience. However, since each viewer processes the show differently, the experience is both shared and individualistic. This duality can make media examples difficult texts to analyze, particularly when looking at past examples in historical context.

Media historians have often struggled with the idea of adopting a cultural approach to historical research.⁴ Establishing a network of contexts, instead of choosing only one, would provide a media scholar with multiple meanings of a given text. Examining the dialogic elements within mass media texts can yield the opportunity for a plurality of contexts in which examples of both the cultures of the shows and viewers are explored. The more contexts scholars suggest, the more potential meanings can be discussed.⁵

Some early TV scholarship drew on the other works of Mikhail Bakhtin who, in addition to his observations of carnivals, adopted a similar theoretical lens with literary

scholarship.⁶ In his mid-twentieth century study of characters in Fyodor Dostoyevsky's novels, Bakhtin articulated his position on how multiple meanings within a literary text reflect the society in which they are produced. As an author, Dostoyevsky is considered by literary scholars to be a "realist," and his works are noted for containing historically accurate portrayals of the societal structures and the characters that inhabited them.⁷

Bakhtin noted Dostoyevsky's characters hailed from different backgrounds, interacted with each other to varying degrees, and represented multiple levels of the class structure. His justification for identifying their dialogic properties was based on the numerous social languages he saw embedded in different interactions and thoughts of the characters.⁸ How and why they spoke or thought was all fair game for his analysis, and he termed these communications "utterances." The characters' utterances were dialogic bonds dependent upon one another. One utterance was based on a previous utterance, and so forth. They were all connected, therefore the meaning of each interaction, whether spoken or inferred, was dependent upon the context in which it was used and influenced by other utterances. The conglomeration of these multiple meanings created a larger cultural environment with its own social schema.⁹

Based on this type of semiotic literary analysis, Bakhtin's model provided the following three levels of categorization that can be used when analyzing satirical texts on television in 1968:¹⁰

1. **Responses** – Consisting of the inhibitions of words by the inflections of others. This is generally non-verbal communication, the ability of one character to read the signs from another character's visible reaction to something said, or an action performed.

2. **Power in language** – This consists of verbal dialogue during which the capacity for judgment is formed. Often these interactions are fueled by fundamental beliefs or opinions of whoever is uttering them.
3. **Provocation of laughter** – This can occur when one recognizes a discourse that is out of place with conversational norms. In order to procure laughter the deviation can be handled with some sense of wit and irony.

These three identifiers combine together to form intertextuality. This is a way media scholars can see how social languages both supplement and contradict each other in order to hybridize and form meaning in different ways.¹¹ In this way they text becomes polysemic, in that it produces and/or contributes to multiple meanings or interpretations. Studying a show's intertextual relationships can provide scholars with valuable clues to both the culture represented, and the culture surrounding the production of that text.¹²

Essentially, this is a list of dialogic criteria, though it is not as exclusive as the term may imply. The idea behind the application of this theoretical lens is to peer through it like a microscope while viewing media texts, recognize the dialogic forms existing in the text, and identify their significance without pigeonholing them if viewed through a different cultural lens.¹³

Cultural History and Media Texts

According to Bakhtin, laughter and the environment creating it is not studied enough. He was clear that the infusion of humor into literary texts is key in changing people's notions about society.¹⁴ He saw that dialogic traits in humor have a specific type of potential to both inform and break down class barriers.¹⁵ No matter how audiences differ, sometimes funny is funny.

Satire, as a type of humor, also exists within this sphere, and scholarship of it has increased since Bakhtin's time.¹⁶ Many have come to the same conclusion as Bakhtin, that when communicating certain messages, using satirical humor is a meaningful act because it's a commentary of the social world in which it's created.¹⁷ Since satire in media texts is often directly tied to current events and major news stories, the study of it as an utterance, or a grouping of utterances, is an analysis of both its cultural context and how it is reflective of broader cultural themes.

When analyzing satirical TV shows, Bakhtin's approach can be used to classify specific references. Jokes would be the utterances, as would the various settings in which they were used, as well as the ways they were delivered and by whom. Multiple jokes involved in a scene may have produced several meanings that contributed to a larger possible foundation one can use to evaluate the relevance of satire at that time of broadcast.

This type of approach is useful when studying historical media texts, and it exemplifies the movement in historical study towards social and cultural history. Focusing on the social and cultural history of a time period – as opposed to solely the societal hierarchy – can better allow for an answer to the question of why these media

texts were relevant at that time. The functions of cultural history are interdisciplinary, which is important since studying the history of media requires an understanding of how era media systems worked.

The benefits of approaching this type of research topic through this paradigm are numerous, and owe much to a foundation established by historians willing to look at new methods of research.¹⁸ Social history is generally the study of what happened within the confines of a particular society, when, and to whom. It relies on counting and quantifying information that will then be used to either support or negate a hypothesis derived from theory. Often the research questions asked by social historians dealt with issues of political economy, and highlighted effects of societal structures on the working class.¹⁹

It was in the 1960s and 1970s that historians began shifting towards social history, and thus began looking at past events in ways that identified problems or issues not touched on before. The natures of questions asked were influenced by an increase in awareness of social issues at that time.²⁰ They were also likely compounded by the increasing media attention given to current events.

Most historical work prior to the shift to social history consisted of lists. Lists of when things happened, mostly to members of royalty or those of higher class, were precisely kept and often revised according to new data. And while these chronologies were important in marking significant milestones, their focus was narrow. Social historians might not have been as concerned with, say, when exactly Columbus set foot on Western soil, but they would be with how much money his voyage cost the Spanish, or how that cost affected the economy back in Europe. In order to arrive at what they felt were answers to these types of questions, they relied on quantitative social science

techniques to show their questions were legitimate. Only assumptions about certain histories based on data collected this way may not have provided the whole story.²¹

Both social and cultural historians began asking questions about previously overlooked groups.²² For example, a social historian might have established there was prevalent alcoholism among Native Americans who lived on reservations, but a cultural historian would have asked why that was the case. In this way cultural history owes much of its established legitimacy to social history, because if certain problems had not been first identified, establishing a context for them would have been moot. If other historians had not first quantifiably established the growth and prominence of television as a mass medium, there may not be as strong an argument for exploring the historical context of its programming content.

This shift from social to cultural history ushered with it more interdisciplinary participation. Clifford Geertz encouraged this with the link he drew from history to cultural anthropology.²³ He viewed the study of another culture as vital to understanding an historic event, calling this approach an interpretive view of history. Geertz likened the past to an intricate spider's web having been spun by man of his own deeds, and only when looking at how the web connects with itself can one understand what that web means. A cultural example he gave was of winking. In order to wink at someone, one must first know what that action means, what it represents. One must also have a pretty good idea of how that action is defined by whomever is on the receiving end of the wink. Presently, winking may only be an innocent form of flirting, but at a certain time in another culture it could have been as offensive as giving someone the middle finger. Knowing how to categorize it can help lead to understanding its meaning.

The shift from social history to cultural history has enhanced the humanities. First, it has allowed for new perspectives to emerge, and by default new theories to arise to explain these phenomena. Prior to this emergence history focused on the accomplishments of a privileged few, producing a chronology of events by (mostly) powerful men. With more emphasis on other classes of people, the cultural products both consumed and produced by them were also seen as relevant. Anthropologist Raymond Williams was one of the first – along with Geertz – to define culture as society's formal values (which included "high art and culture") as well as its generalized commonalities (mass culture previously dismissed as immaterial).²⁴ Williams provided an analogy using food. He said that one could not appreciate the taste of fine cooking without understanding how to blend the most basic ingredients into a simple dish. Television can be like a simple dish of mass culture that is layered with unknown complexity. Williams makes a valid case for its study, as have other scholars more recently.²⁵

Combining the methods of cultural history with the ideas of dialogic theory can prove useful to a scholarly investigation of the nuances of certain historical media texts. The purpose would not be to establish a specific definition for the utterances in those texts, but to put forth an idea for their contribution to a broader scope of historic events.

Researching Television, Satire, and Social Change in 1968 America

When writing about specific methods for conducting interpretive research, Geertz noted that arriving at meaning is the ultimate goal for any researcher using textual analysis. He did not say, “the” meaning just “meaning,” which indicates certain open-endedness. If meaning is embedded in symbols best understood by “reading” the products of a culture, then one could never arrive at a comprehensive meaning without looking at the totality of that culture from every potential perspective. Obviously, this is unrealistic. What is realistic is to study a culture in pieces, research aspects of it, and then amass those findings to create a broader understanding of that society, place, and time. Such was the goal of this study.

A break-it-down-and-piece-it-together approach was taken towards analyzing satire and humor of variety shows on American television in 1968. To identify and observe the political and news-related content of selected comedy shows that aired that year a historical analysis of sketch comedy on television was conducted. Episodes were watched at several archival locations. Primary source documents created for and during the shows were analyzed as well. The analysis took into account production values, audience responses, popularity, historical context, and other outside influences that may have factored into shaping the utterances.²⁶

The sample of shows consisted of episodes from the end of the 1967-68 season and the beginning of the 1968-69 season. This time period contained the beginning and end of two television cycles, and allowed for analysis of how the satirical approaches of certain programs might have changed throughout that year.²⁷ The bulk of primary texts analyzed were a sample of episodes of three popular television sketch comedy/variety

series that aired in 1968. These shows were *Rowan & Martin's Laugh-In*, *The Smothers Brothers Comedy Hour*, and *The Carol Burnett Show*. These specific shows were chosen because of their reputations for containing topical humor and satire in their sketches, and also for being watched by a large number of viewers.²⁸ Additionally, other stand-alone specials not part of a series, but containing similar humor and satire in sketch comedy, were also analyzed. They included Bob Hope's *1968 USO Christmas Special*, *The Bob Hope Special* (a separate variety special), *Kraft Music Hall presents "Alan King's Aggravation,"* and the *40th Annual Academy Awards Special*.

Six of the 20 episodes of *The Smothers Brothers' Comedy Hour* that aired in the calendar year 1968 were viewed – as well as one episode that aired in 1967, as were six of the 27 episodes of *Rowan & Martin's Laugh-In*. Five of the 29 episodes of *The Carol Burnett Show* were viewed. The number of episodes viewed is about 17, 22, and 24 percent respectively of what aired for each show that year. They were selected based on what has survived in archives, and also to keep the sample size manageable. In addition to these 28 episodes, four additional scripts of episodes that were broadcast were analyzed because no taped versions of the episodes existed.

It was difficult to obtain personal copies of specific episodes for these shows, therefore viewing them at the following moving image archival centers was necessary: The Paley Center for Media in Beverly Hills, CA, and the Film and Television Archive at the University of California at Los Angeles. It was at these archives that I engaged in a “long soak” with the materials, absorbing the content, style, and categorical references to culture as much as possible.²⁹

Examining the production cycles of these media texts was necessary in order to take into account the perspective of show runners or producers.³⁰ There is a method to the madness of a creative team behind a television series. Almost every aspect of a shows' production draws from the culture in which it's produced, thus developing a colloquial relationship with audiences even when characters aren't speaking.³¹ Therefore, scripts, production notes, personal correspondence, and other documents pertaining to these episodes and specials were analyzed at the Writer's Guild Foundation Library in Los Angeles, CA, and at the American Heritage Center at the University of Wyoming in Laramie, WY.

Immersion in the study of politics, culture, and other media from 1968 was tantamount to this research in order to establish historical context. News broadcasts and documentaries that highlighted relevant stories, explained their significance, and discussed how they were framed were also viewed, as were video recordings of eyewitness accounts of events both large and small. Other programs produced after 1968 that dealt with either the history of that time period, or the specific shows analyzed were included. Oral history interviews with actors, producers, and writers of these shows were viewed through the online archive compiled by the Television Academy of Arts and Sciences in Los Angeles, CA.

The production and broadcast of these shows form an incomplete dialogic relationship without taking into account the audiences' responses to them. How many people watched, how they responded to the content, and what audiences expressed about them, either positive or negative, were important aspects to investigate.³² In order to approximately gauge what measure of reflexivity existed in the audiences the following

historical texts were analyzed: press reviews, press clippings, and articles about the shows and their production; letters to editors responding to published articles that mentioned the shows; and Nielsen ratings from that time.

In preliminary research the following three themes emerged and were the base subjects for most of the satire: race, gender, and the representations of sexuality; war, politics, and representations of government; and youth culture and aspects of the growing generation gap. The major themes identified in this study are presented separately, but in all three shows studied they often overlapped. The dialogic qualities of these and examples of how they were represented in the shows are addressed in chapters four through six. Though only some content is directly referenced, all of what was absorbed was equally relevant to this study.

Each set of themes also aligned with certain traits of the evolution, production, and content of each one of these shows. In each of these chapters one of the three primary television shows analyzed is also profiled in order to give relevant background information for how each reflected the above themes.

The research questions asked during analysis, and used to hone in on these themes, were the following:

RQ1: “How was satirical content present in television sketch comedy shows in 1968?”

RQ2: “How did the dialogic nature of this content reflect shared experiences related to particular current events that year?”

The goal of this analysis was to highlight the dialogic nature of satire on television, and offer a potential meaning for what it reflected about the culture of that

time. Ideally, this interpretation will add to the cultural lexicon associated with these texts. Future scholars can use it as a basis for research questions about the historical usage of satire in mass media, and the relevance of television in a society navigating a sea of great social change.

¹ In addition to Bakhtin, Pierre Bourdieu also explored the notion of how people construct meaning from culture. For more on his theories see: Pierre Bourdieu. *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgment of Taste*, (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1984).

² John Hartley. *Uses of Television*, (Oxford, UK: Routledge, 1999), 11.

³ Herman Gray. *Watching Race: TV and the Struggle for Blackness*, (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1995) 5-6.

⁴ Horace M. Newcomb. "On the Dialogic Aspects of Mass Communication." *Critical Studies In Mass Communication* 1(1), 1984, 34; James Carey, "The Problem of Journalism History," in *The American Journalism History Reader*, ed. Bonnie Brennen and Hanno Hardt (New York, NY: Routledge, 2011), 22-35.

⁵ Hartley, 165.

⁶ Newcomb, 34-50; John Fiske. *Television Culture* (London, UK: Routledge, 1987).

⁷ Victor Terras, *Reading Dostoevsky* (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 1998), Preface.

⁸ Newcomb, 39.

⁹ Mikhail Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1984).

¹⁰ Zoë Druick. "Dialogic Absurdity: TV News Parody as a Critique of Genre," *Television and New Media* 10, no. 3 (2009), 294.

¹¹ Janet Maybin. "Language, Struggle, and Voice: The Bakhtin/Volosinov Writings," in *Discourse Theory and Practice: A Reader*, ed. Margaret Wetherall, Stephanie Taylor, and Simeon Yates (London, UK: Sage, 2001), 67.

¹² Fiske, 108.

¹³ Newcomb, 39.

¹⁴ Mikhail Bakhtin. *Rabelias and His World* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1984), 4.

¹⁵ Robert Stam. *Subversive Pleasures* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1989), 190.

¹⁶ See Chapter 2 of this dissertation for examples.

¹⁷ Ted Gournelos, & Viveca Greene. *A Decade of Dark Humor: How Comedy, Irony, and Satire Shaped Post-9/11 America*, (Oxford, MS: University Press of Mississippi, 2011), Introduction; Joseph Dane. "Parody and Satire: A Theoretical Model," *Genre*, no. 13, 145-49.

¹⁸ John Nerone. "Theory and History," in *The American Journalism History Reader*, ed. Bonnie Brennen and Hanno Hardt, (New York, NY: Routledge, 2011), 36-45; Michael Schudson, "A Revolution in Historography," in *The American Journalism*

History Reader, ed. Bonnie Brennen and Hanno Hardt, (New York, NY: Routledge, 2011), 46-50.

¹⁹ Geoff Eley. *A Crooked Line*, (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 2005), 88-90.

²⁰ Eley, 88.

²¹ Clifford Geertz. "Deep Play: Notes on a Balinese Cockfight," in *The Interpretation of Cultures: Selected Essays*, (New York: Basic Books, 1973), 412-55; and William H. Sewall, Jr. "Crooked Lines." *American Historical Review* 113, no. 2 (April 2008), 393-405.

²² Eley, 167.

²³ Clifford Geertz. *The Interpretation of Cultures: Selected Essays*, (New York: Basic Books, 1973).

²⁴ Eley, 88-90.

²⁵ Newcomb, 1984; Fiske, 1987.

²⁶ Mittell, 176.

²⁷ Some episodes were available on DVD, but others were viewed at archives. For a complete list see Appendix A.

²⁸ *Rowan & Martin's Laugh-In*: Mittell, 173-174; *The Carol Burnett Show*: Mittell, 182-183; *The Smothers Brothers' Comedy Hour*: Aniko Bodroghkozy. "The Smothers Brothers Comedy Hour and the Youth Rebellion," in *The Revolution Wasn't Televised*, ed. by Lynn Spigel and Michael Curtain (New York, NY: Routledge, 1997), 208-209.

²⁹ Bonnie S. Brennen. *Qualitative Research Methods for Media Studies*, (New York, NY: Routledge, 2013), 196.

³⁰ Jason Mittell. *Television and American Culture*, (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2010), 161.

³¹ Newcomb, 41.

³² Newcomb, 40.

CHAPTER 4

RACE & GENDER

“We’re the most commodity-conscious nation in the world, and the black man is the commodity this year. If black people sell, they’ll be back. If they don’t, they won’t.”
 – Ruby Dee, African American actress/activist, 1968¹

“Gleason could say anything...but if a woman did she was a bitch. If a guy did he got what he wanted.”
 – Carol Burnett, actress/writer/producer²

President Lyndon Johnson signed the Civil Rights Act into law in 1964, but that didn’t mean that four years later America was an integrated utopia of tolerance and equality. It seems that particular political victory was just the first major battle of what would be a long war for equality that was to be fought on multiple fronts. In 1968 collateral damage from these battles was felt in both urban and rural areas, affected certain men and most women, and was broadcast on television for many to witness. In some cases the carnage was literal as well as metaphorical.

The assassination of Martin Luther King Jr. on April 4, 1968, while he walked the balcony of the Lorraine Motel in Memphis, Tennessee, was probably the most significant blow that year against the battle for civil rights. King was the de facto leader of different factions who had different ideas for what their new freedom meant, and how it should evolve. King had been a national figure for more than a decade at that point, and though he was proud of the Civil Rights Act he had heavily campaigned for in Washington, D.C.

prior to President Jon F. Kennedy's assassination, he knew there was more to be done in what had been dubbed "The Movement."³ Also, he was exhausted. The Movement had taken a toll on him both physically and emotionally, as it had for many black Americans, though most were not tasked with being the public face of this freedom fight. King biographer Taylor Branch said the following in a 2004 interview:

When they did the autopsy, they said he had the heart of a 60 year old, he's 39. So yes, it took a big toll on him, and he was constantly fantasizing about getting out of the Movement, but I don't know of anybody around him who ever took it seriously, who felt that even he really thought that he could follow through on that. The Movement was his life.⁴

Nothing was funny about the assassination of Martin Luther King, Jr. It remains a national tragedy experienced by half of Americans living today. In 1968 approximately 120 million Americans watched his funeral on television, more than who tuned in for the 2013 Super Bowl.⁵ Chaotic violence in some urban areas, most devastatingly present in both Chicago and Washington, DC, followed the announcement of King's death.⁶ News broadcasts showed footage of flames devouring city blocks. Then-candidate Richard Nixon said of these events, "Until we have order we can have no progress."⁷

But for some, the disorder following King's assassination echoed a long-lived level of impatience. Media outlets, specifically broadcast news, began granting an increasing number of interviews to those who did not always agree with King and his methods. The year before, Huey P. Newton, controversial leader of the Black Panthers, had been jailed for killing a police officer in Oakland, CA, who according to Newton was

unfairly harassing him. Many empathized with Newton and took up the cause of the Black Panthers. Black Americans were angry, and nothing was funny about that either.

African-Americans became more prevalent on television that year, as network executives saw the advertising potential for their demographic.⁸ Some scholars say that the acknowledgement of the growing purchasing power within the black community allowed for the beginning of blacks being seen as equals.⁹ Much talk and criticism within black cultural politics has since revolved around whether or not at this time blacks were portrayed as either victims or aggressors, but rarely as citizens just trying to live their lives.¹⁰

At the same time, some satire on television served as acerbic commentary on the state of race relations, calling additional attention to race as a national issue. Other jokes about race simply made people laugh without attempting to diminish the seriousness of inequality. In some cases the actual presence of different races on television was groundbreaking, thus subtly showing that being funny wasn't necessarily associated with skin color. These sketches were in programs that bookended evenings spent in front of the television, evenings that began with stories of violence and rage on the network news.

Analyzing the historical context of how issues of race and the related issues of gender and sexuality can present some challenges. Obviously the best way to gain a precise understanding of how sketch comedy reflected these events, as well as the varying sentiments of viewers, would be to hop in a time machine and head back to 1968 for some firsthand observation. Alas, this is not possible. Therefore the following approach was taken in order to recreate as much of an understanding of how these ideas were linked together in a dialogic fashion.

First race was identified as a major topic that was present in satirical humor on variety shows. This was visible both when watching the selected episodes and when reading literature about the shows and this time period. In other media sources from that year such as popular magazines, newspapers, films and narrative TV shows, these issues were present in that they were openly discussed, or addressed by the very presence of minorities in the casts. Finally, after again consulting literature and observing firsthand the stylistic and tonal connections of certain jokes, issues of race seemed to overlap with issues of gender and sexuality. Both had similarities as civil rights issues, with the movement for gender equality seeming to have gained confidence in watching the growing movement within the black community. It made sense to discuss the two in related sections as issues of gender and sexuality, and issues of race.

Issues of gender and sexuality were not characterized by as much violence and anger as issues of race, but they were absorbed in the wake of the Civil Rights movement, and focused on in both public and political ways. That year also saw an explosive debate on the liberalization of birth control, which led to comedic takes on what historians would later call the sexual revolution.¹¹ Meanwhile, on prime-time television in 1968, while more minorities were also being seen and heard, many of the jokes about women on TV were actually told by women. And one of those women was Carol Burnett.

The Girls Join the Boys Club

Andy Warhol once claimed that *The Carol Burnett Show* was his favorite because it lacked what he called “repetitive novelties,” lowest-common-denominator jokes and gags he felt burdened other network series and variety shows.¹² It was a smart show, with smart humor, produced by a smart woman. But it almost never happened.

In 1967, Carol Burnett noticed a clause in her contract with CBS stating that she could exercise an option for the network to provide her with at least a 30-week run of her own variety series. Having already made a name for herself with several stand-alone specials and numerous guest appearances on other shows, she called the network president to exercise this clause as part of her upward career trajectory. But no woman had ever headlined her own comedy variety show before.¹³ He balked at the idea saying, “Look. You know variety is more of a man’s field; Sid Caesar and Jackie Gleason and Milton Berle and Dean Martin,” offering her instead the option to do a situation comedy.¹⁴ But Burnett held her ground. She did not want to play just one character. “I dreamed of 1,000 characters to play and wanted to do all of them,” she later said of her goals at the time.¹⁵ The network gave in, and Burnett was given her own show with a limited run. The first episode debuted in the fall of 1967 and the show stayed on the air for 11 seasons.

Even Burnett has since admitted that no one suspected it would be one of the most memorable shows of all time.¹⁶ The variety show format was in flux as television audiences were growing and developing. *The Smothers Brothers’ Comedy Hour* had Burnett on to guest star in early March 1967. Their show was nearing the middle of its first season, and the brothers Smothers were only just beginning to frustrate network

executives and censors because of their overtly politically themed sketches. After a successful special in the fall of 1967, NBC took a chance that following year with a new variety show format in *Rowan & Martin's Laugh-In*. But Carol Burnett, with her fixed troupe of comedic performers, capitalized by focusing on observational humor, including everyday happenings in social interactions that offered myriad female perspectives.

“I said, ‘We’re just gonna have to go and do it and have fun and not worry about pleasing anybody but ourselves’,” she said of her initial experience with CBS.¹⁷

According to Burnett, as long as they got desirable ratings, CBS left her alone.¹⁸ The first season (1967-1968), *The Carol Burnett Show* had an 11.4 Nielsen rating, a 20.1 share, and was in the Top 30 shows that year, just above *Dragnet* and *Lassie*.¹⁹ In its second season (1968-1969), the show moved up slightly in the rankings with a 12.1 rating and 20.8 share.²⁰ Throughout its run, the show’s ratings only increased. So CBS left Burnett and her writers alone.

Her writers were mostly men, though two women were on the staff. Burnett said she never felt like it was a “boys club,” though she would often be self-deprecating when she felt a scene wasn’t working. Rather than come off as offensive to the male writers, she would take blame for a sketch’s faults. “I would go in the back door,” she said. “I just didn’t want to castrate anybody because a woman doing that in those days would be considered bitchy. Whereas a man would be assertive.”²¹

While media coverage of African-Americans struggles increased, other marginalized groups began following in the footsteps of “The Movement.” The year before the Civil Rights Act of 1964, Congress passed the Equal Pay Act of 1963, which made it illegal to differentiate in pay scales based on sex. Also in 1963, Betty Friedan’s

The Feminine Mystique was published, bringing to the forefront that many women were not necessarily satisfied in their traditional roles as housewives. The book was based on a survey of women who revealed that they felt limited and had more potential to contribute to society.

By 1968, women's inequality increased in social awareness because, just like with civil rights, their situation didn't improve immediately after the Equal Pay Act was passed. Women focused on their plight, while at the same time recognizing the plight of others.²² Advocacy for gay and lesbian issues increased as many heterosexual women empathized with those they saw as fighting for respect.²³ On January 15, 1968 the women's rights group known as the Jeannette Rankin Brigade marched in Washington, D.C. to protest the Vietnam War. That began a year of protests in which women would play key roles. They drew together to support their own equality, and also began taking more leadership roles in other social movements. Female involvement increased in civil rights marches for racial equality and antiwar demonstrations.²⁴

According to numerous reports, 1968 was when some female protestors first started burning bras as symbols of their fight against masculine restrictions.²⁵ The stories of these pyro-antics are somewhat exaggerated, though in actuality women did stage a protest on September 10, 1968 at the Miss America pageant during which they lit many supposedly feminine articles – girdles, pantyhose, high heels, hair curlers, and also brassieres – on fire in trash cans dubbed “Freedom Cans.” The idea was that dependency on these items had made them lose sight of their own personal independence. Somehow only the images of ignited bras moved to the forefront of that narrative, and are what many remember about that protest.²⁶ Either way, women were beginning to actively fight

in public the stereotype that they should stay at home, cook, and clean, and that the professional world was not a place for them.

The image of women fighting for respect and the right to, at the very least, be heard was also reflected in popular culture. *Bonnie and Clyde* was one of the most popular movies that year, and featured Faye Dunaway portraying a female gangster on equal footing with her violent, lascivious partner. Aretha Franklin was the best-selling recording artist that year, and she graced the June 27, 1968 cover of *Time* magazine. The most popular recording that year was the debut album of Big Brother and the Holding Company, whose lead singer was Janis Joplin, a white, bi-sexual, twenty-five year-old from Port Arthur, TX. Joplin struggled with alcohol and drug abuse for most of her short life, an experience shared with other rock stars, but her vocals were unique. She had an independent sound all her own that was raspy, feminine, and immediately recognizable.²⁷

Issues of Gender and Sexuality

At the beginning of each show, Carol Burnett chatted with her audience for about ten minutes. She invited them to ask her questions on any topic. This dialogic exercise appears to have served a dual purpose. First, it warmed up the studio audience. It got them used to laughing, and in a positive frame of mind, so they would react positively to the sketches that would follow. Those watching television shows recorded before a live audience would often take reactive cues from how those present for the taping reacted. Second, it was Burnett's way of forging a relationship with the audience she was about to entertain. This conversational dialogue with regular folks who weren't famous like Burnett made her appear relatable when the interactions were later broadcast. She would play multiple characters through the hour but, for those few minutes in the beginning, she just seemed to be herself.

Every once in a while either the evening's guest stars or other cast members would join her on stage. At the beginning of the April 15, 1968 episode cast members Lyle Waggoner and Harvey Korman dressed in drag in order to "model" some of the latest fashions Burnett was discussing with an audience member.²⁸ The cross-dressing was meant to be a sight gag, and Waggoner and Korman played it up by emphasizing flamboyant mannerisms designed to look like gay stereotypes. "These are guaranteed to get you out of the Army," Burnett quipped, a reference to the idea that many anti-war protesters trying to avoid conscription into the Vietnam War could pretend to be homosexual in order to be kicked out of the military.

African-American comedian Cambridge Godfrey was once told by a National Educational Television censor not to say either "homosexual" or "gay" to infer the same

meaning. Instead, he should say “queer.”²⁹ Although gay advocacy was increasing at this time, there was still a stigma attached. Godfrey was asked to use neither the definitive term for same-sex attraction, nor a euphemism that also meant “happy,” thus having a positive connotation. Instead, he was asked to use a term that referred to homosexuality while inferring another of its pejorative definitions: “strange or odd.”

This type of sight gag was also a dialogic example of a “provocation of laughter” – the type of Bakhtinian utterance where laughter occurred because of something abnormal, or unexpected.³⁰ Men dressed as women were an oddity, and so the studio audience laughed, and probably audiences at home as well.

Dressing in drag only underscored the then-prevalent definition that being gay was also strange or odd, and was often used this way in sketch comedy at that time, especially on *The Carol Burnett Show*. On an episode broadcast November 18, 1968, just one week after the first African-American woman was elected to Congress, Harvey Korman once again donned drag for a sketch.³¹ This time, Korman played a husband helping his wife with a charity benefit by dressing as a woman for a skit. After Korman’s wife (played by Burnett) has to run out for an errand, Korman is surprised by the maid (played by African-American actress Isabel Sanford, who would later become well-known on the sitcom *The Jeffersons*.) Sanford raises an eyebrow as Korman stuttered his way through an explanation for why he’s wearing women’s clothing. As he got more agitated his mannerisms became more feminine causing Sanford to finally shut him up by saying, “I got a cousin like you. It didn’t work out though, he got drafted anyway.”

Alan Sues of *Rowan & Martin’s Laugh-In*, who was gay, but not openly so at that time, was often juxtaposed as an effeminate man placed in traditionally masculine

situations. In the premiere of the second season of *Laugh-In* on September 16, 1968, Sues did not temper his personality when anchoring the sports segment of the show's fake news broadcast.³² He was anathema to the often virile, and always male, sportscasters on network news at that time. This appeared to be the idea behind the joke. In one segment about baseball, Sues encouraged the major league commissioner with some advice on the teams' uniforms. "Off with those silly knickers," he said with a lisp, "and let's get those boys into culottes." He then giggled and winked like Marilyn Monroe, visibly excited about the prospect of baseball players in knee-length trousers cut in the shape of a skirt.

There had been some definitive cultural shifts in professional sports that year. That summer female tennis pro Billy Jean King won her third straight Wimbledon title. In a later interview, she said that it was that same summer she realized she was a lesbian.³³ And, just a week prior to the airing of this *Laugh-In* episode, Arthur Ashe became the first black man to win the US Open. However, much of American professional sports culture seemed to be dominated by traditional masculinity, which included a certain amount of homophobia. This homophobia was not limited to sports and came across in other sketches starring actors rumored to be gay, like Sues, or actors out of their element when dressed in drag, like Korman.

Insinuating that homosexuality was either abnormal or degenerative behavior was often subtext in punch lines for variety show sketches at that time. Gayness was stereotyped by placing an effeminate man in a traditionally masculine scenario, as if to define gay men with the subservient traits women were beginning to rebel against. The next year, in June 1969, the Stonewall Riots occurred at a gay bar in New York City when some were tired of what they felt was police harassment based largely in part on the

notion that gay men were deviant, sexual predators. For many advocates this event marked the moment when gays and lesbians officially began to demand equal rights in the eyes of American society.³⁴

It is difficult to tell if these satirical sketches presenting gay stereotypes were meant in good fun, yet now come across as offensive because of how society has developed, or if they were meant to be ironic in that attaching feminine qualities to men didn't change who they were, no matter what the scenario. If the latter is true, then these sketches should be considered as progressive for that era.

Traditional stereotypes of women were also used as the objects of social satire. In an episode of *Laugh-In* broadcast on April 22, 1968, one female character at a cocktail party said of her husband, "Boris says that 35 percent of the women in this country are working women. The other 65 percent are working men."³⁵ The subtext being that women who were professional were shaking men down for manipulative reasons. Maybe the husband was communicating an actual paranoia felt by some men, that women would take over what was supposed to be the men's roles. The woman who said this, played by Jo Ann Worley, laughed it off as if she thought it ridiculous. However, the idea of women gunning for men and showing unhappiness with traditional roles was an underlying theme in other sketches that year.

The April 15, 1968 episode of *The Carol Burnett Show*, the same one with Harvey Korman in drag, featured a sketch where Burnett played a mail-order bride sent to a wealthy explorer who'd made his living going on exotic safaris.³⁶ It's revealed that the explorer, played by Peter Lawford, had a first wife who had large breasts. Burnett's character is uncomfortable as soon as she finds this out, though Lawford assured her that

she would have no problem filling his first wife's shoes. "It's not her shoes I'm worried about," Burnett replied. She continued to make self-deprecating remarks about her own breast size, and even fired the maid for being amply buxom. Burnett desperately ran around trying to make Lawford happy, but then things changed. It came out that Lawford just wanted a wife to cook, clean, and take care of him. He was actually in love with one of the local natives. When Burnett found this out she immediately changed her tone, posture, and attitude. She became assertive and dominant and ordered Lawford about, who acquiesced almost immediately. Burnett's character was visibly fed up with her situation and, though it is one she entered into of her own volition, her frustration in these jokes mirrored that of other American women at that time: that women were capable of more than just trying to maintain a standard of beauty and/or housekeeping.³⁷

In an episode two months before that, airing on February 12, 1968, Burnett and the rest of the cast appeared in a satirical sketch of popular daytime soap operas called "As the Stomach Turns."³⁸ They poked fun at the shows' preposterous story lines including secret babies out of wedlock, mysterious deaths and multiple cases of amnesia, and each plot had to do with a woman as victim of a man's dastardly scheme, or a woman not using her wits to realize she was being duped, or both.

That previous year, before the debut of her show, Burnett guest starred on the first season of *The Smothers Brothers' Comedy Hour* on March 12, 1967.³⁹ In a sketch titled "Fancy Meeting You Here," Tom Smothers played a "masker," someone who wears a mask, though in this scenario the term described a masked man who assaulted women, and Burnett was the victim. The masker's early attempts to assault her were met with feigned disinterest and only mild agitation from Burnett's character. She was not upset or

traumatized, and even seemed to invite the assaults at later meetings. It was as if she was lonely and any form of attention, even rape, would shake her from this state. The audience laughed exuberantly at the joke, one that would most likely be disturbing to modern day audiences. The idea of women being so numb that inviting assault as an attention-getting option was considered and even joked about suggests a reflection of exactly what Friedan had uncovered in *The Feminine Mystique* four years prior.

In some instances, jokes involving gender caused problems with network censors. In the first season of *Rowan & Martin's Laugh-In*, Dan Rowan battled with NBC censors over a pregnancy joke. A quick sketch had been written that would feature Ruth Buzzi dressed as a pregnant hippie who walked in front of the camera holding sign that said "Make War, Not Love," as if it was almost more desirable to be mired in a stalemate in Southeast Asia than be saddled with an unwanted pregnancy. But that subtext is not what concerned NBC's censors. They were unbridled because, at that time, showing a pregnant woman on prime-time television was forbidden. It implied sex, specifically that Buzzi had been sexually active. "Apparently the networks are great believers in the immaculate conception," Rowan later joked of the incident.⁴⁰ Either the censors realized they were being silly, or they did not want to interfere with a high-ratings show, and they eventually gave in. The sketch aired and was one of the first times a pregnant woman was seen in prime time, on network television in America.⁴¹

Rowan & Martin's Laugh-In featured plenty of sexual innuendo and female sexuality, but because of the hyper-kinetic format of the show these instances were quickly overshadowed as a new one would begin. In each episode, the show featured random, quick clips of some of its most attractive bikini-clad females dancing to

psychedelic music. On their bodies were painted catch phrases and popular slogans of the era. Often they one-line jokes addressing female sexuality, such as “Women should be obscene and not heard.”

Just like the skit with a pregnant Ruth Buzzi during prime time, these overtly sexualized portrayals of women and jokes about sex support the notion that the American culture was becoming more sexually liberated. Feminist scholars might argue as to whether or not it is truly liberating to be one of the first popular network programs to show a sexualized woman provocatively dance in a bikini. However, they would not argue that doing so was reflective of society’s changing attitudes towards both the act of sex and discrimination based on sex. Changes in both would lead to national debates a few years later on issues such as abortion with *Roe v. Wade*, and gender discrimination with the Equal Rights Amendment.

These advancements in women’s rights were highly visible, but they didn’t stop sexism in the TV workplace. An October 1968 article written by a female reporter for *The New York Times Magazine* quoted *Laugh-In* producer George Schlatter who gawked at twenty-two-year-old Goldie Hawn one day on the set. “Hiya honey, God love ya,” he said as she walked by in tight hip pants.⁴² And, when asked in a July 2012 interview about the progression of equality in the TV business at that time, Vicki Lawrence of *The Carol Burnett Show* said, “Equal pay with men...that never happened to me.”⁴³

However, women did have an increasing amount of agency in these programs. Often sketches depended on them carrying the lead-in and punch line for some of the biggest jokes. A few years earlier, women were often secondary to the headlining men who generally highlighted in order receive the big laughs. However, Burnett’s success as

the first female to headline her own comedy show helped open up the door for more screen time for other female performers.

In the fall of 1968 Lily Tomlin began a reoccurring guest stint on *Rowan & Martin's Laugh-In* alongside Ruth Buzzi, Jo Anne Worley, and Goldie Hawn. That same year Chelsea Brown was the first black woman to join that cast, and often served as the sensible, yet sexy, counter to the other females' crazy antics.⁴⁴ More women were joining the ensemble casts of variety shows in prominent ways. These women became household names along with Carol Burnett and Vicki Lawrence. They were the new female faces of television comedy. "They were equal to the men," said *Saturday Night Live* alumna Nora Dunn who once acknowledged them as her inspiration for acting in sketch comedy.⁴⁵

Carol Burnett played a key role in showing audiences that a woman had the ability to multitask beyond what was expected of her. Through her informal chats with audiences, ability to morph into numerous roles, and behind the scenes orchestral producing, she acted as an example of a woman who chose not to limit herself to another run-of-the-mill, situation comedy. She attempted to create her own space within the genre of sketch comedy. And she did so while tugging her ear to tell her daughters she loved them.

Issues of Race

On February 29, 1968, the National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders, also known as the Kerner Commission, published a report investigating the root causes for widespread violence in urban areas the previous year. Among other causes, the report said the national news media did not do enough to shed light on the problems of African-Americans. It also said that there was a lack of minority inclusion in national media outlets, which led to a news perspective skewed towards Whites.⁴⁶ That disparity, as well as the increasing presence of racially motivated violence and use of excessive force by white authorities, turned growing frustration into anger among some black Americans.⁴⁷ The assassination of Martin Luther King Jr. and the violence that followed in some cities only added to this tension.

Much has been written and discussed about the way African-Americans were portrayed in mass media at that time. Some scholars in black cultural politics have debated whether or not portrayals of blacks as victims added to or detracted from post-civil rights discourse.⁴⁸ Others have noted that when looking at their increasing presence in mass media throughout the 1960s, one cannot overlook how it helped established a shared confidence within the African-American community of viewers who watched these shows.⁴⁹

The manifestation of blacks on prime time network television in 1968, a time when some networks feared losing Southern audiences and, therefore, advertisers targeting Southern customers, was not exactly a phenomenon, but was still new to the medium.⁵⁰ At that time there were 22 million blacks in America, yet only 2.3 percent of all commercials featured any type of minority. Twenty-four percent of all entertainment-

related shows on TV featured minority actors in some way, which was still fewer than had been on TV in 1964, the year the Civil Rights Act was passed. Of the 56 prime time shows, 21 had at least one regular black performer, but only one show featured an African-American in the starring role, *Julia*, a situation comedy starring Diahann Carroll on NBC.⁵¹

A November 30, 1968 feature in the widely circulated *Saturday Evening Post* addressed the rise of African-American actors on television. In that story, the reporter credits the following six reasons for this growth:⁵²

1. The success of Bill Cosby, who starred in *I Spy* from 1965-1968. Cosby was the first African-American in a lead role on American television and, though several Southern networks banned the show because of his presence, the show was popular as well as award winning.
2. The mounting pressures of social change. Even though slow to happen, it was still evident that the idea of black inferiority was eroding in the eyes of the American public.
3. The murder of Martin Luther King, Jr. This was a very public tragedy that shifted even more national media attention to civil rights issues.
4. The release of the Kerner Commission report. The report specifically said that the integration of more minorities on television could help detract racial violence before it becomes an issue. The idea was that the more viewers saw a televised world with racial balance, the more that American society would begin to accept that balance and allow it to exist in reality.

5. The recognition of the purchasing power of black Americans. More rights led to some upward mobility, which allowed for a growth in consumerism among African-Americans.
6. The television industry's commitment to social justice. Hollywood is known for backing liberal causes, though even the reporter notes that the industry's commitment would only last as long as it was "in vogue and doesn't cost any money."

Black actors may have had more opportunities for work, but their roles were often limited to criminals, hired help, or other stereotypes.⁵³ There were no powerful black television producers and only a handful of them belonged to entertainment labor unions.⁵⁴ "This is the most powerful medium operating in the world today, and we must have access to it to discuss our problems and concerns," said Ivan Dixon, in the *Saturday Evening Post* article. He was president of an advocacy group called Negro Actors for Action. "And we must have access to it in terms of control – not just 'Give the spooks an hour.' We have to be able to choose the material ourselves and see that it's done in a way that befits the black ethos," he added.⁵⁵

When *Rowan & Martin's Laugh-In* premiered in January 1968, it had been almost been four years since the Civil Rights act of 1964. From the show's very first episode the producers made it a goal to have a cast that was diverse racially, by gender, and with respect to political affiliation. Producer/creator Dan Rowan felt the best way to reach a broad audience was to represent them broadly.⁵⁶ Sketches on *Laugh-In* often dealt with racial themes both indirectly and overtly. The reoccurring Farkel Family sketch portrayed a couple with many children who all had bright red hair and freckles. Whenever it aired,

the races of the actors playing the children were always mixed, and none of the jokes were about the obvious differences in the children's skin color.

Often sight gags were used to highlight issues of race, but more often the utterances at the heart of these types of jokes were dialogic because of the power in their language.⁵⁷ The dialogue was the essence of these utterances. It built off either a presumed preconception of certain terms on the part of the audience, or on other foundational dialogue within the sketch itself.

One of the most popular sketches featured black comedian Dewey "Pigmeat" Markham as the judge. Markham was a comedian who spent a lot of time traveling and performing in African-American clubs, and was well known to black audiences.⁵⁸ One of his bits about a quick-tempered judge who would hand down rash judgments was meant to satirize the lack of judicial fairness often shown towards African-Americans.⁵⁹ *Laugh-In* Producer George Schlatter heard this bit and began using it almost immediately during the first season. Markham often played the role of the judge himself and his introductory cue – "Here comes de judge!" – became a national catch phrase.⁶⁰ Both that, and another of *Laugh-In*'s popular catch phrases, "Sock it to me," had origins in black culture.⁶¹ "Sock it to me" was a Motown idiom popularized by Otis Redding, and eventually banned from use on radio because of its sexual innuendo. (Some thought it was used in a more innocuous way on *Rowan & Martin's Laugh-In*, but the show often showed its female cast getting suggestively soaked after water was poured on them, or struck in the head with a blunt, phallic object.)

On the March 25, 1968 episode, Sammy Davis Jr. made the first of many appearances on the show and he portrayed the judge.⁶² One of the previous one-liners he

quipped when peering through the show's joke wall at the end of that episode was, "The KKK is full of sheet!" Davis took over a reoccurring guest role after the first season. Later that year, in an interview with *TIME Magazine*, he said that any time he'd walk through a predominately black neighborhood kids would march after him proclaiming, "Here comes de judge!"⁶³

In an episode from February 5, 1968, black comedian Flip Wilson, who would be given his own variety show the following year, played "The Nice Colored Man" in a series of transitional one-liners that ran between sketches.⁶⁴ One such line was, "Don't worry Miss. I'm the Nice Colored Man!" Wilson deadpanned his delivery to satirize the stereotype of over-aggressive behavior in African-American men. By delivering the line as if he were serious, and denoting himself as "the" Nice Colored Man, as in the only one, Wilson reminded viewers that even though blacks were on TV more often, they were still viewed in the same bigoted way by many whites.

The season two premiere of *Laugh-In* on September 16, 1968 featured the following joke in a cocktail party sketch.⁶⁵ Chelsea Brown, the only black female cast member, said, "There's a new southern margarine called Imperial wizard, but you can only use it on white bread." Through exaggerated accents and specific regional references, the joke poked fun at the idea of anyone in the South who loves spreadable butter, probably a lot of people, were about the same as those who supported the KKK.

Southerners were often the butts of racial jokes and, in a sketch on January 15, 1968, the cast of *The Carol Burnett Show* satirized them in a parody of the popular stage musical "Showboat."⁶⁶ They played antebellum Southerners who were oblivious to their insensitivities and ignorance. The women portrayed females as loud, obnoxious whiners,

while the men were power hungry and greedy. Mexican American singer Trini Lopez guest starred and played the boat's captain, Mason Dixon. While waiting for the boat to dock, Lopez turns to one of the men and asked what they'll do if the boat doesn't show. The man, played by Harvey Korman, replied, "If the showboat doesn't show then we'll go back to the plantation and start a Civil War!" The showboat eventually arrived, but the idea that Southerners will fight over ridiculous antiquated notions remained.

Black Americans were not the only minority fighting for equal rights in 1968. In the early part of that year, Mexican American activist Caesar Chavez led a public nonviolent protest of conditions for migrant farm workers that yielded increasing media attention after democratic presidential candidate Sen. Robert Kennedy championed their cause. On the April 22, 1968 episode of *Laugh-In* a cowboy turned to the camera and quipped, "I'm an equal opportunity employer. I pay my wetbacks the same as I pay my Indians."⁶⁷ Just a few weeks before this, on March 10, 1968, Chavez ended his 25-day hunger strike.

On the September 23, 1968 season two premiere of *The Carol Burnett Show*, the troupe portrayed a politician's family participating in that year's presidential election.⁶⁸ Burnett was the politician's wife attempting to put on a good face for a fake news interview involving her family. At one point Burnett is asked what she liked to cook and she answered, "I like to cook apple pie, tacos, chow mien, lasagna, and matzo balls...I might add that all of them are equally good." Not only is she satirizing politicians who try to be all things to all people, but she's also acknowledging that these different ethnic foods represent a block of voters who are worth addressing.

Midway through that same segment their maid accidentally wanders into the room. Isabel Sanford also played this maid, and Burnett insisted she join the family even though she was visibly unnerved at the site of them trying abnormally hard to be inclusive. From Sanford's dumbfounded reaction, it's clear the family is putting on a show of benevolence for the cameras. At one point the maid refers to the politician as "the Master," and in order to ease the tension Burnett laughs forcibly and says to the maid "you're a riot!" Immediately Burnett-as-the-wife realized the gaffe she made in using the word "riot," a reference to the racial violence in some cities termed "riots" by national news media and says, "I'm sorry that was bad. You're just like one of the family." The maid raised an eyebrow at her and retorted with, "Except I sleeps in the basement." This utterance depends on the impression that audiences are familiar enough with the racial turmoil shown on broadcast news, and printed in newspapers, to understand that the power in Burnett's use of the word "riot."

It is true that humor is not always a product of hostility, conflict, anxiety, or a threat.⁶⁹ However, satire is often a response to one or all of these, and one of its four tenants is judgment.⁷⁰ The specificity with which Burnett and others cast women in roles of leadership and control, the premeditated decision to have an effeminate man like Sues in a situation anathema to the stereotype accompanying his mannerisms, and the intentional inclusion of unambiguous, racially poignant one-liners on *Rowan & Martin's Laugh-In* were all examples of satirists exhibiting their specific leanings, whether political or cultural.

In 1968 many of these leanings were shared among television viewers. Women had made progress, but also were only beginning to realize their potential for

involvement in America's professional environment. Gays and lesbians were just beginning to advocate for equality. For black Americans emotions had been steeping from the pressure-cooking, slow burn of an arduous struggle for legitimate recognition as American citizens. Some manifested in aggressive ways after their iconic leader was gunned down in Memphis.

The satire of that time gave screen time to these social issues because they were recognizable to audiences. People watched the news and knew the references. If just the actors, writers, or producers understood the jokes these shows wouldn't have entertained millions, sold time to advertisers, and been renewed for season after season. Take *The Smothers Brothers' Comedy Hour*, for instance. While it was a hit show in 1968, it ultimately only had half the run of *Rowan & Martin's Laugh-In* did, and a quarter of *The Carol Burnett Show*. This is because, when the Smothers Brothers took the Vietnam War on as their cause – a valid endeavor for a satirist at that time – they became overbearing and lost sight of the most important aspect of satire.⁷¹ Unlike the deft way Burnett and company, and the crew at *Laugh-In*, handled issues of race, gender, and sexuality, the Smothers forgot that first, and foremost, satire should entertain.

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- ¹ Richard Lemon, "Black is the Color of TV's Newest Stars," *Saturday Evening Post*, November 30, 1968, 84.
- ² Archive of American Television, "Carol Burnett," Television Academy Foundation: <http://www.emmytvlegends.org/interviews/people/carol-burnett>.
- ³ "Martin Luther King, Jr. and the Global Freedom Struggle," The Martin Luther King, Jr. Research and Education Institute at Stanford University. http://mlk-kpp01.stanford.edu/index.php/encyclopedia/encyclopedia/enc_civil_rights_act_of_1964/
- ⁴ "PBS Presents, American Experience: Citizen King," January 19, 2004, Transcript: <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/amex/mlk/filmmore/pt.html>
- ⁵ Terry Anderson. *The Movement and the Sixties: Protests in America from Greensboro to Wounded Knee* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 1995), 192.
- ⁶ David R. Farber. *Age of Great Dreams: America in the 1960s* (New York, NY: Hill and Wang, 1994), 209.
- ⁷ Farber, 210.
- ⁸ Lemon, 84.
- ⁹ Herman Gray. "Remembering Civil Rights: Television, memory, and the 1960s," in *The Revolution Wasn't Televised*, ed. Lynn Spigel and Michael Curtain (New York, NY: Routledge, 1997), 348-358.
- ¹⁰ Gray, 354.
- ¹¹ Addressed in more detail in Chapter 6: "Youth Culture and the Generation Gap."
- ¹² David Marc. *Comic Visions: Television Comedy and American Culture* (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 1997), 184.
- ¹³ Archive of American Television, "Carol Burnett," Television Academy Foundation: <http://www.emmytvlegends.org/interviews/people/carol-burnett>.
- ¹⁴ Yael Kohen. *We Killed: The Rise of Women in American Comedy* (New York, NY: Sarah Crichton Books, 2012) 92.
- ¹⁵ "The Kennedy Center Honors, 2003," The Paley Center for Media Archive, Beverly Hills, CA. Viewed on December 14, 2012.
- ¹⁶ Kohen, 91.
- ¹⁷ Kohen, 93.
- ¹⁸ Ibid.
- ¹⁹ Rank & Nielsen Share: Tim Brooks and Earle F. Marsh. *The Complete Directory to Prime Time Network and Cable TV Shows, 1946 – Present*, (New York, NY: Random House Digital, Inc., 2009), 1685; Nielsen Ratings: www.classicTVhits.com/tvratings/1967.htm
- ²⁰ Rank & Nielsen Share: Tim Brooks and Earle F. Marsh. *The Complete Directory to Prime Time Network and Cable TV Shows, 1946 – Present*, (New York, NY: Random House Digital, Inc., 2009), 1685; Nielsen Ratings: www.classicTVhits.com/tvratings/1968.htm
- ²¹ Kohen, 93-94; Archive of American Television, "Carol Burnett," Television Academy Foundation, <http://www.emmytvlegends.org/interviews/people/carol-burnett>.
- ²² Howard Brick. *Age of Contradiction: American thought & culture in the 1960s* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1998), 165.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Brick, 81.

²⁵ Farber, 252-253.

²⁶ W. Joseph Campbell. *Getting it Wrong: Ten of the Greatest Misrepresented Stories in American Journalism*, (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2010), 101-114.

²⁷ Brick, 86.

²⁸ *The Carol Burnett Show*, Episode #1.27, April 15, 1968. Viewed at the University of California at Los Angeles Film & Television Archive on December 13, 2012.

²⁹ Jim Broadhead, "Verrry Interesting...but Wild," *TIME Magazine*, October 11, 1968, 51.

³⁰ Zoë Druick. "Dialogic Absurdity: TV News Parody as a Critique of Genre," *Television and New Media* 10, no. 3 (2009), 294.

³¹ *The Carol Burnett Show*, Episode #2.8, November 18, 1968. Viewed at the University of California at Los Angeles Film & Television Archive on December 13, 2012.

³² *Rowan & Martin's Laugh-In*, Episode #2.1, September 16, 1968. Viewed at the University of California at Los Angeles Film & Television Archive on December 13, 2012.

³³ Alessadra Stanley, "The Legacy of Billy Jean King, an Athlete Who Demanded Equal Play," *The New York Times*, April 26, 2006. Viewed at: http://www.nytimes.com/2006/04/26/arts/television/26stan.html?_r=0

³⁴ David Carter. *Stonewall: The Riots that Sparked the Gay Revolution*, (New York, NY: St. Martin's Press, 2004).

³⁵ *Rowan & Martin's Laugh-In*, Episode #1.13, April 22, 1968. Viewed at the Paley Center for Media in Beverly Hills, CA on December 14, 2012.

³⁶ *The Carol Burnett Show*, Episode #1.27, April 15, 1968. Viewed at the University of California at Los Angeles Film & Television Archive on December 13, 2012.

³⁷ Christie Davies. *Jokes and Targets* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2011), 270.

³⁸ *The Carol Burnett Show*, Episode #1.21, February 12, 1968. Viewed at the Paley Center for Media in Beverly Hills, CA on December 14, 2012.

³⁹ *The Smothers Brothers Comedy Hour*, Episode #1.6, March 12, 1967. Script read at The Writers Guild Foundation Library on December 11, 2012.

⁴⁰ Ruth Buzzi, Interview from "The Best of 'Rowan & Martin's Laugh-In'," DVD. (Baltimore, Maryland: Rhino Theatrical, 2003).

⁴¹ Dick Cavett, "The Dick Cavett Show" – Hollywood Greats, Disc 2, DVD. Produced by Dick Cavett (Los Angeles, CA: Shout Factory, 2006).

⁴² Joan Barthel, "Hilarious, Brash, Flat, Peppery, Repetitious, Topical and Borderline in Taste," *The New York Times Magazine*, October, 6, 1968, p. 35.

⁴³ Archive of American Television, "Vicki Lawrence," Television Academy Foundation, <http://www.emmytvlegends.org/interviews/people/vicki-lawrence>.

⁴⁴ Chelsea Brown was also the only *Laugh-In* cast member who could claim first-hand familiarity with the war in Vietnam, having previously toured the U.S. Army nightclub circuit in Southeast Asia as part of Ray Charles's nightclub act.

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- ⁴⁵ Kohen, 42-44.
- ⁴⁶ "A Failure to Communicate." *Columbia Journalism Review*, (7)1, 1968, 4.
- ⁴⁷ Howard Brick. *Age of Contradiction: American Thought & Culture in the 1960s*. (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1998), 158-159.
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- ⁴⁹ Angela Davis, "Black Nationalism: The Sixties and the Nineties." 317-325, Gina Dent (ed.) *Black Popular Culture*. (Seattle Bay Press, 1992).
- ⁵⁰ Lemon, 44.
- ⁵¹ Lemon, 42.
- ⁵² Lemon, 42.
- ⁵³ Gray, 354; Lemon, 84.
- ⁵⁴ Lemon, 82.
- ⁵⁵ Lemon, 84.
- ⁵⁶ Dan Rowan and John D. MacDonald. *A Friendship: The Letters of Dan Rowan and John D. MacDonald, 1967-1974* (New York, NY: Alfred A. Knopf, 1986), 25.
- ⁵⁷ Druick, 294.
- ⁵⁸ Mark Deming. Pigmeat Markham – Biography, AllMusic.com. Viewed at: <http://www.allmusic.com/artist/p195/biography> (accessed on November 27, 2011).
- ⁵⁹ Barthel, 34.
- ⁶⁰ Dietz, 33. "Here comes da judge" even became a Baskin Robbins ice cream flavor called "Here comes the fudge."
- ⁶¹ Barthel, 34.
- ⁶² *Rowan & Martin's Laugh-In*, Episode #9, March 25, 1968. On "The Best of 'Rowan & Martin's Laugh-In'," DVD. (Baltimore, Maryland: Rhino Theatrical, 2003).
- ⁶³ Broadhead, 50.
- ⁶⁴ *Rowan & Martin's Laugh-In*, Episode #3, February 5, 1968. On "The Best of 'Rowan & Martin's Laugh-In'," DVD. (Baltimore, Maryland: Rhino Theatrical, 2003).
- ⁶⁵ *Rowan & Martin's Laugh-In*, Episode #15, September 16, 1968. Viewed at the University of California at Los Angeles Film & Television Archive on December 13, 2012.
- ⁶⁶ *The Carol Burnett Show*, Episode #1.17, January 15, 1968. Viewed at the University of California at Los Angeles Film & Television Archive on December 13, 2012.
- ⁶⁷ *Rowan & Martin's Laugh-In*, Episode #13, April 22, 1968. Viewed at the Paley Center for Media in Beverly Hills, CA on December 14, 2012.
- ⁶⁸ *The Carol Burnett Show*, Episode #2.1, September 23, 1968. Viewed at the University of California at Los Angeles Film & Television Archive on December 14, 2012.
- ⁶⁹ Davies, 257.
- ⁷⁰ George A. Test. *Satire: Spirit and Art* (Gainesville, FL: University Press of Florida, 1986), 16-33.
- ⁷¹ Aniko Bodroghkozy. *Groove Tube: Sixties Television & the Youth Rebellion*, (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2001), 149.

CHAPTER 5

WAR & POLITICS

“Let us take as our goal: where peace is unknown, make it welcome; where peace is fragile, make it strong; where peace is temporary, make it permanent.”
– President Richard M. Nixon, First Inaugural Address, January 20, 1969

On October 8, 1968, one month before the presidential election, republican nominee Richard Nixon gave an interview in his apartment in New York City to a young reporter for CBS News named Mike Wallace.¹ The interview was for a new type of television news show created by network news producer Don Hewitt called *60 Minutes*. The show’s concept was still fledgling, but essentially aimed to be similar to a print, news magazine with features produced for television. Nixon was participating in the type of interview profile that would come to define the show.

In the segment, Nixon looked relaxed and comfortable. He wasn’t at all the flop-sweat besotted mess of a candidate many still remembered from his 1960 televised debate debacle against John F. Kennedy. He leaned back in his chair in the relaxed posture of a man who seemed unworried about his chances of winning enough votes the next time around. He reiterated his desire to visit all 50 states during his campaign, and admitted to exercising more control during this election than in the one he lost to Kennedy. He also admitted to letting a wall grow between him and the press. His reason was that presidents and other such great men were not considered great because of their personalities on

television. They were, in fact, “great” because of their principles, so constant interaction with reporters was unnecessary.² During the interview he said of the upcoming election:

If I do win this election I think I will conduct the presidency in a way that I will command the respect of the American people...The most important thing about a great man is not whether he’s loved or disliked, but whether he’s respected. And I hope to restore respect to the presidency at all levels.

The respect he thought needed restoring was a reference to the disapproval and disappointment widespread among Americans at how President Lyndon Johnson was handling both a growing domestic economic crisis and the seemingly hopeless situation in Vietnam. Of course, this was six years before Nixon would resign from the presidency, shrouded in scandal and illegality, with Watergate as the historic significance for which he’s most remembered.

However, on November 4, 1968 Nixon was selected by the American electorate as the most viable of the numerous candidates to replace LBJ. That year ten men vied for the presidency: four democratic candidates, five republicans, and one very controversial independent. None were the incumbent. One of them was assassinated.

Senator Robert F. Kennedy, brother of the former president, had just won the California democratic primary on June 6, 1968 when he was gunned down at the Ambassador Hotel in Los Angeles, CA. The shooter was a Palestinian sympathizer named Sirhan Sirhan who objected to Kennedy’s support of Israel’s sovereignty as a nation. Just two months after Martin Luther King, Jr. had been killed, and three days before King’s shooter would be captured, the death of the former attorney general and presidential hopeful was another national tragedy. Kennedy had recently connected with

Cesar Chavez, who was uniting migrant farm workers in the hopes of unionizing them. Many Hispanic/Latino immigrants looked up to him as one of the few white leaders who championed their cause.³ Many other marginalized groups of voters had expressed the same sentiment.

Kennedy exemplified a new type of strategic political campaigning that rose to prominence in the 1960s called identity politics.⁴ Rather than organize and rally around a specific political party and its multi-focused platform, practitioners of identity politics tended to rally instead around a specific cause or social movement.⁵ They would then support whichever politician showed interest in the change they sought. This shift was seen in the campaigns of democrats, like Kennedy, and republicans, like Nixon. It was even seen in independent presidential candidate Gov. George Wallace, whose campaign was primarily based on his frustration with what he saw as the federal government's imposition of civil rights on Southern states.⁶ This ultra-right wing view of government intrusion gave voice to some Southerners who were indignant about being forced to racially integrate their societies.⁷

Though Civil Rights was a political issue throughout the 1960s, probably the most contentious political issue in 1968 was opposition to the war in Vietnam. At the beginning of the 1960s, American troops had been sent to South Vietnam to protect it from being overtaken by communist North Vietnam. As a tributary to the rushing river that was the Cold War, U.S. armed forces were supposed to be advising the South Vietnamese army on how to fortify against the tides of communist aggression. However, by the end of 1968 there were more than 550,000 U.S. military personnel in Vietnam, and it was common knowledge that the U.S. had been doing most of the fighting for a few

years.⁸ The actual warfare was different than any other war America had previously fought, mostly taking place in jungle environments unfamiliar to American troops, but common to the North Vietnamese. At the end of 1968, CIA reports showed that the American soldiers were only able to find and engage the enemy an average of less than one in 100 times.⁹ That year alone approximately 30, 610 Americans were killed in action in Vietnam.¹⁰

Many felt the war unjustified, fueled by hubris, and was a waste of American lives. Until 1968, most had only read about it, but that year, more than any other time in the war, television news footage began showing the carnage wrought both on and by American soldiers.¹¹ Vietnam became a war fought on the other side of the world, but seen in the living rooms of American television audiences, which opened up opportunities for new dialogic relationships with TV as a media platform. In the wars of prior decades (World War II and the Korean War) there was a predominate sense of national support for fighting abroad.¹² Yet the broadcast news coverage of Vietnam showed visible evidence that the once-justified reason for “saving” South Vietnam seemed to be “mired in a stalemate,” according to CBS News anchor Walter Cronkite. He famously delivered a scathing editorial against the reasons for continuing to fight there on the *CBS Evening News* broadcast of February 27, 1968.¹³

Issues of both war and politics were easily identifiable as major topics within the shows studied. References to political practices, leaders, and events were apparent in every viewing of all episodes watched, as well as in the scripts read, the correspondence analyzed, and in the academic literature studied. The war was a political issue, but one that had been going on prior to the election cycle that year. There were other political

issues discussed by candidates who campaigned. So, while the issues of war and politics in 1968 are inextricably linked, each does exist as separate from the other in several instances in the media texts analyzed. Therefore, the dialogic properties of each are discussed as separately as possible in the following two sections.

From the Tet Offensive, a month-long assault on multiple South Vietnamese targets by the North Vietnamese from January 29 to February 23, to the halting of U.S. bombings on October 30, this undeclared war dominated the evening news in 1968. It was the start of adding visual images to printed news reports. This bled over into the dialogic content of other programs, especially comedy variety shows. The Vietnam War was a consistent target of satire that year, as was the fervor of the presidential election. With multiple candidates who served as objects of ridicule, as well as authoritative blunders such as the extreme force used by Chicago police at the Democratic National Convention that August, jokes about government ineptitude reflected a growing distrust of authority. This distrust fueled the fires of a burgeoning youth movement that made up one side of a growing generation gap. However, that year, the most infamous TV jokesters to satirize national leaders and their decisions were not drug-induced, hippie dropouts. They were two, clean-cut, folk singing comedians from California named Tom and Dick Smothers.

The Smothered Brothers

By the time the third season of *The Smothers Brothers' Comedy Hour* premiered on September 29, 1968 the network censors at CBS were fed up with the show, but they didn't officially pull the plug on it until spring 1969.¹⁴ In its first season, in the spring of 1967, the variety show produced sizable ratings while competing with the hit western *Bonanza*. The network was at first ecstatic, but then they realized that while they had a top-20 show, its content was spiraling out of their control. Yet as long as advertisers were willing to pay for spots, CBS put up with the politically active comedians and their on-air jabs at both network censors and executives.¹⁵

Tom and Dick Smothers grew up in Southern California, attended San Jose State University, and began performing musical and comedy acts in San Francisco as an inseparable duo. The two were always a package deal. Tom the elder played the "straight" man to Dick's younger, slower, but oddly refined goofiness. The two politically leaned left, but looked like preppy Vaudevillians. (Tom played the upright bass, an instrument far removed from the newer, electric guitars shown off by that year's rock stars.) The brothers were noticed by different variety show producers and hosts, and began guest starring on different shows throughout the 1960's. After a few successful TV specials of their own, CBS offered them their own show as a mid-season replacement to debut on February 5, 1967. Their first episode was a hit, garnering 36 Nielsen ratings share, more than that of the episode of *Bonanza* for that night.¹⁶

The set for the show was Tiffany-style, the backdrops images of colorful stained glass in leaded molds that never changed throughout its run. It was a classic look that actually seemed more fitting for the older audiences bandleader Lawrence Welk drew

than for two liberal, lefties from San Francisco. But because Tom and Dick Smothers looked conservative in both the political and descriptive sense their anti-establishment satire was even more of a contrast. They wore crisp, showman's suits, delivered on-point punch lines, and hosted the biggest name guest stars of that year. In the beginning the show's reviews in both the trade and mainstream press were positive.¹⁷ That first season, CBS was thrilled with the Smothers, but was clued into concerns from the beginning that these boys were feistier than they looked.

On the second episode, which aired February 12, 1967, the following exchange took place:¹⁸

Tom: We're going to present some pungent social comment on the pressing issues of the day. We're going to delve into the controversial issues and the material that faces our society today.

Dick: Tommy we're not going to do anything of the sort.

Tom: (*ignoring his brother*) We are going to make social comment, and we are going to talk about what's going on in the world today.

The bit was played for laughs as the earnest older brother's words were met with patronizing eye-rolls of the younger brother. However, it foreshadowed the political content that would only increase throughout the run of the show.

In its second season (fall 1967 to spring 1968) *The Smothers Brothers' Comedy Hour* maintained its status as a top-20 show with a 12.3 Nielsen rating, and 21.7 share.¹⁹ It was in its third season (fall 1968 to spring 1969) that its ratings dipped below the top 25, with a 12.0 Nielsen rating, and 20.6 share.²⁰ Those numbers are only marginally smaller than the previous season, but television viewership increased dramatically enough

throughout 1968 that even the smallest ratings dip caused a large drop in a show's rankings.

Network executives changed their position on the show around the beginning of 1968, when several sketches and monologues overtly focused on the Tet Offensive, and U.S. involvement in the Vietnam War.²¹ The brothers thought Tet made it more obvious to viewers that U.S. involvement was ridiculous, and they might have been right. But it didn't matter to the network whose main concern was selling advertising space for revenue.²² By February 1968, sponsors had begun complaining about the show's content, and specifically the anti-war rhetoric.²³

At the beginning of the show's third season (fall of 1968), both Tom and Dick routinely acknowledged their existence as fraternal thorns in the side of CBS. On the season premiere, they sported longer haircuts. Gone were the slick Bobby Darin-esque suits, replaced with mod-styled, Nehru jackets.²⁴ The opening song was a lyrical montage of current events that year, including the Vietnam War, racial violence, environmental pollution, gun control, poverty, and drug use. It ended with the brothers singing, "CBS would like to give us notice, and some of you don't like the things we say, but we're still here!" The October 27, 1968 episode opened with a blurb about student marches in Paris, Prague, Mexico City, and at Columbia University in New York. The voice over mentioned that the student protestors were encouraged by outside agitators. Tom and Dick then popped on screen said, "Hi! We're the outside agitators!"²⁵

By the following spring, too much of a fuss had been made with the network. *The Smothers Brothers' Comedy Hour* was cancelled by CBS on Thursday April 3, 1969,

after the brothers had already received a renewal notice for a fourth season.²⁶ Tom Smothers would later say in an interview, “We were fired. Not cancelled.”²⁷

Righteous indignation aside, the facts are that as the content of the Smothers’ shows became more focused on politics, and less humor-based, their ratings slipped. Of Test’s four tenants of satire, they were big on aggression and judgment, but the more they used comedy as a platform for politics, instead of the other way around, their jokes lacked the third tenant of playfulness and thereby did not prompt the fourth tenant, laughter.²⁸ According to Bakhtin, the provocation of laughter is generally exhibited when the scenario in an utterance is unexpected.²⁹ The Smothers tended to focus on their personal vendetta against CBS in more sketches in the third season, which may have been justified. Yet when other competing shows like *Rowan & Martin’s Laugh-In* and *The Carol Burnett Show* focused on satirizing authority figures most everyone could laugh at, the Smothers’ attempts to bite at CBS seemed petty. The contrast can be seen in the ways war and politics were presented in other variety shows in 1968.

The dip in the show’s ratings could be attributed to more than just unfair bias of frustrated network executives and censors. Utterances from the Smothers became rote, and no matter how much viewers may have agreed with what they were saying they paid less attention because being lectured to is not as enjoyable as being entertained. This isn’t to say that towards its end the show was devoid of all poignant content and humor, but the ratings decline was the excuse for which executives and censors had been waiting. Once it happened, they didn’t hesitate to pull the plug on what had started out as one of their most promising new shows only two years before.

Issues of War

Towards the end of the 1960s there was tremendous public pressure on politicians, and specifically President Lyndon Johnson, to withdraw troops from Vietnam.³⁰ At this same time, the role of television journalists seemed to be that of challenger to leaders and their policies. From 1968 to 1970, newscasts focused largely on the mishandling of military advancement in Vietnam, the burgeoning antiwar movement in the youth culture, and the growing public frustration with military leadership.³¹ However American politicians weren't the only ones satirized that year.

On an episode of *The Carol Burnett Show* that aired February 12, 1968 Burnett portrayed Queen Elizabeth II of England as her majesty supposedly went through a list of invitees for an upcoming royal event.³² Burnett played her as vapid and out of touch, at one point almost going as far as actually to suggest letting poorer people eat cake. When one of her assistants asked her about Prime Minister Charles de Gaulle of France blocking the United Kingdom's attempted entry into the European Common Market, Burnett-as-the-Queen responded, "I don't really care. Who wants to shop with commoners anyway?"

Charles de Gaulle was also a frequent target. In the late 1950s, de Gaulle handed off the burden of defending South Vietnam, which had been at one point a French territory, to the United States. Some years later in the 1960s, he publically denounced the way the United States was handling the situation he had seemed to abandon. De Gaulle was also a vocal proponent of French nationalism, and pushed his homeland to a larger role in international affairs.³³ At the same time, when he seemed loudly critical of any other nation that pushed similar policies, his nation faced a large financial crisis. Often he

was satirized as bombastic and someone who would rather point fingers internationally than focus on domestic issues.

In an episode of *The Carol Burnett Show* that aired on April 15, 1968, Burnett and guest star Minnie Pearl played two flummoxed women from the South visiting Paris for the first time.³⁴ They emphasized their accents, which was not difficult for Tennessee-born Pearl, and appeared enthralled with their surroundings as tourists who rarely venture outside their comfort zones. The two struck up a conversation with a man at a café who turned out to be de Gaulle, played by Harvey Korman. When Pearl recognized him and exclaimed, “Why you’re Charles de Gaulle! One of the most important men of all time!” he replied, “Yes, most of us are gone now. Caesar, Napoleon, Matthew, Mark, Luke.” Aside from the three apostles listed, the two leaders he mentioned were both famously supplanted due to their hubris. Just before the conversation ended, when Burnett asked de Gaulle for directions, he replied by pointing over the river and telling them they would have to take the bridge. Then he dramatically paused and exclaimed, “I will walk on the water!” De Gaulle then exited off stage followed by the sound of him splashing into the Seine River. “That darn fool will never learn,” Burnett shook her head and said.

On November 27 1968, Bob Hope hosted a variety special co-starring John Wayne, Eddie Fisher, James Garner, and O.J. Simpson. According to the script from this telecast, more than half of the jokes in Hope’s opening monologue were directly related to the Vietnam War, and about one out of every four was a jab at either Charles de Gaulle or France in general.³⁵

In the season two premiere of *Rowan & Martin’s Laugh-In* on September 16, 1968, Dan Rowan joked with the audience, “Hey let’s hear it for Charles de Gaulle!” To

which it seemed like only one audience member clapped. Rowan then turned to the camera and said, “*Laugh-In* feels the way he’s been acting recently, de Gaulle only deserves one clap.”

Dan Rowan had been friendly with both President Kennedy and Richard Nixon. He was invited to both their inaugural balls, and on December 12, 1968 President-elect Nixon wrote Rowan a personal thank you note for Rowan’s and Dick Martin’s service on Nixon’s celebrity fundraising committee.³⁶ Paul Keyes, the head writer for *Rowan & Martin’s Laugh-In*, was rumored to have written jokes for Nixon’s speeches. He sort of denied it in an October 16, 1968 interview with *The New York Times Magazine*, but other reports of his support of Nixon’s campaign exist.³⁷

Despite their affinity for the President, neither Rowan nor Martin, nor their writers, relented in sketches and references to Vietnam. In only its third episode on February 5, 1968 there are more than 30 satirical references to the Vietnam War.³⁸ Most of them supported the following assumptions: that the general public knew it was not receiving accurate information from military officials; that broadcast news reporters were uncovering more contrasting information every day; and that the general consensus among viewers was one of exasperation at how the war had been drawn out. The season two premiere of *Laugh-In* on September 16, 1968 included a joke set in 1988, twenty years from then.³⁹ Dan Rowan delivered this fake update as part of “The News of the Future”: “Dateline, Paris 1988. Bombing of Hanoi will cease as soon as North Vietnam withdraws from South Vietnam, Cambodia, and Seattle.” The idea that the war would still be waged twenty years later was an exaggerated play meant to provoke laughter, but

the idea that it could somehow transfer to American soil was unrealistic, yet probably thought provoking still.

In letters to a friend, Rowan admitted that he had personally donated money to and fundraised for republican causes, but was vehemently opposed to the war.⁴⁰ He had been a fighter pilot, and was shot down in 1943 while in the South Pacific. For his service Rowan was awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross, the Air Medal, and a Purple Heart.⁴¹ Even so, at the end of 1968, he admitted to losing faith almost wholeheartedly in American politicians and their abilities to decide what was right and wrong about Vietnam.⁴² Even when the war continued past 1968, so did the satirizing of it. In a *Laugh-In* episode that aired March 2, 1970, one character asked another where his tax dollars went. The other character replied, “To South Vietnam.”

On October 11, 1968 *Time* magazine praised *Rowan & Martin's Laugh-In's* stinging lines regarding the Vietnam War that were delivered with whimsy.⁴³ In a separate feature in *The New York Times Magazine*, published the week before, *Laugh-In* producer George Schlatter responded to some criticism of the sexual content in the program as “tasteless” by asking if it was more or less offensive than onslaught of visuals from the warfront seen on the evening news.⁴⁴

The *TIME* article compared *Laugh-In's* setup with that of *The Smothers Brothers' Comedy Hour* writing, “The Smothers Brothers, on the other hand tend to editorialize.” It then referred a scene from the Smothers' Thanksgiving episode that had the following exchange:⁴⁵

Dick: We've come a long way since that first Thanksgiving dinner in Plymouth, when the Pilgrims sat down at the table with the Indians to eat turkey.

Tom: Boy, I'll say we've come a long way. Now we're in Paris sitting down at a table with the [North Vietnamese] eating crow.

The studio audience half-heartedly laughed. The joke referred to peace talks in Paris following President Johnson's halting of bombing strikes. Its message was clear – that the U.S. thought it could swoop in and save South Vietnam, but was misguided. What was muddled was the humor. There was no twist or unexpected punch line that would provoke the reaction needed for laughs. A multiplicity of humorless jokes was the demise of the Smothers brothers, which was unfortunate as certain observations they made about U.S. politicians seem in hindsight appropriate and adroit.

Issues of Politics

In the second season premiere of *Rowan & Martin's Laugh-In*, which aired on September 16, 1968, the yet-to-be-elected Richard Nixon appeared in the opening saying, "Sock it...to me?" This was possibly the show's most famous catch phrase and its utterance would arguably be one of the best public relations move Nixon ever made. Some even credit this appearance as a major contribution to his election two months later.⁴⁶ At one point NBC was nervous about the cameo in case he were to get elected, but Dick Martin's response to this was, "So what?"⁴⁷ A letter from a friend to Dan Rowan jokingly credited the show as having helped get Nixon "elected by accident."⁴⁸

Both Dan Rowan and Dick Martin had supported Nixon and continued that support after his election, though they openly disagreed with some of his policies. In January 1972 they even taped a short sketch for his sixtieth birthday party.⁴⁹ On one of Nixon's famous White House Tapes exists a recorded phone conversation of the president thanking Rowan and Martin for the skit and discussing the upcoming Super Bowl VII between the Miami Dolphins and Washington Redskins.⁵⁰ However, the feeling among reviewers and audiences was that *Laugh-In* was largely bi-partisan in its satire.⁵¹

In this same episode, Rowan and Martin debuted the "Flying Fickle Finger of Fate" award.⁵² Winners of this were lauded for performing at a higher level of stupidity than was expected for politicians. This first award was presented to the U.S. Congress for "ignoring the wishes of 200 million Americans and delaying the passage of a gun control law." Upon the awarding of a bronzed hand with a pointed finger, the finger itself shot off the trophy like a gun. Rowan received a telegram the next day from New York Senator Joseph Tydings, a democrat. The telegram read: "Congratulations on your

discernment in your selection of the first winner for your 4-F Award. 85 percent of the people care about reducing gun crime, and those of us in the Congress who share this view appreciate your help. Sock it to ‘em.”⁵³

In each episode of *Laugh-In*, following the opening monologue delivered by Rowan and Martin, the first major sketch of the show was The Party. During The Party actors and guest stars danced in a modern-style, living room set as if they were all guests at a hip, trendy social gathering. Every few seconds the music stopped, and the camera zoomed in on one particular cast member who would crack a one- or two-line joke. Guests at The Party were racially, sexually, and socio-economically diverse. Most of the time the themes of the jokes matched up with the individual cast members. The young, black woman made a joke about race. The elegantly dressed affluent-looking white woman in her forties made a joke about poverty. The swinging bachelor made a joke about free love. The Party served as an opportunity to reflect the broad nature of the audience who watched the show. It was a topical onslaught that set up the rest of the fast-paced, swiftly edited, satirical sketches to come, and most of the time the topics circulating were political. Here are some examples of jokes in The Party in the February 5, 1968 episode:⁵⁴

1. On President Johnson and how he was divisive in the democratic Party: “[My husband] thinks the democrats can do no wrong and, of course, I’m for Johnson.”
2. On the waning support for President Johnson’s anti-poverty efforts: “Boris says we’ll never win the war on poverty until all those poor people surrender.”

3. On France's departure from Vietnam in the mid-1950s: "If General de Gaulle hadn't got out of Vietnam, you Americans wouldn't have it today."

Intercutting jokes like these with swinging music, rapidly zooming camera work, and psychedelic dancing added to the fun, free-wheeling nature of this sketch. The Party was fresh, especially compared with some of the stern ways *The Smothers Brothers' Comedy Hour* opened their program.

On their third season premiere that aired September 29, 1968, the brothers debuted their newer, edgier look.⁵⁵ Previously clean-shaven, in the premiere they both sported moustaches and, in the spirit of the election, asked the audience to vote on whether they should keep them, or shave them. At first there was little response from those in the studio – it seemed like they were uncomfortable, unsure as to whether or not the brothers were joking or serious. Eventually after a few minutes, the audience responded and did so more favorably towards the choice of shaving the moustaches. The brothers replied that the moustaches were going to stay, and they would overrule the majority. It was a teaching moment that seemed to carry with it the lesson that those in charge don't need to listen to the majority of the people they're supposed to serve, and was probably an accurate articulation of many frustrations held by viewers. It just wasn't funny, and the studio audience didn't respond favorably to it.

One aspect of the Smothers' electoral satirizing to which audiences did respond favorably was the mock campaign for the presidency they launched on behalf of guest comedian Pat Paulsen. Paulsen was a dour looking man who somewhat resembled Nixon and delivered lines with a dry, deadpan wit. "Other candidates charge that when I speak I

often embarrass myself. At least I don't embarrass the whole country," he joked when appearing on the season three premiere that fall.⁵⁶ Paulsen then delivered what was the most entertaining segment of the episode, based on the reactions of the studio audience. Shortly after he finished, however, the brothers introduced Harry Belafonte who sang Nina Simone's "I Wish I Knew How it Would Feel to be Free," a serious song aimed at the continuing struggle for civil rights in America. The struggle articulated was legitimate, though it changed the mood of the show from jovial back to somber.

Other comedians kept it much lighter when addressing politicians and their shortcomings. Alan King hosted a special on December 4, 1968 called "Alan King's Wonderful World of Aggravation," with aggravation being the theme of all the sketches and songs.⁵⁷ King had a reputation as being prickly and cynical in his comedy. At the tail end of a year like 1968, he said in his opening monologue, the audience could probably then feel where he'd been coming from those years prior. Nevertheless his skits were lighter and deftly dealt with their subjects.

The special featured a series of reoccurring skits where King or another guest star played a recognizable politician in a unique situation. In the first one King played President Johnson who was packing up his belongings in the Oval Office. He portrayed Johnson as a lumbering, dunder-headed Texan doofus who, at one point, asked for peanut butter and jelly on a bagel with "lots o' mayo and a glass of chocolate milk." When his assistant balked at the odd request he yelled, "You get me a sandwich or I'll run again!" What makes the dialogism of this utterance effective was the way King utilized "responses," or the Bakhtinian criterion of non-verbal communication.⁵⁸ While there is dialogue that showed Johnson as a silly Texan with an accent and odd notions of reality

as well as sandwich preference, absent is the blatant lecturing itemizing Johnson's faults. The aggression and judgment were instead shown through the parody, not told, thereby allowing playfulness to build and lead to laughter.

It was the absence of this "showing" and an emphasis on "telling" that kept the Smothers' satire from being as entertaining as it could have been in its last season. Take the sketch on *The Carol Burnett Show* where Burnett and Minnie Pearl were in Paris with Charles de Gaulle.⁵⁹ Much of the humor from that sketch derived from the fish-out-of-water scenario created by plopping two untraveled, uncultured Southern women in high-society Paris. While the sketch depended on a potentially untrue portrayal of American travelers as provincial and uptight, it was a familiar enough concept that audiences didn't have to focus so much on the details of the utterance. It was set up so they could glean the message while laughing. At one point in that episode, when one Frenchman tries to sell the ladies postcards with a nude statue on it Burnett snaps, "You tacky thing! I don't even watch the Smothers Brothers!"

The Smothers' season three premiere ran into a problem with CBS censors.⁶⁰ The episode included a frank discussion with Dr. Benjamin Spock about why he opposed the Vietnam War. The famous parenting guru had been convicted that summer for conspiracy to violate the Selective Service Act because of his vocal encouragement of young men who burned their draft cards. In the interview with the brothers, Dr. Spock explained his position and CBS cut the entire segment. Also cut was a song performed by Harry Belafonte that referenced recent violent protests in Chicago. The brothers haggled with CBS and even got lawyers involved but to no avail.⁶¹ There was some quick reshuffling, and re-editing, and when the episode aired the brothers hadn't been able to fill the time,

so they included an eight-minute question-and-answer session with the studio audience. At one point, desperate to entertain, Tom tried to do a handstand on one of the stools. Finally one audience member shouted out, "Who does have the last say on the show, the censors or you?" Tom then explained the position of the brothers was that they wanted to use their television show to highlight problems they felt directly affected their viewers, and that the censors were doing Americans a disservice by cutting things like the interview with Dr. Spock, or allowing the free speech of Belafonte. Again he may have been right, but, again, it was another lecture.

The skit that followed that segment was a parody of *Bonanza*, the Smothers' competing show.⁶² The brothers portrayed "the Smut Brothers," two outlaws who stole the "Nielsen's" from the ranch and were holding them for ransom. The two heroes were played by guest stars Mama Cass, lead singer of the band The Mamas and the Papas, and professional football star Rosie Grier. When the cowboy heroes confronted the brothers, both Tom and Dick wore black bandanas over their mouths with "Censored" printed on them. They bickered back and forth, with almost each line a jab at the network that was broadcasting them. At the end, the brothers still hadn't return the "Nielsen's," and then the black Grier kissed the white Cass on the forehead. "Now they'll never get the Nielsen's back," she joked. And they didn't.

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- ¹ *60 Minutes*, CBS News, Episode #1.3, October 8, 1968. Viewed at the Paley Center for Media in Beverly Hills, CA on December 14, 2012.
- ² President George W. Bush would times echo this multiple both during and after his time in office, especially in regards to his decision to invade Iraq in 2003. He also was well known for putting up a wall to the press.
- ³ Dolores Huerta, 1968 with Tom Brokaw, DVD. Produced by the History Channel (New York, NY: A&E Home Video, 2008).
- ⁴ David R. Farber. *Age of Great Dreams: America in the 1960s* (New York, NY: Hill and Wang, 1994), 267.
- ⁵ Cressida Heyes. "Identity Politics," Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy (Metaphysics Research Lab, CSLI, Stanford University): <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/identity-politics>.
- ⁶ Howard Brick. *Age of Contradiction: American thought & culture in the 1960s* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1998), 158-159.
- ⁷ Ibid.
- ⁸ Farber, 145-146.
- ⁹ Farber, 147.
- ¹⁰ Farber, 145-146.
- ¹¹ Farber, 155.
- ¹² Farber, 50.
- ¹³ *Reporting Vietnam – Part One: American Journalism 1959-1969* (Washington, DC: Library of America, 1998), 581-582.
- ¹⁴ David Bianculli. *Dangerously Funny: The Uncensored Story of The Smothers Brothers' Comedy Hour* (New York, NY: Touchstone, 2009), 307.
- ¹⁵ Bianculli, 80.
- ¹⁶ Bianculli, 78.
- ¹⁷ Bianculli, 80.
- ¹⁸ *The Smothers Brothers Comedy Hour*, Episode #1.2, February 12, 1967. Viewed at the University of California at Los Angeles Film & Television Archive on December 12, 2012.
- ¹⁹ Rank & Nielsen Share: Tim Brooks and Earle F. Marsh. *The Complete Directory to Prime Time Network and Cable TV Shows, 1946 – Present*, (New York, NY: Random House Digital, Inc., 2009), 1685; Nielsen Ratings: www.classicTVhits.com/tvratings/1967.htm
- ²⁰ Rank & Nielsen Share: Tim Brooks and Earle F. Marsh. *The Complete Directory to Prime Time Network and Cable TV Shows, 1946 – Present*, (New York, NY: Random House Digital, Inc., 2009), 1685; Nielsen Ratings: www.classicTVhits.com/tvratings/1968.htm
- ²¹ Aniko Bodroghkozy. *Groove Tube: Sixties Television and the Youth Rebellion* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2001) 132.
- ²² Bianculli, 101.
- ²³ Bianculli, 167.
- ²⁴ *The Smothers Brothers Comedy Hour*, Episode #3.2, September 29, 1968. Viewed at the University of California at Los Angeles Film & Television Archive on December 12, 2012.

²⁵ Bodroghkozy, 123.

²⁶ Bianculli, 307.

²⁷ Bianculli, 309.

²⁸ George A. Test. *Satire: Spirit and Art* (Gainesville, FL: University Press of Florida, 1986), 16-33.

²⁹ Zoë Druick. "Dialogic Absurdity: TV News Parody as a Critique of Genre," *Television and New Media* 10, no. 3 (2009), 294.

³⁰ Robert J. McMahon. "The Politics, and Geopolitics, of American Troop Withdrawals from Vietnam, 1968–1972." *Diplomatic History* (34) 3, 2010, 471-483.

³¹ Chester Pach. "'Our Worst Enemy Seems to Be the Press': TV News, the Nixon Administration, and U.S. Troop Withdrawal from Vietnam, 1969–1973." *Diplomatic History*, (34) 3, 2010, 555-565.

³² *The Carol Burnett Show*, Episode #1.21, February 12, 1968. Viewed at The Paley Center for Media in Beverly Hills, CA on December 14, 2012.

³³ Edward A. Kolodziej. *French International Policy Under de Gaulle and Pompidou: The Politics of Grandeur* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1974), 618.

³⁴ *The Carol Burnett Show*, Episode #1.27, April 15, 1968. Viewed at the University of California at Los Angeles Film & Television Archive on December 13, 2012.

³⁵ *The Bob Hope Special*, November 27, 1968. Script read at the Writer's Guild Foundation Library & Archive in Los Angeles, CA on December 11, 2012.

³⁶ Invitation, President Kennedy to Dan Rowan, January 1961, box 4, folder 1, Dan Rowan Papers, American Heritage Center, University of Wyoming; Invitation, President Nixon to Dan Rowan, January 1973, box 4, folder 1, Dan Rowan Papers, American Heritage Center, University of Wyoming; Letter, President-elect Nixon to Dan Rowan, December 12, 1961, box 10, folder 3, Dan Rowan Papers, American Heritage Center, University of Wyoming.

³⁷ Joan Barthel, "Hilarious, Brash, Flat, Peppery, Repetitious, Topical and Borderline in Taste," *The New York Times Magazine*, October, 6, 1968; Bianculli, 236.

³⁸ *Rowan & Martin's Laugh-In*, Episode #3, February 5, 1968. On "The Best of 'Rowan & Martin's Laugh-In'," DVD. (Baltimore, Maryland: Rhino Theatrical, 2003).

³⁹ *Rowan & Martin's Laugh-In*, Episode #2.1, September 16, 1968. Viewed at the University of California at Los Angeles Film & Television Archive on December 13, 2012.

⁴⁰ Dan Rowan and John D. MacDonald. *A Friendship: The letters of Dan Rowan and John D. MacDonald 1967-1974* (New York, NY: Alfred A. Knopf, 1986), 71.

⁴¹ Military Honors, box 1, folder 1, Dan Rowan Papers, American Heritage Center, University of Wyoming.

⁴² Rowan and MacDonald, 93.

⁴³ Jim Broadhead. "Verrry Interesting...but Wild," *TIME Magazine*, October 11, 1968, 52.

⁴⁴ Barthel, 37.

⁴⁵ *The Smothers Brothers' Comedy Hour*, Episode #2.9, November 25, 1968. Viewed at the University of California at Los Angeles Film & Television Archive on December 12, 2012.

⁴⁶ Stark, 143.

⁴⁷ Barthel, 33.

⁴⁸ Rowan and MacDonald, 69.

⁴⁹ Rowan and MacDonald, 129.

⁵⁰ Richard Nixon – Presidential Recordings, Miller Center, University of Virginia, <http://millercenter.org/scripps/archive/presidentialrecordings/nixon>. Accessed November 28, 2011. The Dolphins beat the Redskins in Super Bowl VII, 14 to 7. President Nixon said he thought Dolphins would win.

⁵¹ Broadhead, 52.

⁵² *Rowan & Martin's Laugh-In*, Episode #2.1, September 16, 1968. Viewed at the University of California at Los Angeles Film & Television Archive on December 13, 2012.

⁵³ Telegram from Sen. Joseph Tydings, September 1968, box 1, folder 1, Dan Rowan Papers, American Heritage Center, University of Wyoming.

⁵⁴ *Rowan & Martin's Laugh-In*, Episode #3, February 5, 1968. On "The Best of 'Rowan & Martin's Laugh-In'," DVD. (Baltimore, Maryland: Rhino Theatrical, 2003).

⁵⁵ *The Smothers Brothers Comedy Hour*, Episode #3.2, September 29, 1968. Viewed at the University of California at Los Angeles Film & Television Archive on December 12, 2012.

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ *Kraft Music Hall Presents Alan King's Wonder World of Aggravation*, December 4, 1968. Script read at the Writer's Guild Foundation Library & Archive in Los Angeles, CA on December 11, 2012.

⁵⁸ Druick, 294.

⁵⁹ *The Carol Burnett Show*, Episode #1.27, April 15, 1968. Viewed at the University of California at Los Angeles Film & Television Archive on December 13, 2012.

⁶⁰ *The Smothers Brothers Comedy Hour*, Episode #3.2, September 29, 1968. Viewed at the University of California at Los Angeles Film & Television Archive on December 12, 2012.

⁶¹ Bianculli, 205.

⁶² *The Smothers Brothers Comedy Hour*, Episode #3.2, September 29, 1968. Viewed at the University of California at Los Angeles Film & Television Archive on December 12, 2012.

CHAPTER 6

YOUTH CULTURE & THE GENERATION GAP

Benjamin Braddock: *I'm just...*
 Mr. Braddock: *Worried?*
 Benjamin: *Well...*
 Mr. Braddock: *About what?*
 Benjamin: *I guess about my future.*
 Mr. Braddock: *What about it?*
 Benjamin: *I don't know...I want to be...*
 Mr. Braddock: *To be what?*
 Benjamin: *...Different.*

– *The Graduate*, nominated for the “Best Picture” Academy Award in 1968

On April 28, 1968 “Hair” debuted on Broadway billed as “the American Tribal-Love Rock Musical.” It featured sex outside of marriage, communal living, nudity, homosexuality, drug use, and spurned the authority of the preceding generation all while emphasizing that the long hair of its cast represented more than just a style choice.

“Hair” was a theatrical hit, but it was never really about the hair. It was about what the hair represented. It was about what the length of it stood for, and the fact that its mere existence frustrated some who were more traditional and frowned or clutched their pearls at the sight of it on a young man. It was about a young woman not feeling like she needed to hide her body in obsequious deferment. It was about being able to get high if one chose. It was about peace. It was about love. It was about the freedom to make choices without consequence based on consciousness, the kind of freedom represented by letting those long locks grow. It was raucous and angry and, at the end of it, the audience

wound up on stage for a “Be-in,” a sort of tribute to “sit-in” protests of that era.¹ And when the show opened in Los Angeles, in the summer of 1968 one of the investors who brought it to the Aquarius Theater was Tom Smothers.² In fact, in the winter of 1968, he invited the cast of “Hair” to appear on *The Smothers’ Brothers Comedy Hour* and perform three songs.³

Much mythologizing has been done about the youth culture of this era, and 1968 in particular. In 1967 *TIME Magazine* featured the hippies of the Haight-Ashbury neighborhood in San Francisco, a borough populated with young people from all over the country living in communes, doing drugs, and enjoying life without responsibility.⁴ By 1968, that neighborhood and its inhabitants had turned into a tourist attraction where people still came to experience the “free love” available, but also to gawk at those who spurned societal conventions.⁵

A longhaired hippie smoking a joint, wearing round glasses, with flowers in his or her hair, and flashing the “Peace” sign with two fingers is an image many conjure when picturing this neighborhood, or even when thinking about the year 1968. Yet it was really only a minority who tuned in, turned on, and dropped out. “Most of the time it was a wild excess of self-glorification and narcissism and strangeness and a lot of destroyed drug culture lives,” said former *Wall Street Journal* columnist Dorothy Rabinowitz, of the hippie culture.⁶ Many others were just trying to grow up, go to college, and figure out their lives. Even so, attitudes were changing among youths in 1968.

While campaigning for president that year, candidate Richard Nixon promised to end the draft of American males ages 18 to 25 into military service, a practice that had started during World War II. Many of the young men who would be drafted were

between the ages of 18 to 20, which meant that they could fight, and in some cases die, for their country, but they could not vote. Many American youths saw this as hypocritical and vocalized their opinions in protests and by burning their draft cards. The 26th Amendment to the Constitution, which lowered the voting age to 18, wouldn't become law until 1971.

“It was common currency among my fellow students that the President of the United States was not telling us the truth about Vietnam,” said Jeffrey House in a 2008 documentary. House was a former University of Wisconsin student who dodged the draft by moving to Canada. “Every day you would go down to the common room and the talk would be how to fake a medical condition to get out of the draft,” he said. “How could it be that they could lie to us and then demand that we give our lives for a lie?”⁷

In the mid-1960s, 41 percent of all Americans were under the age of 20, which meant that youths made up the largest group of Americans at that time.⁸ They would later be dubbed the “Baby Boomer” generation, as many of them were products of families promptly started when soldiers returned home from World War II. While many of them participated in protests, challenged authority more than before, and may have felt less constricted about choices made in their personal lives, not all of them dropped out of society to live in communes. Some kept the conventional ideals of the previous generation and were confused by the seemingly chaotic choices made by their peers.

There are a number of societal changes that could be attributed for the shift in ideals between the perceived nationalism of the generation that fought in World War II, and the open frustration of the generation that fought in Vietnam. One is that the idea that traditional values of the early century changed to include divorced families and more

sexual freedom for singles. In 1968 the divorce rate was 2.9 percent, the highest it had ever been in America, having risen steadily the previous five years.⁹ The cover story in *LOOK Magazine* in December 1968 focused on the problem of how to make more marriages work. It pointed out that the perceptions of American marriage had never been more negative, and even suggested that a couple should enjoy society's approval for living together before getting married.¹⁰ This idea began surfacing more in broadcast news stories and in national conversations.¹¹

In March 1968, one specific story widely covered was that of an undergraduate student at Barnard College in New York City named Linda LeClair who decided to live off-campus with her boyfriend. At the time, the school had a set of guidelines dubbed "in loco parentis" rules, or "in place of the parents." These gave the college a type of moral authority over the off-campus activities of its students, so the school called LeClair before a disciplinary committee and threatened her with expulsion because of her living situation. Several hundred students, many of them female, protested "The LeClair Affair." They felt it was an overreaching of authority. Eventually LeClair was allowed to remain enrolled at Barnard, but was banned from certain public places and social activities.

Another reason for shifting ideals was the steadier flow of information disseminated by news organizations, especially information regarding the mishandling of military operations in Vietnam. Other stories that framed those in authority bungling situations paralleled the dialogic themes found in television satire. International student protests that year in Paris, Prague, and Mexico City for reasons dealing with their local authority figures were widely covered by network news, leading some media scholars to

believe that they contributed to the idea that protests worked as messaging tools.¹² Even though protests were often portrayed in news stories negatively, and as subversive acts, they still were covered. Some saw value in them as tools for publicity, and not just as opportunities to rally around causes.¹³

In TV sketch comedy in 1968 the ethos of the youth culture seeped into much of what made it on air. *The Smothers Brothers' Comedy Hour* garnered 16- to 24-year-old audiences more than any other program that year.¹⁴ Throughout the 1960s that particular demographic had been tough to capture because of the lack of programming that spoke directly to them.¹⁵ However, the content produced by the Smothers brothers often exacerbated points of contention between younger and older generations.¹⁶ This was not the case with a competing variety show that was hyper-kinetic and filled with a cast diverse in age, gender, and race, which got multi-generational audiences to watch television together. They sat down for the evening news as a family, and then stay tuned for *Rowan & Martin's Laugh-In*.

The Healing Madness of *Rowan & Martin's Laugh-In*

Women danced in miniskirts as the camera zoomed in. Someone famous said, “Sock it to me!” and then water was dumped on an unsuspecting victim. Psychedelic florets of color – lots of color! – swirled around the screen. Artie Johnson smoked a joint. Someone else famous came on screen and said something funny. A few more women danced in miniskirts. An old woman hit a young hippie in the head with her purse. Then Jack Lemmon looked at the camera and deadpanned, “This isn’t really a TV show, it’s national group therapy.”¹⁷

On January 22, 1968, one week before the Tet Offensive was launched in Vietnam, the quirky sketch comedy show premiered on NBC as a mid-season replacement for *The Man from U.N.C.L.E.*¹⁸ The show was hosted by two tuxedoed, middle-aged men, Dan Rowan and Dick Martin, was populated with exuberant cast members who starred in shorter-than-usual segments, and featured guest appearances from famous actors and musicians. Many of the punch lines were childish, yet timely, and many jokes contained just the right amount of innuendo to keep them from being censored.¹⁹ The show quickly became an escape, and a way for audiences to balance the barrage of serious information they’d just received from the network news.²⁰

Within eight weeks of its premiere *Rowan & Martin's Laugh-In* was the most watched program in America, and remained so the first two of the six seasons it aired.²¹ In its first season it was a top 25 show with an average 12.1 Nielsen rating and 21.3 share.²² In its second season, it was the number-one show on television and averaged an 18.5 Nielsen rating and 31.8 share.²³ Within two months of its second season premiere

Laugh-In was on the cover of four major magazines: *TIME*, *LOOK*, *The Saturday Evening Post*, and *The New York Times Magazine*.

“*Laugh-In* was not a variety show,” said its producer George Schlatter. “*Laugh-In* was a comedy show.”²⁴ Actually it was more like a comedy deluge, according to one reviewer.²⁵ Each episode required 400 pieces of tape for each episode. In TV production the norm is for one page of a script to equal one minute of screen time. For an hour-long show, the average script length is 45 to 60 pages. A show with lots of edits can run about 80 to 100 pages. The average length of a script for an episode of *Rowan & Martin’s Laugh-In* was often more than 250 pages. Each joke got its own page in order to alert the editors as to what type of cuts were necessary. Some pages had less than a dozen words on them.²⁶

The show’s fast pace was a sharp contrast to traditional television shows at that time, and was especially different from the staple variety shows of eras recently past, such as *The Ed Sullivan Show*. Those shows often produced episodes using the traditional two or three-camera set-up, with little visual movement. Essentially this was really nothing more than setting up a camera in front of a stage to record. Critics noticed this and one even commented that it was the first TV series to be based largely on the art of the camera.²⁷ One viewer who was legally blind wrote a letter saying that because the show was so visual his wife often had to explain the jokes and “they don’t seem as funny.”²⁸ Another critic wrote, “Other TV variety shows can be dropped intact onto a theater or nightclub stage, but *Laugh-In* would be impossible anywhere but on television.”²⁹

For *Laugh-In*, George Schlatter wanted to create a newer style of production that would capture what he thought were people's shrinking attention spans.³⁰ This also fit into his something-for-everyone philosophy because if one demographic did not like a joke, chances are it was fine because 10 seconds later the next joke would have them rolling on the floor. In between longer sketches were "quickies" and "one-liners." In the February 5, 1968 episode in between the fourth and fifth sketch was a montage of different buttons parodying political pins with versions of then popular slogans.³¹ The slogans included the following: "Bam the Bum," "Lower the Age of Puberty," and "Tarzan Swings." After several shots of these buttons, each edited to cut in immediately after the other, the next sketch immediately began. Montages such as this were another way *Laugh-In* quickly satirized political topics in addition to specifically tailoring sketches around political themes. Most importantly, though, they were fun. They made people laugh first, and think second.

The shift in ideals among youths and the resulting generation gap overlap with previously discussed issues of gender, sexuality, race, war, and politics. Yet embedded in the archived episodes, scripts, production notes, and other primary sources dealing with these shows existed two distinct themes within the dialogic properties of their satire. The first was the backlash against those in authority and how it manifested through protests and lifestyle choices outside the corner of Haight and Ashbury. The second was the way changing ideals related specifically to ideas about sex and relationships. The dialogic properties seen in both themes are mostly Bakhtinian "responses," non-verbal representations reflecting a reciprocal relationship.³² Utterances in verbal form existed in linguistic mass specifically in *Laugh-In* because of the short length of some sketches.

Since some were only a few seconds long, their dialogic constructs had to be specific in order to provoke laughter. The sheer number of them also made for more opportunities for relating with viewers.

Some of the reason for this lay in how the shows' satire included jabs at both age groups. Schlatter recognized that the younger generation was more media savvy than its parents', at one point saying, "The casual 20 year-old TV viewer has seen more show business than the professional of 20 years ago."³³ He also recognized the comedic value of the Vaudevillian style theatrics many older viewers enjoyed as children.³⁴ Hosts Rowan and Martin were seasoned performers in their mid-forties who had made a previous name for themselves with their vaudevillian-style variety show in Las Vegas.³⁵ They tried to blend certain physical gags, as well as quick one-line jokes with modern antics and boundary-pushing double entendres.

One reviewer said of the show that *Laugh-In*'s aim was to "create a state of sensory overload, a condition that audiences nowadays seem to want or need."³⁶ In the October 4, 1968 cover story in *TIME Magazine* the reporter wrote about how the show seemed to bridge the gap between older and younger audiences.³⁷ Much of how they were able to do this existed in providing a forum that didn't use comedy as a platform for politics, but politics as a platform for comedy.³⁸ Unlike the Smothers brothers, the crew at *Laugh-In* utilized the satirical tenants of aggression and judgment in equal doses along with play. Rowan, Martin, and Schlatter recognized the changes taking place in younger audiences, and wanted to speak to them as well as their parents.³⁹

Issues Relating to the Generation Gap

On the March 12, 1967 episode of *The Smothers Brothers' Comedy Hour*, which featured Carol Burnett just a few months before her own show debuted, there were a number of references to the increasing amount of student-led protests.⁴⁰ Towards the beginning of the episode, Tom turned to Carol to protest the way Dick was picking on him. Burnett kidded Tom for not having really thought his “protest” through. The three then sang a song about protesting that included the following lyrics:

Picket signs and protest songs,
That's the way we'll win the fight,
Cause we believe two civil wrongs
Do not make a civil right.

Another sketch in that episode centered on a group of housewives at a supermarket who were angry because of inflation. When their frustrations reached critical mass, Burnett led them in a song about organizing a protest over what they thought was an insidious amount to pay for vegetables. Even though they were admittedly “regular people,” they thought the protest was just what was needed to lower the prices. Their protest failed, and they were stuck paying what the grocery store asked.

The second season premiere of *The Carol Burnett Show*, which aired September 23, 1968, featured an election-themed skit that was a fake news interview with one of the presidential candidates at his home with his family.⁴¹ The sketch mostly satirized how candidates and their families feigned attempts at being everything to everybody, but one specific reference was aimed at the number of student protests that year. After Burnett, as the candidate's wife, referenced Europe with jingoistic disdain she then remarked about

the straight-laced nature of her children and elbowed her daughter as if encouraging her to say a prepared remark. The daughter, played by Vicki Lawrence, then emphatically said, “This summer I did not go to Europe.” Burnett nodded her head triumphantly and patted her daughter’s knee, but Lawrence shamefully lowered her head as if embarrassed to admit she wasn’t part of the student protests abroad that were widely covered on the news that year.

In 1968 there were more student protests than in any other time in American history.⁴² Most of them centered around the Vietnam War, or war in general, and the drafting of American males ages 18 to 25. Others were on behalf of racial equality, women’s rights, student’s rights, legalization of drugs, and a number of other miscellaneous issues that reflected the emerging generation’s frustrations with the decisions of those in authority. There were a few well-known and publicized protests that got out of hand. One lasted from April 22 to 28, 1968 at Columbia University in New York. Students took over a campus building and occupied it for a week after it was publicized that Columbia scientists had contributed research to the Vietnam War effort. Police raided the building and arrested the students. Another was at San Francisco State University where students protested for more inclusion in university policies, for the hiring of more ethnically diverse faculty members and for making racial diversity a curriculum priority. This protest started November 5, 1968, lasted for five months, and eventually dissipated.

Probably the most famous student-led protests that year were the demonstrations on August 27, 1968 at the Democratic National Convention in Chicago, mostly because they devolved into violence in front of hundreds of journalists. In anticipation of

protestors, Mayor Richard Daley approved the use of excessive force by the police if they got out of hand, and some law enforcement officers claimed that's exactly what happened. Others say the police didn't wait for anyone to step out of line and became aggressive for no reason. Regardless of who started it (most likely it was a combination of tension from both sides), television viewers saw students dragged through the streets, beaten with clubs, and sprayed with mace by local police. Because reporters were there to cover the nominations at the convention anyway, they turned their cameras on the violence and mayhem happening in the streets outside.

Dan Rowan was horrified by what he saw on the news from Chicago, and made it a point to include some references in the script for the second season premiere that fall.⁴³ The jokes he wrote didn't fit the playful mold of *Laugh-In* and also censors at NBC thought they were too inflammatory, so they were cut from the final shooting script.⁴⁴

Ironically, *The Smothers' Brothers Comedy Hour* got away with a direct reference to the violence in Chicago on their season three premiere on September 29, 1968.⁴⁵ At one point, fake candidate Pat Paulson quipped, "Today I have so many new supporters that even Mayor Daley couldn't beat them off with a stick." Unfortunately for them, that same episode was broadcast without a taped segment featuring activist and singer Harry Belafonte. He sang his song "Carnival" in front of a screen depicting images of Mayor Daley at press conferences and police clashing with students in the Chicago streets spliced together.⁴⁶ According to Belafonte, the song was originally written about Mardi Gras in New Orleans, but for the taping of that episode he added in additional lyrics referencing Chicago such as "Let it be known freedom's gone and the country's not our

own.”⁴⁷ Censors at CBS refused to allow the segment to air, and the brothers had to awkwardly improvise to fill some of the time.⁴⁸

Many protests took place on university campuses nationwide. On November 27, 1968 Bob Hope hosted a comedy variety special taped at the sports arena at the University of Southern California. In his opening monologue Hope commented on the lack of student protests he saw there.⁴⁹ “You haven’t had a riot, a demonstration, or even a sit in,” he joked. “Are you sure this is a college? Are you sure?”

Some students chose not to protest but still changed their attitudes about things such as casual sex and drug use. “In those days it seemed a little more healthy to be smoking weed instead of getting involved,” said folk music singer Arlo Guthrie in a 2008 documentary of the growing amount of marijuana usage in 1968. This was reflected in the large amount of drug references and portrayals of youths as frequently being high.

Comedienne Leigh French created a character for *The Smothers Brothers’ Comedy Hour* named “Goldie O’Keefe.” She was supposed to be an amalgamation of different stereotypes of youths, the ultimate hippie chick.⁵⁰ She debuted during the first season and many of her jokes included drug references so colloquial that CBS censors sometimes missed them. On the November 3, 1968 episode of *The Smothers Brothers’ Comedy Hour* during what had become a recurring parody of advice shows for housewives, French as “O’Keefe” said the following while pretending to explain how to knead dough:⁵¹

The more you knead it the higher it rises. The higher it rises, the lighter you feel. I feel good already! Ladies, ladies, ladies get it on this way. My bread is getting high, and I’m beginning to rise.

She delivered this in a suggestive way that, when combined with the drug reference “high,” alluded to an encouragement of women achieving a sexual climax while getting high. Given the continuing issues the Smothers had with CBS censors, it’s surprising that a sketch combining both drugs and sex made it on the air. It was also an example of how the Smothers brothers ran the risk of alienating older audiences by pointedly including edgier subject matter only younger viewers might have appreciated.

Other references to drugs in youth culture were subtler. In the second season premiere of *Laugh-In*, Henry Gibson and Arte Johnson, dressed as hippie college students, and exchanged the following lines:

Henry: “Hi.”

Arte: “You too?”

This simple exchange summed up what writers believed that much of older generation thought of younger people. It played off of the elders’ shared stereotypes, but because there was some truth in its drug-related humor, younger viewers were able to laugh at it as well. Both demographics could potentially see humor in it for different reasons.

Issues of Sex and Relationships in Youth Culture

Throughout the 1960s there was a sharp increase in liberal attitudes toward premarital sex and sexuality in general, with a spike in public awareness of this change beginning in 1968.⁵² Bob Hope joked in his opening monologue at the 40th Annual Academy Awards that, “Some of the pictures this year were so sexy Price-Waterhouse is handing out the [winners’] names in a plain brown envelope.”⁵³

American youths were undergoing what cultural historians would later call the “sexual revolution.” Ideas about sex, personal sexuality, and monogamy were questioned by some for the first time, and for others in a more open way. News coverage of “free love” often was in tandem with stories about the growing feminist movement, in which women were often portrayed negatively.⁵⁴

On July 24, 1968, Pope Paul VI officially came out against the birth control pill on behalf of the Catholic Church in an encyclical letter known as the “*Humanae Vitae*.” The Pill had been birthed into popular culture at the beginning of the 1960s and was controversial because it allowed for sexual practices that included less concern about unplanned pregnancy. That fall the Pope’s edict was fodder for comedy shows that portrayed his views of sex, and those of the Catholic Church, as ostensibly stodgy and out of touch.

Even something as innocent as a man and a woman, fully clothed, in a bed, and singing a sweet song caused some friction. “Mama” Cass Elliot, lead singer of the band The Mama’s and the Papa’s, guest starred on the third season premiere of *The Smothers Brothers’ Comedy Hour*, the same episode where censors took issue with Dr. Spock’s interview and Harry Belafonte’s song.⁵⁵ Cass sang a duet of “Dream a Little Dream” with

Dick Smothers, and at one point during the song the two got in a bed together and continued singing. Dick kept falling asleep during the song, and Cass would throw him an elbow and jolt him awake. Men and women sharing the same bed and singing a love song to each other, even with the comedy of Dick Smothers's sleepiness included, were rarely seen on prime time television at that time. Possibly CBS censors let that scene stay because they were busy fighting the Smothers brothers over other issues in that episode.

"I personally have always thought sex was funny, a good subject for comedy," Dick Martin, producer and star of *Laugh-In* said in an interview in the fall of 1968.⁵⁶ Martin said that he specifically came up with the idea of being a sort of lothario to Dan Rowan's straight man during the show's opening monologues. Though he said it was meant to be innocent.

On the April 22, 1968 episode of *Laugh-In* Barbara Feldon was a guest.⁵⁷ Feldon was the co-star of *Get Smart*, a popular comedy spy show on which she played a sexy secret agent. On that episode of *Laugh-In* during the opening cocktail sketch, an old woman played by Ruth Buzzi turned to the camera and said, "I tried to join the sexual revolution, but I flunked the physical." The music started up, dancing ensued, and the camera pulled back then zoomed in on Feldon. She turned to face it and in a suggestive way said, "I went to parochial school where we really learned the 'three r's' – reading, writing, and rhythm." The third "r" was, of course, a blatant reference to the rhythm method of family planning much preferred by the Catholic Church.

During The Party sketch in the September 16, 1968 episode of *Laugh-In* at one point the music stopped and the camera settled on Dan Rowan and cast member Alan Sues.⁵⁸ Rowan said, "I saw a movie last night that was downright dirty and lewd." Then

Alan Sues lasciviously asked, “Where’s it playing?” The camera then pulled back, the music started and then settled on Dick Martin who turned to the camera and said, “Don’t look at dirty movies as offensive, look at them as training films.” Once again up went the music, the dancing started, and after two beats the camera pulled zoomed back in on Jo Anne Worley who said, “[My husband] says let’s get sex out of the movies and back into the motels where it belongs.” That episode ended with a musical number about higher education featuring Goldie Hawn, Chelsea Brown, Jo Anne Worley, Ruth Buzzi, and Barbara Feldon. The women sang suggestively and the lyrics included innuendos about the women being the “teachers’ pets” and that “teachers love to pet.”

Collectively listing those utterances makes it seem like a sexual onslaught at which even some modern audiences might raise an eyebrow and yet, that second season premiere was one of the highest rated episodes of *Laugh-In* in 1968. After that show, it only climbed until it hit the number-one spot and remained there for the season. The fact that it was so popular, while containing such sexually charged material, suggests that the provocation of laughter from these socially satirical utterances were knowingly understood by audiences without many of them taking offense.

Of course, some were offended. In a letter to a friend, Dan Rowan mentioned a piece of correspondence received that fall from an angry viewer who wrote, “Your show is just disgraceful. We can’t take our children to the movies anymore, now we can’t watch TV, pretty soon we will have to start talking to each other.”⁵⁹

At the end of each episode of *Laugh-In* Dan Rowan turned to Dick Martin and said, “Say ‘good night,’ Dick.” To which Martin responded, “Good night, Dick!” This simple, routine exchange showcased the quick, silly humor that had been foundational for

the entire preceding episode. This closing was not filled with final zingers, and rarely contained anything of political or social importance. It plainly was a cheerful reminder that the preceding hour had been all in good fun, something viewers of television news received little of during 1968. “This show is right for the times...when an hour of laugh, laugh, laugh is a sorely needed thing,” *Laugh-In* head writer Paul Keyes said in an October 1968 interview.⁶⁰

This symbiotic reflexivity experienced by viewers who responded in an overwhelmingly positive way to the style and substance of *Rowan & Martin's Laugh-In* is indicative of the type of relationship audiences began developing with the media they consumed. Television viewership was at its zenith, as was viewership of broadcast news. With the limited programming options by modern standards, and the freshness of television as a medium, programming began to show audiences' desire for both information and entertainment, as well as a combination of the two. This would continue to develop on television and contribute to sketch comedy programming with the satirical content that became popular on *Saturday Night Live* throughout the 1970s.

Ultimately the blend of observational satire with exuberant play that existed in the content of *Laugh-In* helped set a precedent for future shows like *Saturday Night Live*, *In Living Color*, *Mad TV*, *The Colbert Report*, and *The Daily Show*. While not all of these shows adhered precisely to *Laugh-In*'s technical format, they have been most successful when balancing equally among Test's four tenants of satire. Because *Rowan & Martin's Laugh-In* made it a point to generalize, create caricatures, and not intentionally be mean or spiteful, its broad approach was widely accepted by audiences. They understood the references, aware that the events and ideas satirized were more serious than how the

show presented them. Couched in gleeful satire, these experiences were shared in a way that didn't seem hopeless. Many times the show was just plain ridiculous but, like Jack Lemmon insinuated, that silliness may have been the precise kind of group therapy America needed in 1968.

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- ¹ Clive Barnes. "Hair' - It's Fresh and Frank; Likable Rock Musical Moves to Broadway," *The New York Times*, April 30, 1968.
- ² David Bianculli. *Dangerously Funny: The Uncensored Story of The Smothers Brothers' Comedy Hour* (New York, NY: Touchstone, 2009), 245.
- ³ Bianculli, 246.
- ⁴ David R. Farber. *Age of Great Dreams: America in the 1960s* (New York, NY: Hill and Wang, 1994), 185.
- ⁵ Ibid.
- ⁶ Dorothy Rabinowitz, 1968 with Tom Brokaw, DVD. Produced by the History Channel (New York, NY: A&E Home Video, 2008).
- ⁷ Jeffrey House, 1968 with Tom Brokaw, DVD. Produced by the History Channel (New York, NY: A&E Home Video, 2008).
- ⁸ Farber, 57.
- ⁹ Report on the Vital Statistics of the United States. U.S. Department of Health, Education and Welfare, Rockville, MD, 1971, 2-5 and 2-6.
- ¹⁰ George B. Leonard. "The Man & Woman Thing," *LOOK Magazine*, December 24, 1968, 56 & 72.
- ¹¹ Judy Klemesrud. "An Arrangement: Living Together for Convenience, Security, Sex," *The New York Times*, March 4, 1968; "College Morals Getting Worse?" *U.S. News & World Report*, April 29 1968, 10; "Linda the Light Housekeeper," *TIME Magazine*, April 26, 1968, 65.
- ¹² Lynn Spigel & Michael Curtain. *The Revolution Wasn't Televised* (New York, NY: Routledge, 1997), 1-2.
- ¹³ Spigel & Curtain, 2 & 5.
- ¹⁴ Aniko Bodroghkozy. *Groove Tube: Sixties Television and the Youth Rebellion* (Durham, NC, 2001), 123.
- ¹⁵ Bodroghkozy, 124.
- ¹⁶ Bodroghkozy, 125.
- ¹⁷ *Rowan & Martin's Laugh-In*, Episode 2.1, September 16, 1968. Viewed at the University of California at Los Angeles Film & Television Archive on December 13, 2012.
- ¹⁸ Lawrence Dietz "Where TV Comedy is At," *Saturday Evening Post*, November 30, 1968, 32-37, 74.
- ¹⁹ Dietz, 33.
- ²⁰ Paul M. Hirsch. "The Role of Television and Popular Culture in Contemporary Society," *Television: The Critical View*, 2nd ed., ed. by Horace Newcomb (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1979), 252-253.
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- ²² Rank & Nielsen Share: Tim Brooks and Earle F. Marsh. *The Complete Directory to Prime Time Network and Cable TV Shows, 1946 – Present*, (New York, NY: Random House Digital, Inc., 2009), 1685; Nielsen Ratings: www.classicTVhits.com/tvratings/1967.htm
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²⁴ Bianculli, 236.

²⁵ Joan Barthel, "Hilarious, Brash, Flat, Peppery, Repetitious, Topical and Borderline in Taste," *The New York Times Magazine*, October, 6, 1968, 35.

²⁶ Lawrence Dietz "Where TV Comedy is At," *Saturday Evening Post*, November 30, 1968, 32.

²⁷ Barthel, 35.

²⁸ Letters to the Editor, *TIME Magazine*, October 25, 1968, 10.

²⁹ Jim Broadhead, "Verrry Interesting...but Wild," *TIME Magazine*, October 11, 1968, 51.

³⁰ Dietz, 32.

³¹ *Rowan & Martin's Laugh-In*, Episode #1.3, February 5, 1968. On "The Best of 'Rowan & Martin's Laugh-In'," DVD. (Baltimore, Maryland: Rhino Theatrical, 2003).

³² Zoë Druick. "Dialogic Absurdity: TV News Parody as a Critique of Genre," *Television and New Media* 10, no. 3 (2009), 294.

³³ Dietz, 35.

³⁴ Stark, 144.

³⁵ Dietz, 37.

³⁶ Jim Broadhead, "Verrry Interesting...but Wild," *TIME Magazine*, October 11, 1968, 51.

³⁷ Broadhead, 52.

³⁸ Aniko Bodroghkozy. *Groove Tube: Sixties Television & the Youth Rebellion*, (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2001), 149.

³⁹ Barthel, 36-37.

⁴⁰ *The Smothers Brothers Comedy Hour*, Episode #6, March 12, 1967. Script read at The Writers Guild Foundation Library on December 11, 2012.

⁴¹ *The Carol Burnett Show*, Episode #2.1, September 23, 1968. Viewed at the University of California at Los Angeles Film & Television Archive on December 14, 2012.

⁴² Farber, 159.

⁴³ Rowan and MacDonald, 64 and 71.

⁴⁴ Rowan and MacDonald, 74.

⁴⁵ *The Smothers Brothers Comedy Hour*, Episode #3.2, September 29, 1968. Viewed at the University of California at Los Angeles Film & Television Archive on December 12, 2012.

⁴⁶ Bianculli, 194-195.

⁴⁷ Bianculli, 195.

⁴⁸ Bianculli 202-203.

⁴⁹ *The Bob Hope Special*, November 27, 1968. Script read at the Writer's Guild Foundation Library & Archive in Los Angeles, CA on December 11, 2012.

⁵⁰ Bodroghkozy (1), 134.

⁵¹ *The Smothers Brothers' Comedy Hour*, Episode #3.7, November 3, 1968. Viewed at the University of California at Los Angeles Film & Television Archive on December 12, 2012.

⁵² Harding, David J., and Christopher Jencks. "Changing Attitudes Toward Premarital Sex." *Public Opinion Quarterly* 67(2), 2003, 211-226.

⁵³ *40th Annual Academy Awards Special*, April 10, 1968. Script read at the Writer's Guild Foundation Library & Archive in Los Angeles, CA on December 11, 2012.

⁵⁴ William Adams and Suzanne Albin. "Public Information on Social Change: TV Coverage of Women in the Workforce." *Policy Studies Journal* 8(5), 1980, 717-734. Truly nuanced stories about workplace harassment and pay discrimination would not start to be covered by most news outlets until the late 1970s.

⁵⁵ *The Smothers Brothers Comedy Hour*, Episode #3.2, September 29, 1968. Viewed at the University of California at Los Angeles Film & Television Archive on December 12, 2012.

⁵⁶ Barthel, 36.

⁵⁷ *Rowan & Martin's Laugh-In*, Episode #1.13, April 22, 1968. Viewed at The Paley Center for Media in Beverly Hills, CA on December 14, 2012.

⁵⁸ *Rowan & Martin's Laugh-In*, Episode 2.1, September 16, 1968. Viewed at the University of California at Los Angeles Film & Television Archive on December 13, 2012.

⁵⁹ Dan Rowan and John D. MacDonald. *A Friendship: The Letters of Dan Rowan and John D. MacDonald 1967-1974* (New York, NY: Alfred A. Knopf, 1986), 41.

⁶⁰ Barthel, 40.

CHAPTER 7

CONCLUSION

“So the same cultural and political issues that divided us in 1968 are still dividing us.”
 – Russell Banks, American author

In a 2008 documentary, *The Daily Show* host Jon Stewart said his satirical heritage on television was rooted in 1968. “I think if I was going to trace my genealogy – if I was to look down the tree – for me that’s where it ends,” he said.¹ Specifically Stewart mentioned the influence of how the Smothers brothers stood their ground and took on the censors at CBS.

“It was a bargaining game, and it was always respectful, never with bad language or anything like that. It was the only show on the air doing it,” Tom Smothers said in the same documentary.² “If [CBS] hadn’t said ‘You can’t say that,’ I might’ve let it go. But don’t ever tell a comedian they can’t do that, because they will do that.”

Satirists as performers risk failure, especially those who practice their art on television. They accept that by exposing their views to the public in a way that bases success on a reaction to their utterance, in this case laughter, they are investing a great deal into an ephemeral moment.³ In order to allow for the moment to stick with audiences, it cannot be too serious or else they won’t find it funny. Instead, for a message embedded within satire to resonate long after uttered it must balance antagonistic

criticism with absurd comedy. That balance must be precise. Audiences expect humor, but crafting a satirical utterance requires a specific mindset. “A comic is always expected to be funny,” actress Julie Andrews said of Carol Burnett when presenting her with a lifetime achievement award in 2003.⁴ She added, “But an artist is always looking for something else she can do.”

The purpose of analyzing these shows was to see how the dialogic nature of satire on television was exhibited in 1968, and to offer a potential meaning for how they reflected in American culture that year. The episodes with the groupings of satirical utterances that seemed to exhibit the most awareness of the surrounding cultural changes came from *The Carol Burnett Show* and *Rowan & Martin's Laugh-In*. *The Smothers Brothers' Comedy Hour* had content that showed its writers and producers were paying attention to what was going on in the country, but not necessarily what was happening with their audience.

For their January 19, 1969 episode, the Smothers brothers commissioned a short film by director Charles Braverman called “The World of '68.”⁵ The film was a little over four minutes long and was conceived to be a visual time capsule of the previous year. It had premiered several days earlier on an episode of *60 Minutes* that featured a story on the Smothers brothers and their feud with CBS.⁶ The whole film was visually tinted red, and was comprised of edited news footage mostly of war and violence at protests. Its soundtrack was an unrelenting drumbeat that built to a crescendo towards the end of the film. It contained no humor. There was nothing playful about it or its heavy tone. It ended with an image of Tom and Dick Smothers in front of a peace sign.

This short film wasn't funny, nor was it meant to be. It was meant to be a serious look back at the events of the previous year in the hopes that viewers wouldn't want a repeat of past mistakes.⁷ In that respect the film accomplished its goal. However the content of the brothers' variety show didn't always align with the four tenants needed to create successful satire. Maybe had the Smothers been less burdened with fighting CBS they would have layered more humor in their sketches, thus balancing their targeted judgment of governmental ineptitude with the escapist amusement audiences sought in competing programs. Yet, had they not fought CBS so vigorously, they may not have been as influential to future satirists.

Viewers expected the Smothers brothers to be funny and when they weren't audiences stopped watching and their show was cancelled. There's no question that their fight against CBS was influential. Jon Stewart is one of many to cite the brothers as pioneers against network censors. Also successful was some of their political content, especially the fake campaign of Pat Paulsen. During the Q&A at the beginning of her show on the November 18, 1968 episode, Carol Burnett was asked by an audience member what she thought of how the presidential election turned out.⁸ She replied, "I wanted Pat Paulsen to win." The audience laughed, and then Burnett became serious for a moment and said a few words about coming together as a country, and moving together past the election. The next audience member then asked her if she was related to vice-president-elect Spiro Agnew. "No," she replied and then started scratching herself, "But I think I've got it." The audience laughed. Burnett seemed to know not to let the tone stay serious for too long, or else she would lose her connection dependent on humor.

In the end the Smothers brothers sacrificed entertainment for altruism, and they couldn't justify losing their ratings to CBS. Their show only lasted three years.

Meanwhile, Carol Burnett pushed some boundaries with censors on the same network.

Sometimes, she gave in and sometimes she didn't, but never were her issues pressed or presented publically like the Smothers' were. Her show was on the air for 12 years.

Rowan and Martin took the same tactic with NBC, even acknowledging that they learned from what happened to the brothers on CBS.⁹ They poured so many jokes into their show, knowing they would have to cut some, but because of the quantity some boundary-pushing utterances would sneak on the air. Their show was on the air for seven years.

The elements of satire are linked. Satire's goal of improving a society can only be accomplished when audiences fathom the actualization of improvement.¹⁰ This can only happen if the audience responds to the joke. In order to respond to the joke, the utterance must be funny yet also present a targeted message. In order to know a specific target, the originator of the utterance must first have made a judgment of a person or situation. Test's four tenants of Judgment, Aggression, Play, and Laughter are all connected and depend on satirists' keen observations of their culture. These tenants have existed in examples of successful satire in both classical and modern eras, and can be seen in popular political satirists today.

Ultimately for a satirist to be successful, he or she must be paying attention to current events in a society. Without awareness none of the in-between steps can take place, and the informative aspect of a satirist's message is rendered impotent. The potency in satire is not only tied to whether it includes playful humor, but also if it includes hopefulness. This may be one of the reasons why the political satire on programs

like *The Daily Show*, *The Colbert Report*, and *SNL* are as successful. By successfully combining Test's four tenants with keen observations of the current political landscape, these shows can let viewers know they recognize their frustrations certain aspects of politics. Within this camaraderie exists the idea that viewers are not alone in their observations.

On *Rowan & Martin's Laugh-In* there was a re-occurring sketch called "The News of the Future" during which Dan Rowan prognosticated fake news events yet to come. On the April 22, 1968 episode one of the jokes had a dateline of Washington, DC, 1988.¹¹ Rowan said, "There was a shake up as Robert McNamara was sworn in again as Secretary of Defense, and vowed to bring our boys home by Christmas." McNamara had been a highly controversial Secretary of Defense, who many blamed for pushing the war in Vietnam. He left that position at the end of February 1968, right before this episode was taped. That the Vietnam war would still be going on 20 years later, that McNamara would have returned to an influential position of power, and that the government would still be promising an end date they kept moving, seemed to be a hopeless scenario. Rowan made it less so by delivering it with a smile, even chuckling a bit after as if reassuring the audience that would be a terrible scenario, but is so preposterous that it'll never happen. That utterance presented a reality so opposite to what audiences hoped for that it became unrealistic, and the absence of reality made it funny. Its playfulness existed in its ridiculousness. At the same time, it targeted both McNamara and the government for currently dragging things out much longer than necessary in Vietnam.

Viewers actively sought out these shows for entertainment, and the combination of these themes were present within their satirical utterances. This suggests that the

political content added an additional layer for them when they processed the current events addressed in the jokes. Different audience members related differently with these programs, but whoever watched them in 1968 was collectively exposed to specific political content at the same time as others. How they shaped this information is unique to each one, but the dialogic nature of exposure to the message of satire is similar to what which Bakhtin noticed when observing the carnival. For instance, *Laugh-In* seemed to please audiences for some of the same reasons Bakhtin saw revelers delight at the carnival he witnessed. The caricatures were over the top, irreverent, and the jokes came at a frenzied pace. The humor was present and the chaos was distracting.

Even though the major themes identified in this study have been presented separately, in all three shows studied they were rarely detached from one another. The “Candidates at Home” sketch from *The Carol Burnett Show* contained dialogic elements of all three.¹² It satirized a candidate running for office (politics), included his overbearing wife (gender), showed them awkwardly interacting with their black maid (race), and showed both parents struggling to communicate with their teenage daughter (generation gap). The dialogic nature of this sketch was reflected in several ways specific to each theme, as well as in the collective nature of how they tied together.

Audience members processed utterances differently, depending on a number of cultural determiners that shaped who they were and how they thought. This made their shared experiences both individual and collaborative. Interrelating themes in a sketch allowed for a broader and more diverse audience to relate with the shows, and their intertextuality indicates a reflection of the shared experiences of viewers at that time.

Bakhtin's dialogic model is tied to the way utterances compound each other in a similar way that the major themes emerging from this study are interconnected. Race was linked to politics. The generation gap widened in part because of American war policy. Women and youths began marching and protesting after seeing African-Americans march for their cause, and some even took up the civil rights banner on their behalf. A Venn diagram of how these themes interacted would look like a psychedelic kaleidoscope of overlapping circularity.

Studying these utterances in this way was important for two reasons. First, as Bakhtin pointed out, the dialogic potential in comedy is not studied enough. Because of its lighter delivery, humor often contains multiple layers like the ones presented in this dissertation. Second, it shows that these utterances presented information in ways other than through traditional information dissemination, such as broadcast news or print news. Maybe audiences in 1968 realized that while they were laughing, they were learning. Maybe they didn't. Either way the dialogic bond was formed every time they tuned in. That era was when that type of bond became established through television, and it still exists as a conduit in comedy programs today.

Future historical and media scholarship could benefit from an analysis of the dialogic nature of other shows at that time. A possible analysis of narrative comedy shows may also produce findings that demonstrate how humor balanced with messaging, and helped forge a dialogic relationship with audiences. Tracing the evolution of all these themes, or even one particular theme, within one particular show could also prove insightful. One might observe an arc in the dialogic properties, and note how they changed throughout a show's run. As the 1960s prefaced the 1970s, further study of these

shows, as well as other shows in this genre, throughout the following decade could also show they continued relating with audiences. Continuing the study of satire in this way would add to existing contextual understanding of both American and media cultural history in multiple ways.

* * *

On December 21, 1968, at the end of a turbulent year, a rocket was launched into outer space that carried NASA astronauts Frank Borman, James Lovell, and William Anders. The crew of that Apollo VIII spacecraft was the first to see the whole of the planet Earth, and the far side of the Moon. They returned to Earth six days later. While orbiting the Moon on Christmas Eve, all three TV networks aired a special broadcast during which Borman read the first ten verses from the Book of Genesis. While he read, the first images of Earth as a planet from outer space were beamed into households across the country. CBS News anchorman Walter Cronkite had the following reaction:¹³

You know, I'm afraid that my first reaction was, 'Oh, this is a little too much, this is a little too dramatic.' Even, I might even have thought 'this is a little corny.' But by the time Borman had finished reading that excerpt from the Bible, I admit that I had tears in my eyes. It was really impressive and just the right thing to do at the moment. Just the right thing.

At the time the broadcast aired, it was the most watched television moment in the history of the medium.¹⁴

Television has since increased in its participation with American audiences, especially with technological advancement providing viewers more options. Today, many shows vie to create relationships with viewers across multiple media platforms.

Television demographics have become segmented and hyper-nuanced, but in 1968 limited choices existed. Cultural citizens had fewer choices when voting for their favorite programs. In 1968, viewers elected *The Carol Burnett Show* and *Rowan & Martin's Laugh-In*, but kicked out of office *The Smothers Brothers' Comedy Hour*. Today viewers continue to re-elect *Saturday Night Live* for repetitive terms, and in the past decade have done the same with *The Daily Show with Jon Stewart* and *The Colbert Report*. Online availability of clips and episodes has allowed for repetitive watching, as well as first-time viewing at one's convenience.

At the close of 1968, after the Apollo VIII team made it safely home, America segued into 1969 and then the 1970s, where history shows that society faced challenges similar to those in 1968. Historians now see the events that year as part of a cultural evolution in American society that continued after Carol Burnett answered her last question, the Smothers brothers sang their last song, or Dan Rowan and Dick Martin socked it to 'em one last time.¹⁵

Nineteen sixty-eight was a big year in American history. It was a big year in media history. Many people watched TV and cried over what they saw. Others shouted at the news and gasped at the sight of some horrific images. Some were disgusted and disappointed by the events reported. But shortly after the news was broadcast, for a few hours each week, millions would have their moods lightened. They sat in front of their televisions and smiled, smirked, or grinned. And then they laughed.

What else could they do, but laugh?

¹ Jon Stewart, 1968 with Tom Brokaw, DVD. Produced by the History Channel (New York, NY: A&E Home Video, 2008).

² Tom Smothers, 1968 with Tom Brokaw, DVD. Produced by the History Channel (New York, NY: A&E Home Video, 2008).

³ Hodgart, Matthew. *Satire* (New York, NY: McGraw-Hill, 1969), 248.

⁴ The Kennedy Center Honors, 2003. CBS. Viewed at The Paley Center for Media in Beverly Hills, CA on December 14, 2012.

⁵ "The World of '68" – *The Smothers Brothers Comedy Hour*, Episode #3.17, January 19, 1969. Viewed at the University of California at Los Angeles Film & Television Archive on December 12, 2012.

⁶ David Bianculli. *Dangerously Funny: The Uncensored Story of The Smothers Brothers' Comedy Hour* (New York, NY: Touchstone, 2009), 253.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ *The Carol Burnett Show*, Episode #2.8, November 18, 1968. Viewed at the University of California at Los Angeles Film & Television Archive on December 13, 2012.

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¹¹ *Rowan & Martin's Laugh-In*, Episode #1.13, April 22, 1968. Viewed at the Paley Center for Media in Beverly Hills, CA on December 14, 2012.

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¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ David R. Farber. *Age of Great Dreams: America in the 1960s* (New York, NY: Hill and Wang, 1994), 267.

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APPENDIX A

LIST OF TELEVISION EPISODES ANALYZED

40th Annual Academy Awards Special, ABC Television, April 10, 1968.

60 Minutes, CBS News, Episode #1.3, October 8, 1968.

The Bob Hope Special, NBC Television, November 27, 1968.

The Carol Burnett Show, Episode #1.17, January 15, 1968. Viewed at the University of California at Los Angeles Film & Television Archive on December 13, 2012.

The Carol Burnett Show, Episode #1.21, February 12, 1968. Viewed at the Paley Center for Media in Beverly Hills, CA on December 14, 2012.

The Carol Burnett Show, Episode #1.27, April 15, 1968. Viewed at the University of California at Los Angeles Film & Television Archive on December 13, 2012.

The Carol Burnett Show, Episode #2.1, September 23, 1968. Viewed at the University of California at Los Angeles Film & Television Archive on December 14, 2012.

The Carol Burnett Show, Episode #2.8, November 18, 1968. Viewed at the University of California at Los Angeles Film & Television Archive on December 13, 2012.

The Kennedy Center Honors, 2003. CBS Television. The Paley Center for Media Archive, Beverly Hills, CA. Viewed on December 14, 2012.

Kraft Music Hall Presents Alan King's Wonder World of Aggravation, December 4, 1968. Script read at the Writer's Guild Foundation Library & Archive in Los Angeles, CA on December 11, 2012.

Rowan & Martin's Laugh-In, Episode #1.1, January 22, 1968. Viewed at the University of California at Los Angeles Film & Television Archive on December 13, 2012.

Rowan & Martin's Laugh-In, Episode #3, February 5, 1968. On "The Best of 'Rowan & Martin's Laugh-In'," DVD. (Baltimore, Maryland: Rhino Theatrical, 2003).

Rowan & Martin's Laugh-In, Episode #9, March 25, 1968. On "The Best of 'Rowan & Martin's Laugh-In'," DVD. (Baltimore, Maryland: Rhino Theatrical, 2003).

Rowan & Martin's Laugh-In, Episode #13, April 22, 1968. Viewed at the Paley Center for Media in Beverly Hills, CA on December 14, 2012.

Rowan & Martin's Laugh-In, Episode #15, September 16, 1968. Viewed at the University of California at Los Angeles Film & Television Archive on December 13, 2012.

Rowan & Martin's Laugh-In, Episode #2.4, October 7, 1968. Viewed at the University of California at Los Angeles Film & Television Archive on December 13, 2012.

Rowan & Martin's Laugh-In, Episode #2.8, November 4, 1968. Script read at the American Heritage Center at the University of Wyoming on February 4, 2013.

Rowan & Martin's Laugh-In, Episode #2.13, December 30, 1968. Script read at the American Heritage Center at the University of Wyoming on February 4, 2013.

The Smothers Brothers' Comedy Hour, Episode #1.16, March 12, 1967. Script read at The Writers Guild Foundation Library on December 11, 2012.

The Smothers Brothers' Comedy Hour, Episode #1.24, February 25, 1968. Viewed at the Paley Center for Media in Beverly Hills, CA on December 14, 2012.

The Smothers Brothers' Comedy Hour, Episode #3.2, September 29, 1968. Viewed at the University of California at Los Angeles Film & Television Archive on December 12, 2012.

The Smothers Brothers' Comedy Hour, Episode #3.3, October 6, 1968. Viewed at the University of California at Los Angeles Film & Television Archive on December 12, 2012.