THE AMERICAN NEW LEFT AND ITS ‘NEW MEDIA’

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Abstract:

Between 1963, and 1975, young Americans harnessed the power of communication systems to subvert the society about them. Using a theoretical framework that draws on the insights of Wiener, Innes, Youngblood, and McLuhan, I argue that confronted by a host of social ills, countercultural media production in combination with shifting perceptions of technologies pedagogical applications helped to foment the countercultural revolution in the US. First, through an analysis of the Los Angeles Free Press, Fifth Estate, Liberation News Service, and KSAN-FM, this thesis seeks to understand the genesis of the alternative revolutionary communications complex in the U.S.A during the long 1960s. Next, it connects the radical pedagogical movements of the epoch, with a focus on the S.D.S “New School,” with the radical filmmaking practices of the Newsreel filmmaking collective and Emile De Antonio.
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Introduction:

In this thesis, I explore the work of the underground press, radical pedagogical movements, and the radical filmmaking community in combination with shifting perceptions of technology and argue these networks of radical thinking about pedagogy and technology, disseminated in print and film, helped to foment the countercultural revolution of the 1960s. Before this period, the media in most parts of the world was predominantly controlled by the state, access to information was heavily regulated, and governments often used communication systems to manufacture public opinion. These young social activists set in chain a series of events that continue today. Their aim was to free media from the state, and if they faltered in making their country one run ‘by and for the people,’¹ they did succeed in making its media more democratic—and not solely the underground media, but the ‘straight press’ as well. It was not the Berkeley Barb that broke ‘the Pentagon Papers’ and ‘Watergate,’ it was the Washington Post; not KSAN-FM, but Columbia Records that got student dissidents “[studying] the lyrics of Bob Dylan more than the texts of Marx And Lenin.”² For what was so revolutionary about the global sixties within the context of the United States was not its counter culture, but their use of communication systems in the service of political struggle.

Though most histories of the New Left focus on institutions, and many of the main organs of the movement were rooted in such formal structures, it was at the grass roots that media encouraged a new consciousness. Media collectives helped to transform who could be a journalist and what constituted material worthy of publication. The

² Tom Hayden, Writings For A Democratic Society: The Tom Hayden Reader, (San Francisco, City Light Books, 2008), 378.
underground rags, and the communal life which surrounded them, were inclusive structures that encouraged activists to participate in a form of non-violent protest from the ground up. These structures directly contributed to the construction of social networks of activists focused on communication and organization. The ‘new media’ became a principle organizing-tool of the New Left in the United States (US).

Alternative media as we understand it today can be traced back to the New Left in the US. The development of a true alternative to the mass media provided an outlet for youth who were frustrated with the status quo. The New Left’s ‘new media’ acknowledged its bias, yet presented an alternative vision of what American democracy looked like. The roots of our blogosphere, more specifically its alternative media, were forged in mimeographs scattered across campuses and communes from “Portland, Oregon, to Portland, Maine.”

Through the lenses of radical filmmakers and film collectives, while lights flickered across screens in lecture halls and cinemas alike, communities of likeminded people were brought together. Through screening events, electronic media proved a technological provocation to thought and action. Further, the countercultural call for revolution was made manifest and tangible before people’s eyes, as many of the barriers of entry to the ‘marketplace of ideas’ were shattered.

Between 1963 and 1975, the underground press and radical documentary filmmaking community in the US constructed social networks of activists centered on radical political education and cultural production. This thesis project looks at underground press articles, radical documentary films, and documentary evidence collected from the Social Protest Collection at U.C. Berkeley’s Bancroft Library, in the

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hopes of making sense of the genesis of the radical pedagogy and the alternative communications complex in America. Drawing on the theoretical approaches of Wiener, Innes, and McLuhan, among others, it argues that during the 1960s in the US, the war was brought home, not by Molotov cocktails and 12-gauge shotguns, but by communications technology.

Background: ‘The Epoch of Dialectical Humanism’

The Sixties were a time of great political tumult and social change that radically altered human relationships not only to electronic technology, but more profoundly, according to communications scholar Marshall McLuhan, “abolished both ‘space’ and ‘time’ as far as our planet [was] concerned.” Knowledge making, previously the realm of professional journalists, statesmen, and scholars, became a tool of private citizens. The medium may have been the message, but the message was that “information is what will set people free.” One contemporary called it, “the epoch of dialectical humanism,” explaining in 1963 that “the technological revolution…[represented] the beginning of a new revolutionary epoch in the world, an epoch centering around the conscious strivings of people everywhere to live freely.” While media had previously created “monopolies on knowledge,” electronic technology democratized Americans’ ability to report on their own findings and experiences, creating their own understandings of the self and of others.

Confronted with the South’s racist bigotry, McCarthy and Goldwater’s Paranoia, Hoover’s police state, and Johnsons ‘genocide,’ young Americans saw ‘revolution’ as the

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5 John Sinclair, Guitar Army, (Los Angeles, Process Media, 1972), 117
7 Harold A. Innes, The Bias of Communication, (Toronto, University of Toronto Press, 1951), 27.
only viable solution to their cultural dissatisfaction. This movement used its “new media”
to preach an inclusive civil rights agenda, the abolishment of nuclear weapons, anti-
imperial foreign policies, and above all else, the end of the War in Vietnam.

The comprehensive influence of the American student dissident movement is
undeniable. With adherents stretching from “the university of Maine, and the ghettos of
Newark, to Berkeley”\(^8\)—which sardonically, Stockley Carmichael referred to as the
“white intellectual ghetto of the west”\(^9\)—young radicals sought to re-evaluate their social
mores living in what C. Wright Mills had called in his 1960 “Letter to a New Left” the
“age of complacency”—‘the end of ideological and utopian thinking.’\(^10\) This generation,
confronted with thermo-nuclear warfare, and scientific organization and management
characterized by what scholars refer to as the *Liberal consensus*, considered themselves
survivors of the McCarthy era and, as Allan Ginsberg *Howls*, had “[seen] the best minds
of [their] generation destroyed by madness, starving, hysterical, naked.”\(^11\) Daniel Bell
called it: “the End of Ideology.”\(^12\) Motivated by the African American civil rights
movement, more and more citizens of the so-called “home of the free” began to realize
that they were not so. Sit-ins, teach-ins, and occupations began to spread like wildfire,
while young Americans re-evaluated the notion of what a government ‘by and for the
people’ really meant.

\(^8\) “SDS: To Develop a Radical Public in the San Francisco Bay Area”, Social Protest Collection, BANC FILM 2757, The Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley.
\(^12\) Daniel Bell, “The End of Ideology: On the Exhaustion of Political Ideals in the Fifties” (Glencoe, The Free Press, 1960)
Theoretical Approaches:

Following the Second World War in 1948, the same year Orwell gave us his bleak tele-screen filled vision of 1984, Norbert Weiner, American mathematician and philosopher of science and communication, who had been part of the U.S. war effort previously, published what became the manifesto of a new blossoming field of “communication engineering.” *Cybernetics: or Control and Communication in the Animal and Machine*, set out what was more than simply a scientific vision, “taking the Second Industrial Revolution as accomplished,”13 Weiner’s book set out to catalyze a post-industrial world, one in which machines would free humans from the tasks of labor; one where the assembly line would become not solely mechanized, not just scientifically managed, but automated. To suit this end Wiener argued a new science founded most directly on the work of Leibniz was necessary to bring his vision to life.

Wiener coined ‘Cybernetics,’ taking the word from the greek ‘Kybernetes,’ directly translated as “to steer,” and the French ‘cybernétique,’ translated as “the art of governing.” Therefore Wiener implied with his “new science” that communication systems need be understood as tools with which to guide and direct society towards the coming of a new world order, a cybernetic revolution. A young General Electric (G.E.) employee by the name of Kurt Vonnegut offered a dystopic vision of where this would guide society in his first novel, 1951’s *Player Piano*. Both Vonnegut and Wiener argued, the Scientists and the engineers, would control the fate of the world ahead of them; one where ‘the machines’ would free human beings from the tasks of manual labour.

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Wiener argued ‘Control and communication’ meant the science of sending the message to manipulate masses. He writes: “[my work] centered not around the technique of electrical engineering, but around the much more fundamental notion of the message, whether this should be transmitted by electrical, mechanical, or nervous means.”

Therefore involved in “the mechanization of the processes of thought,” Weiner was aware of both the pros, and along with Vonnegut, the cons of such an endeavor. In the final pages of his introduction, he explains, “we have contributed to the initiation of a new science, which, as I have said, embraces technical developments with great possibilities for good and evil. We can only hand it to the world that exists about us, and this is the world of Belsen and Hiroshima.”

In 1950, in his smaller *The Human Use of Human beings*, and building upon Toynbee, Weiner argues, “Society can only be understood through a study of the messages and the communications facilities which belong to it.” In his quest to mathematize and automate the workplace, Wiener canonized himself among the great philosophers of communication. For Weiner understood two things which were relative not only to his own mathematical work, but moreover, were necessary ends if any society, civilization, group, were to garner or seriously affect change, that is, if they were ‘to direct’ and ‘govern.’ First, that the message communicated via the power of communications technology could transform society on a global level; and second, that society could best be understood through an analysis of their communication systems, and the messages they sent.

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14 Norbert Wiener, 8
15 Ibid, 12
16 Ibid, 28
In 1952 Canadian economic historian Harold A. Innes published what became one of the largest historical contributors to the field of media studies, *The Bias of Communication*. This volume contains a series of essays, explaining the role communication technologies played in many of the major paradigmatic shifts in world history. Innes’ work was groundbreaking; he began the exploration of an area of historical as well as sociological thought that his University of Toronto peer—Marshall McLuhan—would later develop more substantially. Innes argued that history needs to be understood as a series of epochs distinguished by systems of media communication that “record, absorb, and transform information, into systems of knowledge.”\(^{18}\) That essentially, the grand story of human interaction need be understood not as one highlighting the relations of production—as his economic foundation had claimed—not hegemonic belief systems as institutional historians claimed—but communications—these offered the historian the true lens in which to gauge society. Thus Innes was involved in imposing order on the past—pin pointing a society in a given ‘time’ and ‘space’ was a topic he constantly returned too. In the preface to *The Bias of Communication* he writes, “it is assumed that history is not a seamless web, but rather, a web of which the warp and the woof are space and time woven in a very uneven fashion.”\(^{19}\) Innes in his work sought to impose order on this “uneven fashion,” and for him that meant understanding communication systems and their role in the development of historical narratives.

Essentially Innes’s contribution to understanding communication systems is in underscoring the point that as these systems hold the potential for the transformation of

\(^{18}\) Harold A. Innes, *The Bias of Communication*, xvi.

\(^{19}\) Ibid, xxviii
society, they could be involved in the overthrow of one ruling class, perhaps also in the rise of another. He argues in his essay *Bias of Communication*, that with the eruption of revolutions throughout the world, “newspapers became the ammunition.”\(^{20}\) Innes profoundly understood the impact new communications technologies held for catalyzing profound changes in knowledge transfer. Just as Wiener had stated that we could only hand our work to the society about us, the early 20\(^{th}\) century had seen media communications harnessed by the power of the state, and the power of capital. Innes concurs that “shifts to new media of communication have [long] been characterized by profound disturbances”\(^{21}\)—the shift to an electronic world would be no exception.

In 1954, German philosopher Martin Heidegger published an essay “On the Question Concerning Technology.” In his work, he explained that knowledge was made manifest through the creation of technological contraptions, but that “all manners of thought lead through language.”\(^{22}\) Heidegger argued that technology itself, given its original definition, was an *instrumentum*, translated from Latin, an instrument, one harnessed not for betterment of the human race, but to extend the power of the ruling class. For him, technology was instrumentality, made manifest to achieve an end, further, it helped “[root]…power.”\(^{23}\) Heidegger argued that perhaps one day technology would be used not to oppress, not to control—but to liberate. He concludes in prophetic fashion:

> “it is technology itself that makes the demand of us to think in another way than what is usually understood… someday…the essence of technology may come to presence in the coming-to-pass of truth. Because the essence of technology is nothing technological”\(^{24}\)

\(^{20}\) Ibid, 58
\(^{21}\) Ibid, 188
\(^{23}\) Ibid, 109
\(^{24}\) Ibid, 111
Essentially, Heidegger argued technology was not neutral or passive but a means to an end, that one-day—foreshadowing the young radicals of the 1960s—would be used to harness the power of truth in the service of political action, because technology was not some abstract mechanical apparatus, but rather, “the mechanization of the processes of thought.”

During the early 1960s, following in the footsteps of his mentor Harold Innes, University of Toronto philosopher of communication Marshall McLuhan published two books that would become part of the canon of political theory and media history. Profiling the rise of ‘new electronic media’—McLuhan, the ‘patron saint’ of media studies—sought to understand and explain the effects electronic technology would have on the world around them. In his 1961 book, *The Guttenberg Galaxy*, and his 1964 *Understanding Media*, McLuhan explained that contemporary media consumers are all passengers of ‘spaceship earth’ retribalized in the form of a *Global Village*, and re-connected through electronic communication. Parting from the thoughts of his predecessors, he argued, “the mark of our times is a revulsion against imposed patterns.” And thus, the potential that cybernetic communication systems offered was far from lost on McLuhan. He foresaw communication platforms no longer being used to monopolize, but democratize, one day, as he predicted quite correctly, we would all be publishers.

McLuhan argued that just as “oil and cotton,” media was a staple good; that just as these goods had come to define their societies, so too did media define the cultural life.

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and social habits of its consumers. McLuhan wrote, “It is this implosive factor that alters the position of the Negro, the teen-ager, and some other groups. They can no longer be contained in the political sense of limited association. They are now involved in our lives, as we in theirs, thanks to the electric media.” It was this media that “compelled participation and commitment,” at levels unprecedented in human history. As Images of burning Vietnamese monks woke Americans to the terror in Southeast Asia, the ‘Mans’ technology was for the first time not chained to the system as Innes, Toynbee, and Heidegger had claimed—but free to be used as a tool in its subversion.

In 1967, in an article entitled “The Permanent Possibility of Revolution” published for the Center for the Study of Democratic Institutions, philosopher Scott Buchanan put forth a new conception of the term “revolution.” Buchanan posited that rather than being equated with guns, violence, and political upheaval, we need understand that there is always permanent possibility for change, regardless of a state of violent antagonism. Buchanan meant that Revolutions did not equate carnage, aggression, or assault; that they “did not ‘revolve’ as their name implied,” but rather, that “revolutions, like great tragedies, [were] convulsions of human learning.” Buchanan even went as far as to argue that the revolutions of the 20th century had been hardly “festivals of the oppressed,” but rather, coups d’états. For Buchanan, revolution meant the shift to a new medium of thought, not political reorganization. Very much in the same vein Angela

27 Ibid, 29
28 Ibid, 7.
29 Ibid, 7
Davis from the confines of her prison cell explained, “that when you talk about revolution, most people think about violence without realizing the real content of any revolutionary thrust, lies in the principles, the goals your striving for.”

32 Revolutions need be characterized not by military histories, but intellectual ones, as Gene Youngblood argues revolution “is basically the same whether defined by Marx, or the I-Ching: removal of the antiquated.”

The New Left’s ‘new media’ helped to extend those goals across space and time and through its work was instrumental in the development of activist social networks that acted to codify the New Left’s agenda. Creating a sense of cohesion through the construction of culture—‘a web of meanings and shared symbolic values that acted to bind peoples together’

34—the new media made sense off and helped organize a loosely amalgamated political movement and became an outlet for grassroots expression whose levels of participation and commitment had been unprecedented in American history.

**Communication Systems in the International and Domestic Affairs of the 1950s**

In 1993, David Halberstam, New York Times correspondent and Pulitzer prize winning journalist, set out a vision of the fifties that sought to root and identify many of the substantial cultural and political upheavals of the ‘sixties’ in a historical analysis of the decade which had preceded it. Halberstam argues given the experience in the historical record with the 1950s—largely comprehended via black and white still photos in contrast to the colour moving images—many perceive of the decade which preceded


the countercultural revolution as stagnant.\textsuperscript{35} He argues that on the contrary, the 1950s provided the pre-requisite changes to facilitate a new subculture and to guide its political orientation. Halberstam’s work connects the advent of birth control research with the sexual revolution of the 1960s, a campaign of communist paranoia brought about by a Republican party out of power since 1933, the rise of the civil rights movement, and the beginning of the Cold War Nuclear Arms race to the emergence of a generation “housed now in university…looking uncomfortable to the world we inherit.”\textsuperscript{36} While in these areas Halberstam’s work is quite astute, some of his arguments do leave room for additional nuance.

Halberstam’s work credits the rise of television\textsuperscript{37} as pre-requisite for the democratization of the media that followed it, and upon deeper analysis, this seems to be a flawed argument. While the 1960s did see the rise of the ‘straight press’ in confronting social ills, and television was instrumental in bringing the sights and sounds of war into American living rooms, this thesis argues that the spirit of resistance against political hegemony was born first in the underground press, a by-product of the 1960s, and not of the 1950s. It argues that new alternative communications networks and infrastructure provoked the demand in American society for conglomerated media to respond to its government’s policies critically. In addition, the level of grassroots participation in cultural and media production, though present, would remain rather stagnant throughout the 1950s in the face of a government that sought to outlaw “subversive” opinions and

\textsuperscript{35} David Halberstam, \textit{The Fifties}, (Toronto, Villard Books, 1993), xi.


\textsuperscript{37} David Halberstam, \textit{The Fifties}, 212.
organizations.\textsuperscript{38} The tension was palpable for Americans who saw their peers blacklisted and the words, “liberal,” and “Jewish,” among many others, construed as “Communist,” and “subversive.” What the success of the emergent alternative communications complex demonstrates was that the market for subaltern opinions and analysis forced the stakeholders in major conglomerated media to begin to see that newfound demand could be channelled toward generating profits. Even \textit{Rolling Stone}, today colloquially understood as one of the watershed publications in the development of the countercultural media, was capitalizing on a newfound demand in American Society, not only for coverage of ‘Electronic Folk Music,’ but also institutional change.

In fact, throughout the 1950s, media was very much an arm and tool of the ruling political class. Joseph McCarthy not only fundamentally understood the power of mass communication, but also had been, since Franklin Delano Roosevelt, the one man in America most successful in making the media and its potential for mass communication a tool of his political agenda. Understanding that film camera’s needed time to warm up, he would quite famously bang of the side of his podium signaling to the media to get their cameras ready to capture exactly what he wanted to be broadcast on the nightly news.\textsuperscript{39} In addition, he was aware of all the major press deadlines for publication around the country and would consistently use these to his advantage in generating publicity for his “anti-communist witch hunt.” \textsuperscript{40}

In the realm of international affairs, as opposed to domestic issues, the press was also a tool of the ruling political class throughout the 1950s. Following and leading up to

\textsuperscript{39} David Halberstam, \textit{The Fifties}, 50.
the 1953 coup of Iran’s Prime Minister Mosaddegh—*Time* magazine’s 1951 Man of the Year—organized by Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) operative Kermit Roosevelt, the CIA used contacts at the Associated Press to get a report which it had penned published on the situation around the world. Additionally, the intelligence organization manufactured reports published in *Newsweek*, which presented the coup as unattached to any American interests and activity in the region.\(^{41}\) A recently de-classified CIA document entitled “Campaign to Install Pro Western Government in Iran,” stamped “Top Secret,” reads, “Objectives: through legal or quasi legal measures to effect the fall of the Mosaddegh government; and to replace it with a pro-Western government” conducted via “a war of nerves,” orchestrated, “[using] U.S. media.”\(^{42}\) Further, in 1954, as the United States directly funded and participated in the coup of Guatemala’s popularly elected president Jacobo Arbenz, also organized by Kermit Roosevelt, and approved by President Dwight D. Eisenhower, Secretary of State John Foster Dulles, and his brother Allan Dulles, the director of the CIA, once again the media was used to imply that there had been no US involvement in the coup. Manufactured newsreels shown in American cinemas and articles published in respected papers presented the struggle as born out genuine Guatemalan resistance to its popularly elected president as opposed to US imperial designs or the economic interests of the United Fruit Company, which owned more than half the country’s arable land.\(^{43}\) The US even set up a radio station in Guatemala, *Le Voz de La Liberación*, to broadcast certain messages while blocking the

\(^{41}\) Ibid.

\(^{42}\) C.I.A. Memo, “Campaign to Install Pro-Western Gov. In Iran,” U.S. *National Security Archives*: http://www2.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/NSAEBB/NSAEBB435/docs/Doc%202%20-%201954-00-00%20Summary%20of%20Wilber%20history.pdf

\(^{43}\) David Halberstam, *The Fifties*, 374.
transmissions of the elected government.\textsuperscript{44} Further, the \textit{New York Times'} correspondent for the region, Sydney Gruson, was actually barred from entering Guatemala as the events unfolded on direct orders from his publisher, Arthur Sulzberger, a friend of Allen Dulles.\textsuperscript{45} Another frustrated \textit{New York Times} correspondent, Herbert L. Matthews, later called his peers, “God’s gift to the United Fruit Company…they saw and wrote exactly what the state department wanted to hear.”\textsuperscript{46} These incidents help to illustrate that during the 1950s, media, both domestically and internationally, frequently operated under intense control and repression.

During the 1950s the expression of alternative viewpoints was prohibited and often expressly illegal in the United States. Substantial participation in grassroots subversive media did not occur until the founding of Art Kunkin’s \textit{Los Angeles Free Press} in 1964. In its aftermath, countercultural media outlets began to multiply across the country until they finally coalesced in an Alternative Press syndicate: \textit{The Liberation News Service}. As media began to radicalize, so too did the movement that surrounded it. This thesis explores the dynamics of the shift of communications technologies and their impact on countercultural media activism in the United States of the 1960s.

\textbf{Organization:}

This thesis argues that shifting attitudes regarding the use of media in pedagogy and activism set the tone for a transformation and democratization of news media in the US. The first chapter explores the historical development of the grassroots underground press, the communal structures that accompanied it, and the role that community radio

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item[Ibid, 376.]
\item[Ibid, 379.]
\end{enumerate}
\end{footnotesize}
stations played in broadcasting radical news. Through an analysis of articles and editorials printed in the Los Angeles Free Press, Fifth Estate, Liberation News Service, and KSAN-FM, it argues that grassroots participation had never been as substantial, as inclusive, or as widely disseminated in American history. The second chapter looks at the development of radical pedagogical movements connected to the rise of ‘new media.’ It reveals how theories expressed by Paulo Freire, Neils Postman, and Charles Weingartner, found their application in the development of “non-sectarian [institutions] developed for the education of radical [publics],” exemplified in this study through the Students for a Democratic Society ‘New School.’ I argue radical education opened up avenues both in and outside of the university, which were crucial in securing a place for film and media studies in academia and for raising the profile of alternative media as knowledge producing. The third chapter connects the emergence of radical film communities and argues that film became an organizing weapon and pedagogical tool of the New Left in the US. Using the work of the Newsreel Filmmaking Collective and Emile De Antonio, as evidence of these claims, it argues that film became a powerful instrument of political education and helped to instigate social unrest. Finally, this discussion concludes with the argument that shifting perceptions of technologies’ pedagogical applications helped to foment counterculture throughout the 1960s and opened the way to the democratization of the US media market.
Chapter 1: “A Great Bunch of Motherfuckers Man!”: New ‘Consciousness Flowing’ Media, the Underground Press, and Alternative Media History

“The answer of course, is to have a society based on human values other than buying or selling. To arrive at this society, we need a good deal of planning and a good deal of struggle, which, if the best comes to the best, may be on the plane of ideas, and otherwise—who knows?”

Norbert Wiener, Cybernetics, or Control in the Animal and Machine, 1948.

I—Introduction: “The Transformation of Society Requires the Creation of a Consciousness”

The underground press community that flourished in the United States was the principle architect, organizer, and voice of the radical student dissident movement of the 1960s in the US. More than simply a print medium, harnessing the full power of ‘radical media,’ these community organizers put forth a new conception of their society. “New consciousness flowing media” was just that—an expression of not simply a newfound political consciousness, but the socio-cultural manifestation of a whole new way of life. Central to the communal and collective social structures that codified the “New Left-New Consciousness,” was redefining The Fifth Estate. Being connected to the underground press whether in a leadership capacity, or as a subscriber, meant not being a passive consumer or journalist. Though they certainly cost money and did rely on advertisers to subsist, their goal was not profit. Young radicals, through a “good deal of struggle,” sought to arrive at “a society based on human values other than buying or selling,” and to do so, they attempted to effect what Jon Sinclair described as a “Total Assault on the

American youth found expression by creating their own alternative media communications system; writers for “movement papers” saw themselves as social activists first, and journalists second. Throughout the unfolding of this counter-cultural revolution, the underground rags played a central role in “[hastening] the evolutionary process.”\(^{50}\) What the underground press did that was so significant was cultivate this new consciousness in the service of the revolutionary student movement. While most histories of the so-called ‘movement’ focus on institutional histories of the main organ of the New Left, Students for a Democratic Society, and in relation to media activism, its press syndicate, the *Liberation News Service*, it was at the grass roots that this new consciousness first proliferated. While institutional structures like the University, L.N.S and S.D.S. buttressed the growing social movement, it was in communes and collectives that the true roots of the New Left were birthed. Papers like *The Los Angeles Free Press* and *The Fifth Estate*—featuring writers like author Hunter S. Thompson, revolutionary John Sinclair, cultural media theorist Gene Youngblood, humorist P.J. O’Rourke, graphic novelist Art Spiegelman, and poet Charles Bukowski, among many others—transformed what journalism meant in the context of their society. These brave activists and the staffs of the papers mentioned above made manifest the expression of the “new subculture” before them, and as more and more people caught on to the ‘message,’ the subversive and revolutionary force of these media became so influential that they were directly targeted by J. Edgar Hoover’s Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI).


\(^{50}\) “Subscribe”, *San Francisco Oracle*, Vol 1. No.1, September 20, 1966
The Los Angeles Free Press set the precedent for what radical communications media could accomplish, following in their footsteps, as radical media agents realized the power of the message, subversive journalists conglomerated in the form of their own press syndicate: The Liberation News Service. Moving beyond the print medium, underground radio stations like San Francisco’s KSAN-FM—whose advertisements argued, “if you don’t like news, go out and make your own”\(^5\)\(^2\)—in combination with the organized and cohesive press syndicate, became the true genesis of a “media [by and] for the people.”\(^5\)\(^2\) The Free Press, established in 1964, was the oldest and most radical of the underground rags, and it became the model for what a ‘people’s media’ meant. The most subversive of the underground papers, it was here that a socially inclusive, democratic, grassroots communitarian archetype was developed by Art Kunkin and his staff-members like film critic Gene Youngblood for the alternative communications complex. Looking back on his time in Alternative media, the cultural theorist would call his work and the work of those who followed him, “the only communications revolution in American history.”\(^5\)\(^3\)

The Fifth Estate, run out of Detroit and staffed by revolutionaries like John Sinclair and Peter Werbe, was described in 1968 as “among the most devoutly revolutionary of the 200 some underground papers…at age three [also] one of the oldest.”\(^5\)\(^4\) At the Fifth Estate, music editor and “revolutionary prophet to Detroit’s


\(^{52}\) John Sinclair, 112.


\(^{54}\) John Burks and Don Demaio, Rolling Stone, October 4, 1969, Special feature on the Underground Press, Social Protest Collection, BANC FILM 2757, The Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley.
hip/rock.radical scene."\textsuperscript{55} John Sinclair, first found his calling as a radical media proponent and theorist. Sinclair explained that, “when people see our newspapers come out every two weeks…that our lives go on freaky as they are—they learn that they can do it too.”\textsuperscript{56} This new consciousness was self perpetuated through the dissemination of underground press articles that preached the collective over the individual—the commune over the consumer.

“The literature of democracy” rarely “exhibit[ed] the order, regularity, skill and art characteristic” of more professional media outlets.\textsuperscript{57} For the most part, the underground papers were messy in their presentation. Even so, their subversive messages were so loud, communicated on such a large scale through “the new media,” that mainstream audiences could not ignore them. John Sinclair explained, “We couldn’t buy that space, we couldn’t steal it, we couldn’t make them give it up,”\textsuperscript{58} so they created their own. The first volume of San Francisco’s \textit{Oracle}—one of the more psychedelic and countercultural of the underground rags made clear: “each issue of \textit{The Oracle} takes you through the looking glass into…the new consciousness. A new sub culture.”\textsuperscript{59} Jerry Rubin explains, “the underground press’s role was to…define an alternative community, to give it a voice.”\textsuperscript{60} Through print and over the radio, the underground communications movement made possible grassroots participation in revolutionary alternative media.

\textsuperscript{55} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{56} John Sinclair, 101.
\textsuperscript{58} John Sinclair, 99.
\textsuperscript{59} “Subscribe”, \textit{San Francisco Oracle}, Vol 1. No.1, September 20, 1966
In many ways, the radical press communications infrastructure were a form of what we today might call ‘social media.’ Over the airwaves, and in print, anyone who had a valid point to make, could speak their minds, communicate, and congregate on the issues that were as important to their own political consciousness, as the “new consciousness.” In Herbert Marcuse’s words, “In short…here [was] the ‘determinate negation’ of the prevailing system.” While promoting events where New Leftists congregated, it supplied the growing subculture with a crucial lifeline—the voices of the underground press quickly became emblematic of a generation. Along with S.D.S.’s spirit of ‘participatory democracy’ on university campuses, the “movement press,” with a stated goal of “the development of an alternative media network in this country,” spread their influence well beyond the realm of universities.

Realizing the profound influence that radical activists had acquired through the print medium, radio became a second new tool for reaching the masses. San Francisco KSAN-FM became the proto-typical force for what alternative media meant in the context of this “technological…new revolutionary epoch.” Opening their waves up to political debates through the telephone, and turning people on to the movement through “electronic folk music,” this technological solution was one of the principle voices of the New Left—not S.D.S, but the grass roots—the ‘people’ conversing on the air, over the telephone. As late as 1965, rock and roll was still a rarity on the radio, as top 40 A.M stations shied away from subversive themes and musicians fearing prosecution. The underground press community, as exemplified by the Los Angeles Free Press, The Fifth

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61 Herbert Marcuse, “the Question of Revolution”, New Left Review, September-October, 1967, 6-7
63 Ibid.
Estate, Liberation News Service, and KSAN FM, punctuated and set the standard for the birth of subversive, alternative, and revolutionary social grassroots media in the United States. John Sinclair, encapsulating their role for this generation of radical activists, in a *Rolling Stone* feature on the Underground press printed in 1968, announced, they were “a great bunch of motherfuckers, man!”

II—The Los Angeles Free Press: “a Place for Free Expression”

The Los Angeles Free Press founded by Art Kunkin in 1964, “is widely considered to be the youth movement’s first underground paper.” While some might debate the validity of the latter statement, there is absolutely no doubt that it was the largest circulated and most successful during the formative years of the underground press experience. Launched with only a few hundred dollars Kunkin had collected from friends, the “half-marxist, half-hippie,” introduced his paper as a counter to Norman Mailer’s *Village Voice*. Having felt the *Voice* supported ‘liberal democrats’ and was, thus, an ‘establishment paper,’ Kunkin saw the need for a radical alternative. Lionel Rolfe, a Los Angeles writer remembers the bohemian scene gathering often at Xanadu Coffeehouse in the early 1960s. In there conversations, they would “complain about how badly a new newspaper was needed…the difference between Kunkin and everybody else was that Kunkin actually went out and started the paper the rest of us just talked about.”

What was most salient about Kunkin’s new paper was that he went about creating a place where liberals, academics, intellectuals, bohemians, musicians, and artists, would

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67 Ibid, 37.
be free too openly communicate on the issues of their time period. More than simply a paper, the *Free Press* was meant to be a community. The *Free Press* office located in the basement of the Fifth Estate coffeehouse on the Sunset Strip in West Hollywood, California, “regularly hosted folk musicians and hootenannies, screened classic films, and displayed arts and crafts.”69 In the first issue, Kunkin explained his paper “would provide a place for free expression and critical comment and for dialogues between creative figures who have pertinent things to say…but who presently have no outlet in which to print such provocative writing.”70 More than simply a print medium, the *Free Press* was Kunkin’s vision of a truly democratic society; it sought to identify and record community events while providing domestic and international affairs made manifest through the “new consciousness.” Reminiscent of the Port Huron Statement, Kunkin argued that his paper was above all “committed to the principles inherent in the democratic ordering of society wherein all citizens have the right to meaningfully participate in community, political, and social life.”71 Kunkin’s *Free Press* was much more than simply “a community newspaper,” its democratic spirit, and unconventional reporting style, became the prototypical force in the development of the “new media;” “as a source of information on racial injustice, S.D.S, local New Left schools, demonstrations and antiwar activities, [it] was authoritative.”72

A few months after it’s founding, the Free Speech Movement at the University of California broke onto the New Left scene, young students like Mark Savio ushered in a

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69 John McMillan, 41.
new era of campus activism. Kunkin would later comment that without this important event, the paper might not have survived. The *Free Press* coverage of Berkeley’s civil unrest spread across the country like wildfire inspiring activists all across the country inspiring similar movements and grassroots activism. The November 5th 1964 front page profiling “the battle at Berkeley” read:

“The UC administration unilaterally announced a ban on Berkeley student activities long carried on at the Bancroft and Telegraph entrance to the campus, including the right to collect money, and solicit membership for off campus projects like civil rights. Eight students who continued such activity were suspended; and then on October 1, a former student Jack Weinberg was arrested on campus for the same reason. The police car into which he was put never moved from its initial spot; it was immediately surrounded by students. During the next two days it stayed there in a direct confrontation of the authorities by thousands of students. By the afternoon of the second day, the Kerr administration had gathered 1000 police on campus. Between 500 and 1000 students chose to sit down in preparation for mass arrests. At the last moment, the administration yielded.”

Scholars Robert Cohen, Reginald Zelnick, and Seth Rosenfeld, argue the free speech movement was responsible for the large outgrowth of the student dissident movement in the latter half of the 1960s. Although this argument is well supported, I posit that more important than simply inspire students to question there societal norms, *The Free Press* coverage helped necessitate the cultural schism represented by the Free Speech movement. While Savio cultivated civil unrest at the institutional level, Kunkin was responsible for its proliferation on the national stage. By making manifest the “new consciousness” for the first time, *The Free Press* became the archetype for what the Underground Press was all about—‘a space of our own.”

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75 John Sinclair, *Guitar Army*, 17.
III—The *Fifth Estate*: “Revolution as Ecstasy”

Following in its footsteps, Detroit’s radical and revolutionary scene gave birth to the *Fifth Estate* in 1965. Founded by 17-year-old Harvey Ovshinskey—a former member of the *Los Angeles Free Press* team—Ovshinskey, enthralled by his experience in the “new media,” and naming the paper after the coffeehouse that cultivated Los Angeles’s radical media scene, founded the paper from his parents Detroit basement. He even admits to “[stealing] ads from other publications…just to make it look like we had some support.”76 As Ovshinskey’s paper came to grow in notoriety, his acquaintances and audiences began to multiply. Support for the new paper was still far from substantiated when he met 24-year-old founder of the “Detroit Artist’s workshop,” John Sinclair. Described by Ovshinskey, “as ancient to me at the time. [Sinclair] was the first adult besides my parents, who encouraged my idea for a new paper.”77 Already an important figure of Detroit’s countercultural scene, Sinclair agreed to write a column for the paper entitled “Rock and Roll Dope.”

Sinclair’s endorsement of *The Fifth Estate* was essential in fostering a serious revolutionary and countercultural audience. Even so, after two issues, *The Fifth Estate* seemed as if it would not be able to finance its own production, a far cry from the liberal press, advertisers were weary of associating with such a publication; “I didn’t think we were going to make it”78 recalls Ovshinskey. It was announced that they would close shop when a young Peter Werbe stepped foreword to answer the call. After seeing the first issue, the man who had become editor-in-chief, Peter Werbe, was immediately

77 Ibid, 56.
78 Ibid, 59.
inspired by the ‘new journalistic’ tone. He said, “I’d always thought the print media and the people in power were inaccessible, and here was a paper that said things could change. It knocked my socks off.”79 Moving out of Ovshinskey’s parent’s basement, the paper was legitimized with its own office and accompanying bookstore located on Plum Street, home to “Detroit’s art community.” Using the bookstore to finance the publication of the paper, many of the members began to collaborate in the form of their own collective and community structures, living together, and helping to co-finance each other’s rent and groceries. Together, they also listened to music under the influence of mind-altering substances, and “revolution as ecstasy”80 became the paper’s unofficial motto.

While the Los Angeles Free Press was the proto-typical force in the New Media, The Fifth Estate redefined its administrative structure. A true revolutionary communal and collective structure was what the Fifth Estate lent to those that followed them. John Burks wrote in Rolling Stone of his experience at the Fifth Estate office:

“right near the door someone has painted FREE LSD FOR THE COMMUNITY…they are waiting. Editor Peter Werbe greets me with a shotgun leveled about my right knee. He keeps the shotgun in his office, he tells me later, because he wants to be ready ‘when the shit starts coming down.’”81

The Fifth Estate were not simply reporting, “[they] were going out and stirring up trouble” together, “instead of putting up pictures of Che [Guevara], [they tried] to be like him.”82 Part of this “new consciousness” was not solely being politically engaged, but it meant “living together to work together, [eating] together, [fucking] together, getting

79 Ibid 62.
80 Ibid, 64.
81 John Burks and Don Demaio, Rolling Stone, October 4 1969, Special feature on the Underground Press, Social Protest Collection, BANC FILM 2757, The Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley.
high together, [walking] through the world together,”\textsuperscript{83} to confront the society they had inherited. Living together in a big house in the Cass Corridor, called “Boone’s Farm Commune,” the group came to form its own internal community. As the underground press community conglomeration in the form of its own press syndicate, L.N.S, the communal and revolutionary roots of the “movement press” were far from forgotten. In much the same vain, the organization, which would help foment an explosion of the “new consciousness,” was rooted in a formal communal revolutionary structure.

IV—The Liberation News Service: “A New Kind of Journalism”

Slowly as the “movement press” grew more and more powerful, radical journalists began to come together to further the goals of the student dissident movement. Writers for the underground press syndicates organized themselves in the same manner as their “straight press” counterparts; a direct answer to the Associated Press. Meeting for the first time during Easter of 1967, sponsored by the Underground Press Syndicate, the “new media” gathered 30 of its top representatives at the home of San Francisco “oracle guru” Michael Bowen. The conference, in line with much of the Bay Area scene, was more of a carnival than a serious meeting of the radical intelligentsia. The invitation read:

“Well here we are here, Uncle Sam, on the verge of death. A sleep-stupor symbol-added environment haunts out hearts, and what are we going to do about it?...we extend this most urgent invitation that our fellow journalistic tribesmen will come together for spiritual guidance and fun.”\textsuperscript{84}

\begin{footnotes}
\item[83] John Sinclair, \textit{Guitar Army}, 104.
\end{footnotes}
Ironically, in a “symbol addicted environment,” the conference, “served as a symbol, creating a sense of national community that new papers could plug into.”\textsuperscript{85} The conference was chaos; punctuated by acid, Hopi Indians, and dancing; it got very little accomplished. The year had marked some of the most violent confrontations young Americans had ever seen; rebellions in Newark and Detroit brought youth militancy to a highpoint. The October 21\textsuperscript{st} “Confront the War Makers” march on the Pentagon saw violent clashes between police and students, At the University of Wisconsin and in Oakland, California, students continued to oppose the police to “end the draft.” As the Summer of Love myth faded into the past, the Rolling Stones made clear that it was no longer love that would provide the solution. Parodying the summer of love anthem dancing in the streets, they sung, “summer is here and the time is right for fighting in the streets,”\textsuperscript{86} the ‘new students’ would no longer be ignored.

The Liberation News Service, founded in 1967, by Ray Mungo and Marshall Bloom—two former members of the United States Student Press Association—set in chain a series of actions that would have profound implications across the entire New-Left. An “attempt at a new kind of journalism…questioning bourgeois conceptions of ‘objectivity’ and [reevaluating] established notions about the nature of the news,”\textsuperscript{87} the Liberation News Service resulted in Underground rags growing from the hundreds, to the thousands. Community papers were free to focus on their own municipal issues, while the press syndicate helped supplement their broader domestic and foreign affairs. Providing access to subversive political cartoons and discussion for a small fee, the Liberation

\textsuperscript{85} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{86} The Rolling Stones, “Street Fighting Man”, \textit{Beggars Banquet}, (London, Decca, 1968)
News Service spread the ‘new consciousness’ further than ever before. While New York City, Los Angeles, and San Francisco, were the original hotspots of the underground movement, because of the influence of L.N.S. now places as far reaching as Missoula, Montana, and Omaha, Nebraska, had their own subversive revolutionary ‘messengers’.

Highlighting the break with the old counter cultural stoned out stereotypes, Mungo and Bloom incorporated the Liberation News Service under “the new media project”, which was an attempt to subvert the mass media’s portrayal of the counterculture, and served as a way to highlight the substantial differences between themselves and their straight press contemporaries. The name also was used to present the media collective in a manner that was approachable to those who were skeptical of the radical politics of the Liberation News Service. John McMillian writes, “when raising money or renting equipment they presented themselves as “the New Media Project”; to youthful dissidents across the country, they were LNS.”

The name, in essence, acted to lend some legitimacy to a group whose total resources consisted of 80 US dollars, 20 of which was spent on an ounce of “high grade marijuana.” Therefore “The New Media project” became a title used by LNS to cover up conspicuous activities and gain access to places they would have otherwise been denied—it served to lend some sense of legitimacy to a newly founded group of radical journalists.

A direct result of the rising social pressures, the L.N.S. was able to proliferate its unique journalism at levels unforeseen in the early days of the movement. In its manifesto circulated in early 1968, Mungo wrote,

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88 John McMillian, *Smoking Typewriters*, 90.
89 Ibid, 91.
“Because there is a war in Vietnam, because there is a Stockley Carmichael, because there is an active resistance, there is also a new audience for independence publications, counter institutions which can be started anywhere by persons of high competence and serious commitment…At last, our radical press, disparate and spread out as it may be, is standing on its own.” ⁹⁰

So pervasive was the new institution that the *New York Times* referred to them “one of the few functional alternatives or counter institutions that the Movements had produced…a principal pillar of the U.S underground press.”⁹¹ The New Left’s answer to the *Associated Press*, through its work, the “LNS literally reached millions of readers.”⁹²

Former member of the co-operative Allen young writes, “LNS became firmly established after the October 1967 demonstration at the Pentagon, when LNS material documented aspects of the anti-war movement ignored or misunderstood by the straight “media.” It was that straight media that had misinformed the American public with its estimates and coverage of New Left events. It was thus in a spirit of reversion catalyzed by the October 67 demonstration, that LNS’s truly alternative, revolutionary, and communistic outlook became a major force to be reckoned with. L.N.S. writers propagated “ideas that would make the world a better place,”⁹³ in the true spirit of both Kunkin’s, and Ovshinkey’s paper, The Liberation News Service can be seen as directly responsible for the move away from the peaceful tactics of the New Lefts non-violent origins. As the press grew more and more radical, so, too, did the student dissident movement.

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While LNS packets were printed and distributed on a regular basis, the New Media Project moved to a farm in Montague, Massachusetts. It was from this base that their alternative and subversive voice reached according to fortune magazine, at least 1 million Americans on a bi-weekly basis. Soon buttressed by LNS’s propaganda, the New Left became increasingly radical, and 1968 sent shockwaves across the entire New Left. The result of the escalation of the war in Vietnam, of political assassinations and urban unrest in the aftermath of Martin Luther King’s, and Robert Kennedy’s deaths, and the 1968 Chicago Democratic convention protests, urban rebellions garnered more influence than ever before. A year later, in 1969, the major organ and symbol of the New Left, Students for a Democratic society was split in two.

V—KSAN F-M: “That’s the News, if You Don’t Like it, Go Out and Make Your Own”

In line with the radicalization of the youth movement’s media, San Francisco’s KSAN-FM, offering a mix of political satire and psychedelic music, offered the burgeoning youth culture a newfound voice. It all started when Disc Jockey Tom Donahue, then working for KMXP, primarily known for foreign language programming, began slotting 4 hours of the experimental, psychedelic, and electronic folk music during the 1967 Summer of Love. Within two months, though the ubiquitous haze of smoke and lysergic acid may have faded, the programming was so successful that in June of 1967 KMXP became a full-fledged rock and roll outlet. As the station became well known in the Bay Area, advertisers began to flock to the community radio station, and owner Leon

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Crosby started to “[want] more commercials from bigger businesses.”96 For this reason, he instituted strict rules governing airtime, as well as the music that was to be played. In protest, Donahue, in addition to several of his peers walked away and went to work for KMSR, a classical station. Working with the management to reshape it into a true community radio station, KSAN-FM became emblematic of the underground press—“a weapon of cultural revolution,” 97 and organizing tool for grassroots participatory democracy. As pivotal events such as the stabbing at Altamont and Free Speech protests at Berkeley unfolded, the station opened up its airwaves to the voices of the people via the telephone. KSAN-FM not only directed protest movements and provided news geared towards New-Leftists, but became a powerful pedagogical instrument.

Larry Miller, one of the converts wrote, “we took our inspiration from alternative newspapers such as The Fifth Estate in Detroit, The Berkeley Barb, and the San Francisco Oracle...and of course, The Los Angeles Free Press...we brought their radical words and ideas into the studio in the form of newscasts and editorials.”98 Working with the Liberation News Service, KSAN spread the “new consciousness” over the radio—“the electric right now.”99 What was so revolutionary about KSAN was that in addition to simply sending messages, they allowed their audience members to interact. In 1969, in the aftermath of the ‘Altamont’ music festival—which John McMillian calls the beginning of the end for the New Left100—KSAN opened its waves to allow discussion of

97 John Sinclair, Guitar Army, 52.
99 John Sinclair, 96.
100 John McMillian, Smoking Typewriters, 3.
the important event, a tradition that would continue as major events such as protests in New York at Columbia University, shootings at Kent and Jackson state by National Guard troops, and urban insurrection in America’s ‘African American ghetto’s’ continued to shake the nation. That was what KSAN was all about, its most prominent Disc Jockey Scoop Nisker was famous for closing his broadcasts with, “that’s the news, if you don’t like it, go out and make your own.”¹⁰¹ This was exactly what they did, and if we have any doubt of the pervasive influence KSAN was able to garner even outside of its own city, Scoop Nisker would recollect in 1978 that “in 1970, after the guilty verdicts of the Chicago conspiracy trial were announced, the San Francisco Chronicle had an article saying that the rioters [in Berkeley] were listening to KSAN news to find out where to go. And they were of course, because we were giving them directions.”¹⁰² These were not passive hippies that manned the airwaves, bur rather, dedicated revolutionaries who harnessed the power of their messages, to bring the cultural revolution to the people. KSAN-FM, was the proto-typical force in the development of community rock and roll radio in America.¹⁰³ Inspired by the vanguard of the movements press, and working in conjunction with the Liberation News Service, it was responsible for the proliferation and dissemination of the “New Consciousness” across space and time.

¹⁰¹ Scoop Nisker, as quoted in, Larry Miller, 131.
VI—Conclusion:

Young radicals did not see the underground press as a career, nor a means to an end. These journalists were on a mission to *bring the war home*, and in doing so, gave voice to an alternative and social media in the US. The *Los Angeles Free Press* was the first communications medium to present a serious alternative to the status quo. Offering its democratic and subversive mission to the rest of America, it became a symbol of what was possible. Among the many periodicals and media sparked by this movement *The Fifth Estate* became a model for how to organize the underground communications movement. Becoming a safe haven for Detroit’s art community and organizing community events, it preached revolution by way of “total assault on the culture.” Further radicalizing through the dissemination of LNS packets, the loosely amalgamated New Left found a common voice, and as the new consciousness became concentrated, it grew more radical and more powerful. Finally, KSAN harnessed the electronic power of the radio to subvert people as they listened—“to fuck them right in their tracks.” Using psychedelic music and allowing their audience to communicate on the air, the grass roots rose in prominence as the university began to lose its monopoly on political action. These young radicals transformed the manner in which the media fomented political action—together, they made manifest the “new consciousness,” and helped lay the foundations of subversive, revolutionary social communications infrastructures in the United States.

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105 Ibid, 94.
Chapter 2: “To Develop a Radical Public”—Radical Education and Pedagogy in the US—The “New Students” and The SDS “New School”

“History is neither simply the object of written chronicle, nor merely the process of human activity. That activity first becomes history as something destined. And it is only the destining into objectifying representation that makes the historical accessible as an object for historiography…the essence of technology lies in enframing…What is dangerous is not technology….the essence of technology as a destining of revealing is the danger.”


I—Introduction: “In Order to Make the Revolution, We Must Remake Men”

“In order to make the revolution, we must remake men,” wrote Doug Kennel in the Pine Tree, Rampart College’s student-authored academic journal. The journal was founded to advocate a new radical approach to pedagogy. Education was as important to the revolutionary student movement Kennel referenced as protest was. Much the same as radical press publications challenged the status quo, in the context of the university, and in ‘New Schools,’ academic journals and associations arose to point out the contradictions in their system such as the exclusive nature of their education system, its lack of visual stimulation in the sense of accepting film, music, and theatre as worthy of intellectual analyses, and its primarily male aging professorial middle class. Teach-ins were common occurrences on university campuses across the nation. It was sociologist C. Wright Mills who had inspired the New Left to “forget Victorian Marxism…and read Lenin again.” Historian Staughton Lynd, who had mentored a young Tom Hayden, not only having organized but also chaperoning his 1965 trip to Hanoi. Philosopher Herbert

106 Doug Kennel, “Toward a Revolutionary student Movement,” in The Pine Tree published by Rampart College, as found in, Social Protest Collection, BANC FILM 2757, The Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley.
107 Ibid.
108 C. Wright Mills, Letters and Autobiographical Writings. (Berkeley, University of California Press, 2001), 327
Marcuse, too, was instrumental in creating what historian Jeremi Suri calls “an
international language of dissent.”\footnote{Jeremi Suri, \textit{Power and Protest}, 90.} These university-based intellectuals influenced
students and inspired organizations like SDS “to inject controversy into a stagnant
education system” as part of their challenge to the status quo.\footnote{“S.D.S: A Broad Program, A Broad Vision,” Social Protest Collection, BANC FILM 2757, The Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley.} Radical pedagogical
movements worked to challenge the ‘system’ around many social and political issues,
using the freshly available tools of ‘new consciousness’ media and electronic
technologies. In this chapter, I outline the development of radical pedagogical
movements across the US; with a focus on the S.D.S “New School,” I explain how the
New Left used pedagogical tools to advance their calls for activism and social change and
create their own separate institutions and associations based around activist social
networks.

II—Radical Education: “Our Goal is the Development of a ‘Radical Public’”

Radical pedagogical movements swept across the Western hemisphere throughout
the 1960s, transforming not solely the relationship of student to textbook, but professor to
classroom as well.\footnote{Marshall McLuhan, \textit{Understanding Media: The Extension of Man}, (Cambridge, MIT Press, 1964), 8.} Radical disciplinary associations sprung up around the country as
scholars challenged the policies of their university institutions and conglomerated to form
sub-disciplines like radical history, radical geography, and radical psychiatry, among
many others. The radical psychiatric manifesto published by the APA (American
Psychiatric Association) proclaimed:

“Business as usual means hearing about the Nazi Exterminators—but not about
the MyLai Massacre… Business as usual means learning about aversion treatment
for homosexuals —but not considering whether homosexuality is really a
‘psychiatric’ disease...Depression is the result of intolerable alienation and deprivation—violent anger a healthy reaction to oppression.”

For historians imbued with this new spirit of education and activism, the present was injected with historicity. Staughton Lynd wrote he was “less interested in eighteenth century radicalism than in twentieth century radicalism.” But the radical historical profession was just one piece of a much larger whole. Left and right, professors that challenged the status quo professors were expelled from their universities. Lynd was tossed from the Ivory Tower when he was denied tenure at Yale after the publication of his book *The Intellectual Origins of American Radicalism* in 1968. William Bunge, who wrote *the Geography of a Revolution*, was fired from Wayne State University in 1969 and was blacklisted by the US government as a ‘subversive’ communist.

Among the key texts that led the field of radical education in terms of pedagogy, Paulo Freire’s seminal 1968 publication *Pedagogies of the Oppressed* helped mark a fundamental shift in the thinking of New-Left scholarly activism. A work lauded by many, including Noam Chomsky, Staughton Lynd, and William Bunge, it focused on developing an educational structure that was responsive to a worldview informed through Marxist class analysis. The radical intelligentsia, Freire argued, held the position of

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116 He eventually found educational asylum in Canada at the University of Western Ontario.
vanguard in the revolution. Therefore, a new pedagogy was needed—one part of a ‘new media,’ and one written for “the oppressed and to those who suffer with them, and fight at their side.”

Throughout this time period, as young scholars and activists were quite conscious that they were actors on history’s stage, Freire presented an exploration of a global society in which only two sorts of individuals existed: “those being colonized, and those doing the colonizing.” His goal was not simply to free the minds of those subjugated. He did not see revolution “as an ideal located outside of man,” rather a piece of “the great humanistic and historical task of the oppressed: to liberate themselves and their oppressors.” Freire’s contention was ultimately that “only power that springs from the weakness of the oppressed will be sufficiently strong to free both.” He argued that pedagogy need be “made and re-made,” and that teachers and students were involved in creating knowledge which generated “not pseudo-involvement but active commitment.”

Friere explained rather than see students as receptors one needed to see his or her students as co-creators of knowledge and not an empty vessel to be filled like a piggybank. Through his work Friere helped formed the basis of the field of ‘critical pedagogy. By focusing so heavily on the nature of class conflict as an agent of change and learning, Friere neglected the emergence of new media as a tool in the struggle for

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118 Ibid, 43.
119 Ibid, 45.
120 Ibid, 48.
121 Ibid, 49.
122 Ibid, 57.
123 Idid, 59.
social justice. Professors who ‘taught as a subversive act’ would take into account the role of the new media and the ‘communications revolution’ by focusing on the idea that just as the world and its technology was constantly in flux, so to should its learning be. Pedagogy, Postman and Weingartner argued, need not be ‘made and re-made,’ but directly founded on technology and the by-products of what they called, “the communications revolution.”

Neil Postman’s and Charles Weintgartner’s 1969 *Teaching as a Subversive Act* would have an equally causal effect on the development of the New Left’s pedagogical agenda. Right from the first page of Postman’s and Weingartner’s work it is immediately clear that an emphasis on “the communications revolution”\(^\text{124}\) will heavily pervade the structure of their argument. While Freire focused his pedagogy on the development of instigating change via class conflict and analysis, Postman and Weingartner chose the ‘message’ as their focal point. The two cultural theorists explained, “it is the thesis of this book that change—constant, accelerating, ubiquitous—is the most striking characteristic of the word we live in and that our educational system has not yet recognized this fact.”\(^\text{125}\) They argued that a fundamental transformation of the education system was needed in order to facilitate a new worldview, or consciousness, and that by focusing on what they referred to as ‘new media’, which they argued was in fact a ‘new language,’ the education system could help bring about said consciousness. But moreover, what was most salient about their argument beyond the revolutionary rhetoric was that the two cultural theorists argued new media forms like film, and music, represented a new diction

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\(^{125}\) Ibid, 5.
worthy of academic analyses. Further, that this would necessitate the construction of social networks of activists and scholars.

Following McLuhan, Postman and Wiengartner argued that technology needed to be understood as an extension of the central nervous system.\textsuperscript{126} The Cultural theorists and “educationists” posited that ‘new media’ now held the crucial responsibility of educating society, pointing out that “a lot of things have happened in this century, and most of them plug into walls.”\textsuperscript{127} In fact, the pair of cultural theorists argued that McLuhan, though not considered so, was “an operational educationist nonetheless.”\textsuperscript{128} This connected his thoughts to that of John Dewey’s who argued ‘we learn from what we do’. They also saw a connection between McLuhan’s famous passage ‘the medium is the message’ and Dewey, arguing that McLuhan “implies…that the critical content of any learning experience, is the method or process through which it occurs.”\textsuperscript{129} For in this electronic age, “electric media [comprised] new languages,”\textsuperscript{130} and therefore, new frames of analysis were needed from which to interpret them. Essentially, by this thesis of accelerating change,

“The fact that the new media are inseparable from the changes occurring in the environment requires that the school’s virtually exclusive concern with print literacy be extended to include these new forms; in other words, the magnitude of the effect of new media, still in the process of being assessed, requires that any attempt to increase the relevance of education include substantive consideration of them.”\textsuperscript{131}

\textsuperscript{126} Marshall McLuhan, 17.  
Chapter 2 of \textit{Teaching as a Subversive Act} is entitled “The Medium is the Message”  
\textsuperscript{127} Ibid, 19.  
\textsuperscript{128} Ibid, 21.  
\textsuperscript{129} Ibid, 22.  
\textsuperscript{130} Ibid, 174.  
\textsuperscript{131} Ibid, 175.
Building on both Friere, as well as Postman and Weingartner, the Students for a Democratic Society’s “New School,” would help offer evidence for the efficaciousness of these theoretical frameworks as seen in actual practice.

III—The ‘New Students’ and ‘The New School’

As evidenced in the first chapter, the ‘new students’ were a much larger piece of a New Left, and a new media, which had proliferated a new consciousness. Thus, the fundamental problem perplexing the New Left’s serious thinkers was how to create a radical, serious and engaged public, and a ‘new school,’ as much as a ‘new media,’ soon became a necessary prerogative to achieve that end. The university and the student movement had been the cradle of the New Left, but the “New School,” born in Berkeley, California, in the summer of 1964, became an experiment in how to ‘drop out’ of the university system and yet remain engaged in a critical dialogue. Inspired by the Free Speech movement of the same year, the new institution explained that in this “electric age,” the university was a 13th century remnant of the past.

Although the school challenged the status quo while looking towards a brighter future, it was centered on the invocation of its historical precedents. The “New School’s” prospectus read: “In the age of the Greek city state, politics was considered the highest form of human activity; through it, men molded their own lives and the shape and content of society…the aim of the New School is to stimulate a return to articulate, well informed, and active political life.” In fact, the first course included in its curriculum described and explored the needs of radicalized groups actively involved in political

132 “Poster for Party For Peace: UC Days of Decision on Vietnam, Friday, August 20, 1965, 2431 Dwight Way Berkeley, California,” as found in, Social Protest Collection, BANC FILM 2757, The Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley.
133 “The New School, Prospectus, Courses, History, and Forum,” as found in, Social Protest Collection, BANC FILM 2757, The Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley.
action. It was entitled “Processes of history: a study of revolution, nation building, and social transformation,” taught by radical historian and sociologist Franz Schurmann. Understanding the past, as much as *Understanding Media*, was an essential piece of the New-Left’s pedagogical agenda. The New School argued that by creating an effective counter-institution which built upon the university foundation yet infused it with the advent of radical pedagogical practices, the New Left could further their goals through the construction of social networks of activists centered around education.

The New School helped foment counterculture through participation in radical dialogue and education. By using new media forms to attract more people to the movement and by participation in dialectic activities the school created networks of activists who would seek further involvement with the political conflict at hand. Furthermore, the New School made Postman and Wiengartner’s ‘new diction’—electric media—the focal point of their institutional practices. The school was in fact designed specifically for people engaged in the protests movements and a number of seats were exclusively held for people who had shown interest in radical organizing initiatives. Though anyone could join their weekly conversations, lectures, and study groups, the school did have requirements for full acceptance to the institution; the most important of which, was previous engagement in the Bay Area’s radical protest movement. As the pilot project grew, slowly, the New Left’s major organ, SDS, saw interest in the new initiative and joined to partner with the “New School” to further advance both the mission of the New Left and its pedagogical practices. They argued a revolutionary education, was a necessary pre-requisite for any social or cultural revolution.

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In article III, section 6, of the SDS national constitution, the organization “[welcomed] the opportunity to co-operate with other organizations in jointly sponsoring action programs.”\textsuperscript{135} Pairing with Students for a Democratic Society in 1966, the “New School” became a pilot project centered on ‘criticizing existing structures and policies while proposing suitable alternatives’\textsuperscript{136} that furthered not only the goals of the student dissident movement, but also engaged and viewed its students as being involved in the construction of meaning and knowledge as opposed to passive consumers of it. As much as the professors held accountability for constructing courses and questions which would engage their students, the students held the responsibility of connecting the dots between the material and their own realities, further, of making manifest and spreading this knowledge well beyond the confines of the lecture hall. In the context of “a radical, non-sectarian institution developed to engage men and women in a radical dialogue,”\textsuperscript{137} the goal became breeding individuals to question the paradigmatic societal norms that had bore them out of ‘complacency’—to question the so called ‘liberal consensus.’ Students for a Democratic Society was dedicated to above all else the transformation of the educational apparatus. As the organization made quite clear, “we stand for education: our own above all… we are honestly and openly critical of our society…we wish to work with our friends in the university and beyond…The time is one of revolution.”\textsuperscript{138} The “new school,” in many ways became the personification of four years worth of radical rhetoric.

\textsuperscript{135} ‘Students for a Democratic Society: National Constitution (as amended at 1966 national convention, Clear Lake, Iowa), Social Protest Collection, BANC FILM 2757, The Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley.


\textsuperscript{137} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{138} Ibid.
In the spirit of the classical ethos they’d invoked in their prospectus, the school held open conversations which welcomed anyone in the community for the price of a dollar. A pamphlet circulated locally entitled, “February 15th 1966: Workers and Peasants of Berkeley,” explained that the New School would provide “loosely structured once a week study groups” centered on political questions and discussion focused on assigned readings. The study groups were meant to focus on “theoretical and historical analyses” which forced its students to see that problems like the Vietnam War, global poverty, development, and de-colonization, were not issues that existed in a foreign land, but rather were the direct result of American policy and that these analyses would be instrumental for analyzing ‘structural change’ in the USA. Further, that their actions could have profound implications on not only a national scale, but a transnational one; that issues like poverty in America, and the war in Vietnam, revolutionary movements in the 3rd world, and structural change in America had a causal relation.

Guest speakers at the meetings included “Paul Jacobs…Susan Sontag…. Lawrence Ferlenghetti…[and] Saul Landau” among numerous others. The discussions were consciously built around “criticizing existing structures and policies and proposing more rational and humane alternatives,” and thus, the classrooms, were in every way designed for those active in movements for social and political change. But the speakers ranged from academics, to photographers, to members of theatre troops—they included novelists, poets, journalists, music critics, and even film distributors. People like Landau, a young journalist, actor, and film distributor, taught “Agencies of Social

140 “The New School,” Social Protest Collection
141 Ibid.
142 Ibid.
Change and the New Movements” at the New School, and would participate in the production of nearly 70 documentary films.143

The New School helped to redefine who could be understood as an expert, and what constituted material worthy of academic analyses. Radical theatre became a mainstay of their weekly meetings, filmic, photographic, and literary analyses were commonplace, and discussion based around these media of communication spurred intellectual discussion which opened up cultural material for deep intellectual study, and ironically, would help to secure a place for it in the context of the university institution in the aftermath of the countercultural revolution.

IV—Conclusion: Alternative Media Forms, Scholarly Activism, and Radical Education

In the 1960s alternative media forms became one of the primary organizing weapons of the New Left in America. By connecting alternative media beyond the realm of print literacy with educational theories and institutions which argued revolution could only be achieved through radical pedagogical practices the New Left went about constructing its own counter institutions and networks of scholarly activists. Scholarly activism was not only associated with the New Left, but a central tenant of the political agenda. Every leader was involved in intellectual study and argued that a new education was needed to generate serious institutional and cultural change. While scholars within the institutions continued to challenge the practices of their bureaucracies, many began to realize that they could no longer fulfill they’re goals within the University and moved beyond its ivory tower. Tom Hayden, one of SDS’s foundational members, the man who

143 Landau eventually became Professor Emeritus at California State Polytechnic, specializing in history and digital media before his death in 2013.
drafted “the Port Huron Statement,” wrote in “a Letter to a New (Young) Left, “The radical style takes as its presupposition Dewey’s claim that we are free to the extent that we know what we are about. Radicalism as a style involves penetration of a social problem to its roots, its real causes. Radicalism presumes a willingness to continually press forward the query: Why?” Education, was not only part of the New Left’s movement for social change, but a direct reflection of what it meant to be radical and involved in moving beyond the society they had ‘inherited.’ For just as radical filmmaker Emile De Antonio made clear: “the truth is radical.”

The “New School” brought together committed activists in an academic environment that challenged the University by making theater, literature, and art the focal points of intellectual discussion. Showing films, they crafted collective consciousness among their viewers and worked towards the development of a ‘revolutionary student movement.’ Radical film and university pedagogy was about a conscious move towards changing how one participated in social activism; it was about a shift away from the mainstream towards the development of a codified and organized alternative communications infrastructure. The films were a provocation to thought released into a community that was prepared to analyze them as such—‘instruments,’ for a ‘pedagogy of the oppressed.’

Thus, new media literacy became one of primary goals of the radical pedagogical shift that seemed to encapsulate the intellectual zeitgeist of the era. One such burgeoning radical medium of communication—film—with its ability to attack to envelope the viewer in a deep sensory experience seemed to not only trump all others, but bring people

144 Tom Hayden, *Writings for a Democratic Society*, 23.
145 “Political Documentary Filmmaker in Cold War America: Emile De Antonio Interview.” 38 min. 22. Sec. Video Clip, YouTube, Posted By: The Film Archives. [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WOF1KmXqE1U](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WOF1KmXqE1U)
together in a way music, photography, and radical theatre could not quite come close too. Film, as the archival record makes clear, seemed able to spur passion for the subjects being discussed in a manner none of the other mediums could. As the Underground Weathermen explained in *Prairie Fire*, “The vitality of SDS was rooted in its local experiences and the application of national programs to different regions and conditions—applying the lessons of Columbia through films…transformed our identification, our lives.”¹⁴⁶ The University of California at Irving chapter of S.D.S further elucidated the efficacy of this teaching method arguing they “showed ‘Newsreel’ films as an alternative media form.”¹⁴⁷ Radical film, in this post-literate, postindustrial society, became, just as Postman and Weingartner had made clear, a potent form of radical education that was part and parcel of both the “New School’s” and New Left’s pedagogical and revolutionary agenda. Pushing foreword the query why? were the New Left’s Newsreel Filmmaking Collective, and Emile De Antonio.


Chapter III—Radical Film: “Revolutionary Action Generates Revolutionary Consciousness; Growing Consciousness Develops Revolutionary Action”

“It’s a Vietnam we don’t know very much about. An old man speaking in Vietnamese tells us his house has been bombed, destroyed, rebuilt twelve times. The Subtitles are there, but we know—by looking at him and hearing a language we don’t understand—much more than we did before…we meet them on a human plane”

Emile De Antonio, Beyond Vietnam, 1974.

I—Introduction:

Radical filmmaking had roots that extended far beyond the continental United States and were as old as the medium itself; this sense of global community through electronic communication provides important context for the forbearers of the ‘communications revolution’ in the United States. Many of these radical media proponents looked to models of vanguard political filmmaking in Europe, ranging from earlier movements like Soviet Kino Pravda to later movements, such as Italian neorealism and French New Wave.148 Russian filmmaker Sergei Eisenstein considered ‘the father of montage’149 and one of the first great radical filmmakers crafted collective consciousness focusing on the great mass of the ‘people’ in his films.150 Immortalizing himself with Battleship Potempkin and October in 1925 and 1927 respectively, he set the standard for how radical films could attack the senses and invoke historical consciousness in the service of a political agenda.151 Following in his footsteps, in 1949, a young

Frenchman by the name of Rene Vautier was commissioned by the French government to make a film about life in the West African colonies. Seeing oppression everywhere and a colonizing force of occupation about him, he was shocked to learn that the French media’s presentation of ‘life in the colonies’ seemed a farce. Rebelling against the government he was currently under the employ off, Vautier’s film *Afrique 50*, set out an anti colonialist vision calling for African independence. The film was banned for over 40 years in France, and Vautier sent to prison for infringing upon ‘censorship laws.’

Meanwhile, as the 50s turned to the 60s in France, Jean Luc Goddard pushed French sensibilities even further with works like the 1960 *Breathless* and 1962 *Contempt* and a *Nouvelle Vague*, or “new-wave” began to reach far beyond the shores of the Mediterranean. Inspired, Joris Ivens and his wife travelled to the ‘17th parallel’ in 1969 where they documented the harsh realities of life under US bombs. On the other side of the Atlantic, in Latin America, a movement *Towards a Third Cinema* emerged in the work of argentine filmmakers Fernando Solenas, and Octavio Getinas, who in 1968, set out a vision of 400 years of colonial oppression in the landmark *Hour of the Furnaces*.

But though the radical film movement was in every internationalist in its origin and scope, “A New American Cinema” emerged in the 1960s caught between Old Left and New—the Newsreel Filmmaking collective, and Emile De Antonio, argued that only through film could “revolutionary action generate revolutionary consciousness” and

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growing “consciousness develop revolutionary action;”\textsuperscript{153} that educating the public through an attack on the senses, would bring about the true revolution.

\textbf{II—The Newsreel Filmmaking Collective: “Films and all Media Forms are not for Passive Consumption, but for Analysis that leads to Direct Political Action”}

On October 21\textsuperscript{st}, 1967, one day shy of 10\textsuperscript{th} anniversary of the first U.S death in Vietnam, psychedelic music rung out over the Pentagon’s parking lot while the ‘Fugs’ performed a top a make shift stage singing of ritual levitation and satirical exorcism; young men and women made love in the streets; a young African American stood tall with a placard reading “NO VIETNAMESE EVER CALLED ME A NIGGER”; and Dr. Benjamin Spock, a famed pediatric specialist referred to LBJ as “the enemy” before young Americans brandishing the red, blue, and gold flag of the NLF. This day, 100,000 Americans “confronted the war makers.”\textsuperscript{154} As the largest protest ever organized by the New Left unfolded on the streets of Washington D.C.—civil war seemed imminent. In \textit{Armies of the Nights: History as the Novel, the Novel as History}, a historical profile of the event, Norman Mailer invoked the storming of the Bastille calling the Pentagon the “bastion of the republic;”\textsuperscript{155} the fall of the Egyptian empire, referring to the Potomac as “our Nile;”\textsuperscript{156} and explained that amidst the carnivalesque scenario, “there were to be seen a hundred soldiers in confederate gray, and maybe there were two or three hundred hippies in officers coats of Union dark blue.”\textsuperscript{157}

\textsuperscript{155} Norman Mailer, \textit{Armies of the Night}, 54.
\textsuperscript{156} Ibid, 112.
\textsuperscript{157} Ibid, 121.
The civil war Mailer predicted never came, but something of even greater importance that most histories have ignored took place as the New Left “confronted the Warmakers”—the Newsreel Filmmaking Collective was born. The event is largely understood in the context of the non-violent origins of the student dissident movement. Understanding the vast importance of the march on the Pentagon, filmmakers, photographers, and journalists flocked to the capital, creating informal contacts and gathering to discuss the possibility of using all the footage in a collective film project. Jonas Mekas, who had been spokesperson for “the New American Cinema,” an editor for *film culture*, and film critic for the *Village Voice*, in conjunction with Robert Kramer, an influential director and major figure of the US radical film scene, organized several meetings of the interested parties in New York, and in December 1967, Newsreel New York was officially founded. Its organizing principle held that the “group [would use] films and other propaganda in aiding the revolutionary movement.”

Bill Nichols comments in *Cineaste*: “Newreel’s formation…as a group of leftist filmmakers and activists dedicated to the creation of a radical alternative to the mass media was virtually without precedent in the US.” The film collective, born in frustration with the mass media’s presentation of how the New Left had confronted the war makers, grew from its base in New York, to establish chapters in San Francisco, Boston, Washington, Atlanta, Detroit, Chicago, Los Angeles, and even Puerto Rico, “with 150 full time activists in its 9 regional offices,” becoming a truly national radical film movement. For Newsreel, the camera, and not the Molotov cocktail represented the true ‘instrument’ of revolution—the

158 “Newsreel,” as found in, Social Protest Collection, BANC FILM 2757, The Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley.
production, distribution, and showing of their films, Robert Kramer called “guerilla warfare.”

Most of the films were short and too the point, they championed what Kramer called an “empirical” approach to filmmaking. Essentially, it meant they “presented actual material with a minimum of scientific analysis.” This allowed the viewer to engage critically with the film on his or her own terms, and “acknowledge the uniqueness of the historical moment.” Jerky camera angles, violent quick transitions, and searing classical scores conflated with psychedelic imagery and music came to punctuate films meant to be interpreted as “battle footage…[exploding] like hand grenades in peoples faces.” In fact, this is what had inspired not only the name of the group, but the content of the films as well. Michael Renov in his piece centered on a historical profile of the collective wrote, “these radical cineastes were inspired by the forced aesthetic privation of true guerrilla footage, documents of forces fighting wars of liberation in Vietnam, Africa, or, Latin America…offered refuge from seamless, ideologically complicit products of the culture industry.” The people in action became the central theme that ran through the majority of Newsreels footage—the goal—inspire others to do the same by framing ‘the movement’ in the shadow of the struggles of ‘oppressed’ peoples the world over—for this was not an American struggle, but a global one. As Robert Kramer made clear: “we and many others are at war. We not only document that war, but try to

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162 Ibid, 272.
163 Ibid.
164 Ibid.
bring that far to buy war to places which have managed so themselves isolation from it.”

The collective was in the business of educating its viewers as to the true state of not only ‘the union’ but the world in an attempt to develop a collective consciousness—as Lenin and Mao point out—a necessary pre-requisite for any cultural revolution.

Using film to provoke confrontation, the Newsreel filmmaking collective worked non-stop to bring the war home. Distributing and producing films in their basements, and showing them “in dormitories, peoples living rooms, churches, union halls, high school auditoriums,” the collective was not in the business of creating ‘art movies,’ rather, films which would provoke a direct political response and work to overturn the mass media’s presentation of a radical intelligentsia lost in the haze of countercultural ‘ecstasy.’ Standards for submission and distribution of films were generally quite low, and many of the films were not masterpieces of filmography, but, for the Newsreel filmmaking collective, the medium was the message, and the messages trumped any technical qualities the films might had reciprocated. The collective operated in the spirit of the democratic ethos that had dominated much of the New Left’s rhetoric. Anyone could be a publisher, a distributor, a director, and that what was even more radical than the content of the films they produced. They inspired others to experiment with a medium that could envelop the viewer. Films like Pig Power, Columbia Revolt, and On Strike, helped to secure a place for radical film in the US by first educating there viewers as too the widespread cultural dissatisfaction of Americans from diverse

166 Robert Kramer, as quoted in, Micheal Renov, 273.
168 Larry Daressa, as quoted in, Micheal Renov, 275.
backgrounds, and then inspiring them to ‘do it themselves.’ Whether it was the African American New Left in *Off the Pig,* the white middle class student dissidents in *Columbia Revolt,* or, the “third world students” in *On Strike,* the collective was based on informing its viewers as to the reality of their country and they understood that in lieu of that education, citizens could no longer stand idly by.

These filmmakers also facilitated the development of transnational networks of solidarity distributing films “from France, Italy, Japan, Cuba, Vietnam” and made by “guerilla movements in South America and Africa.” Using electric media to create solidarity among peoples of distinctly different racial and ethnic backgrounds in the service of a common goal, they brought upon cultural revolution, but also, showed their viewers that they too could be “artists imperceptibly gaining on reality,” that media, democratized in the hands of the ‘people, could work to challenge and change the system by creating open access to information—that ‘technology through its objectification into representation, revealed truth;’ and that access to information necessitated action.

III—The ‘Radical Scavenger’ Emile De Antonio: “History, is the Theme of All my Films”

At the ripe age of 40, Emile De Antonio, or ‘De’ as his closest friends called him, began his crusade “against [the] institutions which rule America.” With “no background” in film, by the end of his life he’d earned himself the title of “America’s

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170 Ibid.
173 “History is the Theme of all My films,” An Interview with Emile De Antonio, as quoted in, Alan Rosenthal and John Corner, *New Challenges for Documentary,* 2nd Ed. (Manchester, Manchester University Press, 2005)
foremost radical documentary filmmaker.”\textsuperscript{175} Despite constant FBI harassment and intimidation\textsuperscript{176} before his death in 1989, De Antonio remained wholeheartedly committed to his mission of understanding the complexity of the country he loved so dearly, De Antonio constantly focused on “Americaness in a metaphorical sense.” It was ‘America’ itself—understanding its ‘essence’—just as it had been for the transcendentalists before him, and the \textit{beats} he roamed around with mirroring themselves in Thoreau and Emerson’s distorted image, which inspired them.\textsuperscript{177} In fact, the ‘aristocratic Marxist’ had been, as described by his classmate John F. Kennedy, a bright undergraduate amongst the history faculty at Harvard.\textsuperscript{178} Bill Nichols, American film critic and theoretician explained that through De Antonio’s lens-cap, “the documentary [was] a genuine instrument of historiography, a medium for diachronic social analysis with its own validity and authority, relying on visual documents in the same way that the traditional writing of history relied on written documents.”\textsuperscript{179} The radical filmmaker through his training in history and obsession with understanding his country offered up polemical visions of American domestic and foreign policy using almost solely archival footage. De Antonio called himself “a radical scavenger,”\textsuperscript{180} and in his work, pioneered a new kind of filmmaking: compilation documentary.

\textsuperscript{175} Ibid, 3.
\textsuperscript{176} Ibid 6.
\textsuperscript{177} History is the Theme of all My films”, An Interview with Emile De Antonio, as quoted in, Alan Rosenthal and John Corner, \textit{New Challenges for Documentary}, 2\textsuperscript{nd} Ed. (Manchester, Manchester University Press, 2005)
\textsuperscript{178} Randolph Lewis, 29.
\textsuperscript{180} Randolph Lewis, 17.
According to American studies scholar Randolph Lewis, ‘De’ was a “womanizing raconteur” and an “upper class Marxist;” a failed English professor and a Harvard-educated scholar; a university and Marine Corps dropout with the second highest IQ in the Army Air Corps; a half ‘beat’ remnant of the ‘old-left; an “over thirtier”; a historian not an artist—above all, a painter, and not a filmmaker. Andy Warhol quite famously remarked: “Everything I learned about painting, I learned from De.” De Antonio can even be seen heavily inebriated in Warhol’s 1956 film Drink. The Harvard Crimson described De Antonio as having a “Rabelaisian taste for life.” That wit, and sarcastic edge, would become a mainstay of his filmography. In fact, the medium that would come to define the latter half of his life had initially been what he saw as everything wrong with America. ‘De’ argued he “saw film in his early life as a commercial enterprise; films were made to make money; films were made to avoid the realities of life; documentaries like Louisiana’s Story were fraudulent—they presented a false picture and I saw no space for me in that world.” But things changed for De Antonio when he began to become a mainstay of the New York avant-garde scene in the latter half of the 1950s. Films like the 1959 Pull My Daisy, written by Jack Kerouac, and directed by Alfred Leslie and Robert Frank, what ‘De’ called “the quintessential expression of the beat generation,” changed his notions of what the medium could accomplish. De Antonio said, “I thought if these

181 Randolph Lewis, 12.
182 Ibid.
183 Andy Warhol, as quoted in, Randolph Lewis, 23.
184 Ibid, 19.
185 “Political Documentary Filmmaker in Cold War America: Emile De Antonio Interview.” 2 min, 22 sec. Video Clip, YouTube, Posted By: The Film Archives. http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WOF1KmXqE1U
186 Ibid.
people can make a film for almost nothing and its one of the best films ever made, maybe its time for me too look at what should be done.”  

On September 28th 1960, he and 23 other independent filmmakers, including Jonas Mekas who would later help found the Newsreel collective, came together and called for a movement towards a “New American cinema”—its goal—to turn film “the color of blood.” There manifesto published two years later read:

…the official cinema is all around the world is running out of breath. It is morally corrupt, esthetically obsolete, thematically superficial; temperamentally boring… Common beliefs, common knowledge, common anger and impatience binds us together—and it also binds us together with the New Cinema movements of the rest of the world. Our colleagues in France, Italy, Russia, Poland or England can depend on our determination….We don’t want false, polished, slick films—we prefer them rough, unpolished, but alive; we don’t want rosy films—we want them the color of blood.”

Striving to understand how his generation had seen their “best minds destroyed by madness, starving, hysterical, naked,” in the spirit of the “New American Cinema,” De Antonio bought from the American Broadcasting Company (ABC) the complete 188 hours of the ‘Army-McCarthy’ hearings and set out on the project that would turn him into the quintessential American political filmmaker of his epoch. Though he had never seen celluloid or an editing machine and “started from scratch,” De Antonio went boldly where no American filmmaker had gone before. “History,” he said, “is the theme of all my films.”

187 Ibid.
189 Allan Ginsberg, Howl, and Other Poems, 9.
190 Emile De Antonio, as quoted in, Randolph Lewis, 34.
**IV—POINT OF ORDER: 1964**

In sharp contrast to Kubrick’s *Dr Strangelove*, produced the same year, which began “none of the characters portrayed in the film are meant to represent any real persons living or dead,” *Point of Order* started with a warning that “everything you are about to see actually happened.”¹⁹¹ De Antonio’s narration lasting just the first 59 seconds of the film is the only voice heard that was not collected via archival documentation. As ‘De’ makes clear, “the subject of the hearings was not a single army private, but the American democracy itself.”¹⁹² The radical filmmaker wanted “the people who themselves were in the film to be the only voices heard,”¹⁹³ and by showing rather than telling his audience, the documentarian allowed the viewer to engage with the material on his or her own terms. De Antonio said there was “no preaching [allowed]. I was against McCarthyism, but theatre was more effective than howling.”¹⁹⁴ Joseph McCarthy’s opening speech are some of the first words in the film.¹⁹⁵ De Antonio uses the film to accuse McCarthy of “[introducing] witchcraft, terror, falsehood, a debasement, manners and mind; and [creating] for the first time in our history an atmosphere that was truly totalitarian.”¹⁹⁶ He argued, “even if you were a cleaning lady in the state department and didn’t even know what communism meant—you were a

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¹⁹² Ibid.
¹⁹³ “Political Documentary Filmmaker in Cold War America: Emile De Antonio Interview.” 2 min, 22 sec. Video Clip, YouTube, Posted By: The Film Archives. [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WOF1KmXqE1U](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WOF1KmXqE1U)
¹⁹⁵ *Point of Order*, DVD. Directed by Emile De Antonio. 1964. New York: Point Films. 3 min, 10 sec.
¹⁹⁶ Emile De Antonio, as quoted in, Randolph Lewis, 37.
communist because McCarthy called you one.” The film in his opinion was an attempt to use political raw material to make an art that would inspire action. For ‘De,’ filmmaking was “not a question of editing, or, of reducing, [rather] a question of making something, and giving it structure.” The art was not in the act of creation, but of organization. By focusing on the historical, the empirically identifiable, by evidencing it as it happened, and not as it was portrayed, De Antonio showed the American the true face of ‘anti-Americanism.’ He would later recall, “I named it *Point of Order* because those words were heard around America for months and all was disorder—that was the point of the film.”

V—*RUSH TO JUDGEMENT: 1967*

On November 22nd 1963, a phone rang in American artist Jasper John Jr.’s apartment where Emile De Antonio was recovering from knee surgery. A disgruntled 42-year-old radical filmmaker picked up the phone and on the other end heard a familiar voice, “oh, De, Jack Kennedy’s been shot,” Andy Warhol’s voice muffled through the speaker. Not in the mood for joking, ‘De’ hung up the phone in frustration. Just in case, though, he decided he’d better turn on the radio. As a political representative, De Antonio had always been quite skeptical of his former classmate Kennedy—“he saw idealism as a political liability because it led to moral certainty and intolerance of

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197 “Political Documentary Filmmaker in Cold War America: Emile De Antonio Interview.” 4 min. Video Clip, YouTube, Posted By: The Film Archives. [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WOF1KmXqE1U](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WOF1KmXqE1U)
198 Ibid.
199 Ibid.
200 Ibid.
201 Andy Warhol, as quoted in, Randolph Lewis, 48.
202 Ibid.
dissenting opinions”—but that did not make the loss any easier on the radical cineaste. Watching the mass media’s presentation of “lone gun-man” theory De Antonio found no solace in lieu of the mounting contradictory evidence seemingly brushed aside by the federal government—“they left too many strings untouched,” he said. While still hard at work on Point of Order, ‘De’ attended the lecture of a young lawyer Mark Lane who had made a name for himself challenging the ‘Warren Commissions report’ and offering posthumous legal defenses for Lee Harvey Oswald. In January 1964, over a sandwich and a drink, the two pledged to create a visual “brief for the defense.”

Rush to Judgment begins with the classic archival footage of Lee Harvey Oswald shortly after his arrest. Oswald appearing with a swollen left eye tells the press, “I am accused of murdering a police man;” that “[he] knows nothing more than that and requests someone come foreword to give [him] legal assistance,” and then, “emphatically [denies] the charges.” The movie then sharply cuts to footage of the press questioning a spokesperson for the Dallas district attorney’s office: “as we understand it, no one actually saw this man pull the trigger of the rifle that apparently killed the president, is that correct?” “that is correct” responds the spokesperson. Rush to Judgment was a direct attack on the warren commission pointing out so many of the inadequacies of the investigation. De Antonio and Mark Lane argued that “if [Oswald] had lived of course he would bee entitled to council, [we] think he is entitled to council now, and [we] think all

203 Ibid.
204 “Political Documentary Filmmaker in Cold War America: Emile De Antonio Interview.” 5 min. 22. Sec. Video Clip, YouTube, Posted By: The Film Archives. http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WOF1KmXqE1U
205 Randolph Lewis, 51.
207 Ibid.
of America is now entitled to have council for Lee Oswald so we can found out actually what took place on November 22\textsuperscript{nd}.\textsuperscript{208} Did that ‘magic bullet’ really come from the 6\textsuperscript{th} floor of the depository? Could one bullet really have hit both Kennedy and Garrison? These were some of the aspects of the Warren Commissions’ report they called into question. But the film did not offer absolute answers; it appears ‘closer to what Michel Foucault calls genealogy than a historical narrative.’\textsuperscript{209} The film in a quite boring way, which De Antonio said with amusement “he liked,” debunks the Warren Reports version of the account—but does not dabble in conspiracy. “I don’t know what happened, I have no idea what happened,” de Antonio made clear, “All I know is that whatever happened, was covered up.”\textsuperscript{210} Some of the most touching testimony comes from actual witnesses who explain that their words as they appear in the Warren Commissions report have been changed or falsified. This De Antonio saw as a victory, he argued it was “the first time a film specifically [attacked] and [confronted] a major government position;” “the first time in which an actor in history [became] an actor in a film (Mark Lane);” and “the first time a film [was] a plea for the defense.”\textsuperscript{211} Rush to Judgment as an achievement in filmmaking would hail in comparison to De Antonio’s favorite, 1968’s In the Year of the Pig.

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\textsuperscript{208} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{209} Randolph Lewis, 55.
\textsuperscript{210} “Political Documentary Filmmaker in Cold War America: Emile De Antonio Interview.” 7 min. 4 sec. Video Clip, YouTube, Posted By: The Film Archives. http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WOF1KmXqE1U
\textsuperscript{211} Emile De Antonio, “A Conversation with Mark Lane and Emile De Antonio, as quoted in, Kellner and Streible, 175.
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VI—IN THE YEAR OF THE PIG: 1968

“The first left wing movie nominated for an academy award,” In the Year of the Pig, a conscious work of history profiling the Vietnam War as it was being fought, was released in America to immediate hostility. At its debut in Los Angeles, “someone broke into the theater and wrote the word traitor on the wall.” In Houston, bomb threats accompanied its showing at every theater—even the university refused to play the film where only one group appeared brave enough to show it: the Youngmen’s Hebrew Association. In Philadelphia, “the police came and said the fire exit [was] no good….and then one of the police said, ‘it’s because of one of those Vietnamese pictures your playing.’” All the theatres cancelled it, De Antonio would later recollect. The French loved De Antonio’s film, but even in Paris, in a city crazy about film, “the cinema was systematically stink bombed.” Nonetheless, it stands today as a testament to ‘compilation documentary’ and ‘American New Cinema.’ It was a self-conscious historical “organizing weapon”—the most powerful critique of US involvement in Vietnam ever made. The nation’s most influential film critic, Pauline Kael, “appraised the film under the heading blood.” In the New Yorker she wrote:

“the theme is not, as might be expected, the tragic destruction of Vietnam, but the triumph of Vietnam over the American Colossus…it provides a historical

212 “Political Documentary Filmmaker in Cold War America: Emile De Antonio Interview.” Video Clip, YouTube, Posted By: The Film Archives. http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WOF1KmXqE1U 22 min, 53 sec.
213 Ibid.
214 Emile De Antonio, Alan Asnen “De Antonio in Hell (1968)” as quoted in, Kellner and Streible, 206.
215 “Political Documentary Filmmaker in Cold War America: Emile De Antonio Interview.” Video Clip, YouTube, Posted By: The Film Archives. http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WOF1KmXqE1U 27 min. 5 sec.
216 Ibid.
217 Emile De Antonio, Alan Asnen “De Antonio in Hell (1968)” as quoted in, Kellner and Streible, 206.
218 Ibid.
219 Kellner and Streible, 200.
background and puts the events of the last few years into an intelligible framework...De Antonio’s historical interpretation, [is] remarkably persuasive.”

De Antonio himself described it as “a kind of black comedy” “evoked only by telling a substantial piece of it in time.” The compilation of archival footage collected in Paris from the Vietnamese, from the NLF in Prague, the soviets in East Germany, and at home where he paid “3000 dollars a minute,” revealed American interests that had been lurking in Southeast Asia since 1945. One film scholar argued, “there probably [had] never been so many images before put together in a film.”

*In the Year of the Pig* painted a picture steeped in eastern philosophy of Ho Chi Minh as a revolutionary not unlike those who’d left their lives on the battlefields of New England in the summer of 1776. The war, De Antonio argued, was a revolutionary struggle against a colonial occupation. It had nothing to do with communism, but rather, the urge to create a society in which “all men were equal” with the right to “life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness”—words De Antonio points out Ho Chi Minh spoke declaring his own independence from France. De Antonio described that he “wanted to make a film that would place Vietnam in history.” In his eyes, the war ran contrary to the values upon which the invading nation had been founded; the ‘Americaness’ he was constantly searching for. Thus, through historical inquiry, ‘De’ sought to point that out.

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221 Emile De Antonio, Alan Asnen “De Antonio in Hell (1968)” as quoted in, Kellner and Streible, 208.
222 Political Documentary Filmmaker in Cold War America: Emile De Antonio Interview.” Video Clip, YouTube, Posted By: The Film Archives. [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WOF1KmXqEjU](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WOF1KmXqEjU) 32 min. 23 sec.
223 Ibid.
224 Ibid.
The film begins with the statue of an American Revolutionary, at its base it reads: “as soon as I heard of American independence my heart was enlisted.”

A quick transition, and the viewers are cast an American G.I. whose helmet reads: “MAKE WAR NOT LOVE.” Throughout the film Generals and politician’s rhetoric, from Eisenhower to Nixon, John Foster Dulles to De Antonio’s own former commanding officer, General Curtis LeMay, are turned eerie comedy.

*In the Year of the Pig* was “a collage-history of the peoples struggle in Vietnam” and a piece of revolutionary pedagogy. In 1978, De Antonio remarked, “I still meet people who tell me ‘your film turned me to anti-war activity,’” The real goal of all De Antonio’s work was to move people to action. His work was in that sense, inherently didactic. Beyond a filmmaker, or a painter for that matter, De was in essence a teacher and a historian, a scholarly activist participating in the construction of both art and historiography. He would voraciously research the material he dealt with and was one of the few directors from the “New American Cinema” who would read volumes upon volumes of information before ever turning on the camera. De Antonio was thus as evidenced by his films, involved in using the archive to participate in the study of the past. His arguments rested on historiography conveyed through archival footage and retrospective analysis.

Uneasiness about the presentation of history is a pervasive theme throughout all of his work. In this way, and not only evidenced *In the Year of the Pig,* one can see the

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225 *In the Year of the Pig.* DVD. Directed By Emile De Antonio. (New York: Emile De Antonio Productions, 1968), 2 min. 22 sec.

226 Ibid.

227 Emile De Antonio, “Nichols Replies (1978), as quoted in, Kellner and Streible, 224.

228 Ibid.

229 Randolph Lewis, 27.
foundation of his filmmaking as resting on the principle that the past was in need of a re-
examination. He argued with his work that by using film one could grapple with the
political and historical realities that existed not only in South-East Asia, but in the United
States as well. Yet his message was not intended solely for an academic audience, and
that is what made De Antonio so dangerous to his federal government. Because this
material was being presented in a medium that was in a sense universal, and because it
was being made available, and accessible through the marketplace of communication, De
Antonio’s pedagogy was outlawed. His films were not only marginalized at the time in
academic discourse, but also, by municipal, state, and federal governments. 230 De was in
every sense of the word a ‘radical scavenger’, attacking his government with the camera
as his weapon, and urging others to think critically about their current state of affairs.

‘De’ was also at the vanguard of a ‘New American Cinema,’ and whereas the
Newsreel filmmaking collective showed their films on their own terms, De Antonio
wanted his seen by the mainstream, whatever the consequence. As a result he was
constantly harassed, he quite facetiously told an audience: “I was audited every year, I
might as well have been a drug smuggler or a Mafioso.”231 But ‘De’ wasn’t a Mafioso, he
was a teacher, and the education he provided to his viewers, was in the eyes of his
government, more dangerous than an organized crime. In a sense De both politicized and
historicized documentary filmmaking in the United States of America. Though political
and historical films no doubt had been made before, the message had never before in
American Life been made as distant from the power of both state and capital. De Antonio

230 Ibid, 32.
231 “Political Documentary Filmmaker in Cold War America: Emile De Antonio Interview.” Video Clip,
YouTube, Posted By: The Film Archives. http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WOF1KmXqE1U
42 min. 34 sec.
said, no “filmmaker is objective…. whenever you point a camera you make a statement, whenever you cut a piece of film you make a statement,” and in his work, that “there lied the hope that the world can change.” At 40, having never seen a piece of film ‘De’ decided to become a revolutionary, what he really ended up was a revolutionary educator and a historian, didactism, and not only history, one might call the theme of all his films.

VII—Conclusion:

The Newsreel collective helped democratize media production and consumption by taking films out of the context of the theatre, and placing them in the ‘New Schools’, in high school auditoriums, in lecture halls, and in their friend’s living rooms. It provided a tangible space for the ideas put forth in Radical pedagogy to find an audience. It didn’t matter whether you knew how to put film together or had been to film school, what mattered was that you were committed to the ‘movement’ and its ‘new media.’ Their films were shown all across the US presented by the likes of Liberation News Service, promoted by KSAN-FM, endorsed by groups like the Weather Underground, and shown at meetings of university chapters of SDS in as distant corners of the US as U.C. Irving and Columbia University.

Through the communal structure of a media collective, something which had been pioneered in the underground press, and working with ideas put forth in radical pedagogy, Newsreel brought together committed activists and helped to foment counterculture through participation in direct cultural production. When people engaged

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233 Emile De Antonio, as quoted in, Randolph Lewis, 73.
The Weather Underground, Prairie Fire, 17.
Todd Coffin, 3.
with these films they saw in them that they too could change the society they lived in. Direct participation in the form of documentary filmmaking, promotion, education, and grassroots activism, helped to create social networks of activist who upon seeing Newsreel films were moved to take action and seek further involvement in the political conflict at hand and in the filmmaking collective itself. With over 150 members across 9 cities in the Continental U.S. and beyond, and creating networks of solidarity with oppressed peoples the world over the Filmmaking collective was a social network that used media to help instigate and promote change. The films were in no way meant to be understood as anything less than revolutionary propaganda. The message was their weapon in the subversion of their society and the collective helped to politicize filmmaking and bring the Cultural Revolution to those who had been sheltered from it.

De Antonio worked to transform art into politics, film into history, and helped redefine how to organize around a ‘New American Cinema.’ He was an academic, a teacher, and his work was inherently didactic. Though he was not a pedagogical theorist by trade, his work evidenced an undying passion to understand and transform collective understandings of the American past. ‘De’ worked to make people ask questions and even when he did not offer absolute answers, as is the case in Rush to Judgment, they still put forth the radical query why? De Antonio though, unlike his Newsreel counterparts, wanted his message to be heard and seen outside the confines of the New Left’s dictated media space. And so by placing political art in the mainstream he exposed himself to a myriad of criticisms and his life as a filmmaker was fraught with adversity. But, his work moved many to begin to question their society outside of the New Left. At 40, ‘De’ was approachable to many adults in a way that Jerry Rubin and Abbie Hoffman were simply
not. His arguments were founded on scholarly research and so presented a bias picture no
doubt, but one which was had scholastic merit behind it. Whereas the Newsreel collective
were providing propaganda, and materials for pedagogical practice, ‘De’ was providing
his audience with an education—a nuanced argument premised on archival research.

De Antonio’s films turned people to protest activities and the protests which
accompanied the showing of his films in the United States and even in France, did bring
social unrest to light. As the first left wing filmmaker ever nominated for an Academy
Award, De secured himself in popular film history, but his work also helped to foment
counterculture, and instigate social unrest by bringing the cultural schism to the
mainstream. Both the Newsreel filmmaking collective and Emile De Antonio helped to
foment counterculture by bringing people together and creating social networks of
activists across time and space through their films.
Conclusion:

“The Duty of the revolutionary is to make the revolution. This is not an abstraction. It means revolutionaries must make a profound commitment to the future of humanity, apply our limited knowledge and experience to understand an ever changing situation, organize the masses of people and build the fight…the only certainty will be constant change.”

_The Weather Underground, Prairie Fire, 1975_

Ideology, Marx said, reproduced the means of production. The message and the changing technologies associated with them, as Innes argued as well, made societies move forward, change, and seek new realities. Even so, this power, until the 1960s was firmly held by the state, which used media to chain people to vernacular, suppress political opponents, and cement policy in place. What was revolutionary about the sixties was that it was then that electronic media, radical pedagogical movements, and the communal organizational archetype put forth in the Underground Press, began to enable a new relationship between media and political activism. ‘The message,’ Wieners fundamental priority, coupled with the power of the machine, and the destruction of the barriers to the marketplace of communication, allowed young Americans to realize not only who they were, but who they wanted to be, and how they could achieve that ‘alternative’ reality. In this sense, shifting perceptions of pedagogy and activism as well as the technology associated with them directly helped to foment counterculture in the US and transform the landscape of information sharing in American society.

During the _sixties_ media production and consumption was truly democratized for the first time. The New Left’s ‘New Media’ is where the conversation and debate about

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235 Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, _The German Ideology:_
http://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1845/german-ideology/

236 Harold Innes, _The Bias of Communication,_ 27.
the true ‘state of the union’ took place. It was a space, an avenue, an outlet for dissatisfied youth, and the most important causal reaction of its creation was that it made manifest a culture that surrounded it, which through electronic media, extended itself across time and space. Admits the mimeographs of the underground press the New Left found an communal organizational model founded on social networking and cultural production. It provided a space for subaltern opinions to find expression and activists to find likeminded networks of individuals and congregate in the form of media collectives. For the first time, a codified, democratic, inclusive, system of resistance to hegemony as expressed in media arose in the form of editorials, articles, and coverage of foreign and domestic affairs. Most salient though, were their methods of organization, a form of communal resistance, and itself a political act, which helped to inspire grassroots activism across the New Left.

By organizing around media production the underground press became the principle voice of the student dissident movement but moreover set an organizational archetype for the New Left in terms of both political production and media related activism. The underground press offices were first and foremost communities of likeminded people brought together by a common goal: bring the Cultural Revolution to the people. John Sinclair wrote, “when people see our newspapers come out every two weeks as freaky as they are they realize that they can do it too.”

While the underground newspapers multiplied and formed syndicates, the model it put forth would extend to other forms of electronic media. Community radio stations like KSAN-FM brought that sense of democratic grassroots participation—quite consciously mimicking the

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underground press—and opened their airwaves to their listeners to interact with and help “make their own news.”

Through radical pedagogical movements new media literacy became a priority of educational theorists and shifting attitudes about the value of electronic media in pedagogy and activism helped to inspire ‘New Schools’ where theoretical premises about ‘new media’ found application. Postman and Wiengartner’s “New Languages” found an audience who was willing and able to interpret them as such, and a new diction, in the form of electronic media, which became more rigidly connected to intellectual practices and applications. “The New Schools” were essentially social networks of activists and communities where scholars conglomerated to make media one of the primary organizing and pedagogical tools of the New Left, but also, helped to foment and inspire political action through pedagogy. Once again, radical activism was predicated on a communal structure and environment.

Then, using the organizational model pioneered in the underground press, and theoretical ideologies made manifest and tangible in radical pedagogy, radical filmmaking movements and directors found a space for dialogue, criticism, and were lent legitimacy by its connection with intellectual practice. Through the lens caps of Emile De Antonio and the Newsreel Film collective, a ‘New American Cinema’ was born. Coinciding with the radical pedagogical movements of the epoch, film proved a provocation to thought, and more importantly, action. Radical education was about the development of the ‘revolutionary students movement,’ and the ‘New American Cinema’ was about a shift towards an ‘alternative’ communications complex—a new ‘space of our own.’ Because of their work, the ‘movement’ grew more radical as the educational
apparatus and the films did as well. Though they were directors and artists by trade, the filmmakers and crews behind the Newsreel Filmmaking Collective, and Emile De Antonio, were teachers. Turning films the ‘colour of blood,’ they helped politicize and historicize documentary in the United States via participation in cultural production predicated on social networking.

In fact, the underground radical communications complex that developed in the latter half of the 1960s in the United States gave birth to ‘social media’ before the concept in its modern connotation existed. Anyone could be a writer for an underground rag; anyone could call up KSAN-FM and join the conversation; anyone could ‘make their own news’; anyone could be a director working for the Newsreel film collective. Conglomeration around media practices fomented counterculture while communication bred community, and activism helped necessitate the democratization of the communications complex.

That there was a counter-cultural revolution is something that myriads of scholarship has shown to be the case, but why this revolution in fact happened, seems to be more vaguely understood. Media, was one of the causal agent in the unfolding of the anti-imperial protest movement of the 1960s—as the media radicalized, so too did ‘the movement.’ Is it not simply a coincidence that in 1968 when the news packets of the Liberation News Service were reaching 1 million people, 1 million college students identified themselves as revolutionary in a Gallup pole. The New Left and its ‘New Media’ had a causal reciprocal relationship on the other, and as more radical opinions and expressions made themselves into the living rooms of America, so too did more people

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238 Tom Hayden, *Writings for a Democratic Society*, 382.
begin to realize the fallacies inherent in the ‘American Dream.’ Through participation in cultural production premised on communal organization and social networking, and building on radical pedagogical theories and practices, the New Media helped foment counterculture in the United States of America and left a behind it a legacy of grassroots media production and social activism.

**Epilogue: “A Single Spark Can Start a Prairie Fire”**

In 1963 conscious radical political filmmaking was nearly unheard of in the US and even in a sense outlawed by the federal government; radical education was stigmatized, and besides the *Village Voice*, there were very few journalistic outlets which offered coverage of alternative opinions and allowed for community based values and grassroots participation. The state held a firm grip on the media, using it to its own domestic and foreign ends, and independent and oppositionist papers found it very difficult to find any real audience admits the communist paranoia that had dominated the decade which had preceded it. Today, nearly anyone can become a publisher, any viewpoint can find expression, and political filmmaking has forged out a dynamic sphere within the realm of political activism in the US. Radical pedagogical practices continue to challenge university practices and electronic media has a secure place within higher education.

Filmmakers like Eugene Jarecki, whose latest works *Why We Fight*, and *The House I Live In*, profile the historical roots of the military industrial complex, and the war on drugs, as well as Micheal Moore, among many others, find a direct historical

Alternative media outlets such as Vice News, which began from humble countercultural roots as a monthly punk zine, and which uses documentary filmmaking and social networking to transform collective understandings of past and present, also, find a historical precedent in the underground press. Finally, Universities such as “The New School” at Parsons continue to push the boundaries of radical education and pedagogy. Through participation in cultural production, The New Left’s ‘New Media’ helped to secure a place for these filmmakers, journalists, and educators in our modern world. By pushing the boundaries of media technologies and through a constant dedication to social networking, the ‘New Media’ helped to set a foundation for and inspire today’s alternative social media, radical documentary filmmaking, and radical pedagogy—we are forever indebted.
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