

2004

From guerrilla theater to media warfare Abbie Hoffman's riotous revolution in America: a myth

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FROM GUERRILLA THEATER TO MEDIA WARFARE
ABBIE HOFFMAN'S RIOTOUS REVOLUTION IN AMERICA:
A MYTH

A Thesis
Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the
Louisiana State University and
Agricultural and Mechanical College
in partial fulfillment of the
Requirements for the degree of
Master of Arts

in

The Department of Communication Studies

by
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May 2004

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Abstract

The following thesis is a discussion of the radical activist Abbie Hoffman's theatrical work to revolutionize the United States. What the author does is explain the historical uniqueness of Hoffman's theatrical techniques as tools for social change. What made Abbie Hoffman such a unique character from that already bizarre and devastating time in the United States known as The Sixties was his ability to infuse pot with politics, fun with social activism and cultural change with his contemporary means of communication. He was able to excite and activate a whole generation of people who would otherwise drop out of society rather than become involved by walking a thin line between being a revolutionary and being a clown.

The thesis begins by focusing on Hoffman's early guerrilla theater performances and proceeds to his larger, nationally focused demonstrations in Washington D.C. and Chicago. Each chapter extrapolates from the descriptions of the performances the theories which influenced the subsequent performance. The culmination of Abbie's work is his highly publicized trial (with seven other defendants) in Chicago for the riots that took place there the previous year.

What we are made to understand is that while Abbie and most of the other radicals of the time are often brushed off as stoned freaks with nothing to offer in the way of social improvement, it is exactly their ability to volley between being taken seriously and being overlooked which allowed them to get away with saying and doing so much.

Introduction

To the States or any one of them, or any city of the States,
Resist much, obey little,
Once unquestioning obedience, once fully enslaved,
Once fully enslaved, no nation, state, city of this earth,
Ever afterward resumes its liberty..
Walt Whitman (10)

Although not the first person to embrace the idea of performance as a means of protest during the turbulent years of the 1960's, Abbie Hoffman enacted some of the more profound and notorious theatrical feats of this era. He was responsible for organizing the Festival of Life that led to the riots at the 1968 Democratic Convention, the throwing of money onto the New York Stock Exchange floor and the magical exorcism of the Pentagon, to name only a few. He fully embraced Antonin Artaud's belief that theater was everywhere and that its true value "lies in its excruciating, magical connections with reality and with danger." (qtd. in Raskin 119)

Although the rhetoric of the day resembled the strong language used by violent revolutionaries the goals of most 1960's radicals were peace and equality. Abbie's brand of activism was a savvy solution for those who didn't believe that killing one's enemies was a solution to conflicts and for those who were unwilling to work within the system to achieve social change. In his section on "Monkey Warfare" in *Steal This Book* Abbie writes:

If you like Halloween, you'll love monkey warfare. It's ideal for people uptight about guns, bombs and other children's toys, and allows for imaginative forms of protesting, many of which will become myth, hence duplicated and enlarged upon. (211)

In his own way, he seems to have embraced Malcolm X's philosophy to achieve one's goals "by any means necessary." (Shabazz xiii) This well known phrase has often been

misappropriated to impose a violent tone on Malcolm X and his followers. However, Malcolm X's daughter, Attallah Shabazz, realigns us with his intentions:

Malcolm X never advocated violence. He was an advocate of cultural and social reconstruction--until a balance of equality was shared, "by any means necessary." Generally, this phrase of his was misused, even by those who were his supporters. But the statement was intended to encourage a paralyzed constituent of American culture to consider the range of options to which they were entitled--the "means." "By any means necessary" meant examine the obstacles, determine the vision, find the resolve, and explore the alternatives toward dissolving the obstacles.

(xiii)

Although Malcolm X may never have "advocated violence" he did preach that it was wrong for people, African-Americans specifically, to turn the other cheek, to stay humble in the face of degradation and use their lives as preparation for the hereafter.

For some people the uncompromising drive of Malcolm X was too abrasive and would only yield negative outcomes. Others believed in the power of pacifism as the only real solution to bringing about a peaceful world. In response to the proposition that one should use whatever means necessary, including violence, to obtain one's goal, Mahatma Gandhi has written, "Your belief that there is no connection between the means and the end is a great mistake...Your reasoning is the same as saying that we can get a rose through planting a noxious weed."

(Gandhi 411) This theory aided Gandhi in his efforts to expel the British from India, it influenced the methods of Martin Luther King, Jr. in his quest to gain equality for African-Americans and inspired large numbers of Americans to incorporate civil disobedience and other nonviolent tactics as a means of protest.

Abbie, as a political clown would be, sits somewhere in the middle between Gandhi and Malcolm X. He was certainly not a pacifist. He writes:

I respected their pacifist beliefs, but something in their approach jarred my American heartland upbringing. I practiced nonviolence as a tactic, but was far

from a follower of Gandhi. Confrontation always demanded surprise and uncertainty...Violence and the threat of violence have a good track record when it comes to changing the minds of people in power.

(The Autobiography 83)

His brand of violence never involved killing anyone. Whether he really believed that the movement would one day become bloody is open for debate, but the tactics he used were unique because they were designed to be both nonviolent and extremely confrontational. He always kept his intentions a secret by teetering on the thin line between rebel and clown.

What separated Abbie's form of protest from that of others of his time was his dedication to the belief that protesting and participating in the changing of one's culture is not a boring activity to be executed by deadly serious men but rather a joyful and fun occasion for actualizing one's goals. "A 'riot,' he [Abbie] reminded readers of WIN magazine, meant an outbreak of laughter as well as an outburst of violence; a riot was therefore successful if 'everyone has a good time.' The point, as far as he was concerned, wasn't to burn down buildings or shoot police officers, but to detonate brain cells and create a revolution in consciousness" (Raskin 108).

Abbie had been involved with the civil rights movement for a number of years by working with the NAACP and Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC), registering people to vote, teaching, writing, etc. However it was the guerrilla theater tactics and philosophy of the Diggers that truly turned Abbie on to the possibilities of protest. The Diggers were a small group of actors in the San Francisco area (and later New York), formally of the San Francisco Mime Troupe, who believed everything should be FREE. They adopted an all out rejection of money. They provided free clothing, food, furniture, medical assistance and whatever else they

could get their hands on (by any means necessary) to hippies and other people in need on the street.

Theater was a means of revolution for the Diggers. On one occasion the Diggers, including Abbie, “showed up at the headquarters of Con Edison, where they threw soot in the air and on employees in jackets and ties.” The idea was “that a handful of soot down an executive’s neck might be more effective than a pile of petitions begging for cleaner air.”

(Raskin 102) It was this kind of directness and spectacle that brought them free media attention to advertise for their cause of peace and justice. The Diggers understood the value of spectacle. They knew that people were tuning into the television not radicals handing out leaflets. It was this kind of mentality that informed all of Abbie’s performances even after he broke from the Diggers due to differences of opinion concerning hippies and personal animosities toward Abbie for supposedly “stealing Digger ideas and exploiting the Digger mystique to aggrandize himself” (Raskin 128).

Despite this confusion over all of the available means Abbie was willing to employ we know that he was an effective propagandist. He was effective because he focused on developing a myth (the youth revolution), he used contemporary channels for pushing that myth (television/radio/festivals/music/theater/ drugs/etc) and his choice of actions were designed to disrupt people’s everyday lives and hence abolish neutrality. He helped polarize the country and force people to choose sides. Once his attitude changed towards the dropout culture and their absorption in the world of music, drugs and free love all of his performances were a means of reaching that community, binding it together and expanding its influence on America. He constantly emphasized the generation gap, which helped to create more confrontation in the

American home. The hippies were mainly young people who were fed up with the wars and norms of their parents and Abbie exploited this. But it was also savvy to emphasize the youth (although Abbie was in his thirties for the majority of these performances) because it played into the natural habit of young people rejecting their parents and it added to the myth that the youth would one day grow to take the place of their elders (another natural occurrence); utopias are always set in the future.

“...our job is to line the streets of the country with banana peels.”
Abbie Hoffman (Raskin 109)

My interest in Abbie Hoffman lays in the substance and effects of these performances - this area between laughter and seriousness - this space where people find their courage, their renewal in life, and where the official voice of power can be shaken. A surface reading of the accounts of Abbie Hoffman and other coconspirators' (Jerry Rubin, for example) activities would make them sound like innocuous clowns...but the FBI had large files on them. The fact is all of Abbie's humorous performances were intrinsically a threat to the powers that be. Each event was not a mere satirizing of current figures and events for the sake of a joke or a brief release from reality. Each performance was a call to wake up to the realities of the times and begin thinking in new ways not prescribed by the official culture. Abbie Hoffman was a dangerous, subversive character in 1960's America. But what is it that made him and these performances so dangerous?

Joel Schechter is the author of the book *Durov's Pig: Clowns, Politics and Theater*. In his book, Schechter outlines the history of satirical, political theater in the twentieth century,

beginning with the performances and trials of the Russian performer Vladimir Durov and his circus pig around the turn of the century and ending with contemporary protests by Green Peace. Schechter relies heavily on Mikhail Bakhtin to help illuminate the unique place clowns have in society. Bakhtin writes in the introduction to his book *Rabelais and His World*:

As such [clowns and fools] represented a certain form of life, which was real and ideal at the same time. They stood on the borderline between life and art, in a peculiar midzone as it were; they were neither eccentrics nor dolts, neither were they comic actors. (8)

This midzone is both the crowning and crucifixion of the political clown. They are at liberty to speak out about whatever they please because they are *just* clowns and can be easily cast aside. This gives them a tremendous amount of freedom not granted to those enacting traditional forms of dissidence, but it is also the reason they can be easily ignored. However this does not make them innocuous. Political clowns are the megaphone for the unofficial attitudes of the people and when that voice is too loud the official powers take notice and act against them. There is a line that can be crossed...a line Abbie frequently overstepped.

During the course of his discussion of political clowns Schechter mentions Abbie Hoffman briefly as an example of political satire reaching out to the public “to unsettle a national audience through the electronic and print media.”(Schechter 199) My goal for this thesis is two-fold. First, I will situate Abbie Hoffman within this history of performance through political clowning and explain further how Hoffman and his coconspirators displayed their message to the public through the media; a project Schechter calls for himself. Secondly, I want to take Schechter’s brief analysis of Abbie’s performances a step further. Schechter is right to include Abbie in the tradition of political clowns and noting the uniqueness of his approach to the media, but very little of Abbie’s methods and theories are discussed.

It is my belief that a tremendous amount of the effectiveness of his performances derives from their myth-making function, which places Abbie in a separate category from Schechter's other clowns. Abbie believed that the ambiguous facts that would spring up after a performance were helpful to encourage others to discuss the subject at hand and join the revolution in their own way. By utilizing a production concept based on humor, festival, myth and an open-ended definition of the boundaries of each performance spontaneous action was able to erupt out of individuals wanting to take measures against their government. The myth of a youth revolution and the enactment of demonstrations that, both in form and content, simultaneously called society's actions into question and gave some sort of answer to those questions convinced a great deal of people that a utopia, or at least an improvement in society, was achievable.

“THE ONLY WAY TO SUPPORT A REVOLUTION IS TO MAKE IT YOUR OWN.” (Hoffman, *Revolution* 188)

Each chapter will contain a description of events compiled from oral histories, biographies and other literature written on the subject of Abbie Hoffman and by Abbie himself. In addition to the description I will rebuild the career of Abbie Hoffman as a political activist and clown by showing how he developed his ideas of political protest from guerilla theater into larger festivals. I will evaluate all performances according to how well they walk the line of being serious and comical. How well is Abbie able to maintain the balance between being free to act with all the liberties of a harmless clown and, at the same time, having the effectiveness of a focused revolutionary?

My second chapter will be more of a general overview of some of Abbie's first pieces of political/guerilla theater from throwing money out onto the New York Stock Exchange floor to the "Support Our Boys" march and planting trees throughout New York City. Image creating events like these produced what Abbie refers to as pure theater or pure information. "It needs no explanation. It says more than thousands of anti-capitalist tracts and essays. It's so obvious that I hesitate to discuss it." (Hoffman, *Revolution* 66) These initial performances can be thought of as Digger experiments for Abbie for he would eventually expand the breadth of these performances based on his experiences using a political clown's strategies from guerilla theater into larger demonstrations.

The third chapter of my thesis will focus on a single, much larger event: The Exorcism of the Pentagon. On 21 October 2003 a festival was planned to commence on the grounds surrounding the Pentagon so that it could be levitated into the air through magical powers and exorcised of all of its demonic power. Through several press conferences and networking through the New Left Abbie and friends managed to bring together "tens of thousands of college students, hippies, and middle-class suburbanites" as well as "intellectuals, writers, and celebrities, including Paul Goodman, Noam Chomsky, Dwight Macdonald, Robert Lowell and Norman Mailer." (Raskin 121) It was a giant put-on that promised music, flowers, drugs, hippies, orgies and FUN! The Pentagon was, of course, not levitated, but the goal of the demonstration was reached. The intended reality, which was beamed to millions of Americans in their homes, was "the sight of the most famous war-making symbol on the planet under siege by thousands of its citizens...That needed no interpreter, no hocus-pocus." (Hoffman, *The Autobiography* 136)

The example of the Pentagon exorcism is loaded with examples of Abbie's myth building techniques and ability to manipulate symbolic images for the media. For Abbie, these were much more important goals than making one's self clear, logical and factual. Myth, as Abbie put it, "can never have the precision of a well-oiled machine, which would allow it to be trapped and molded. It must have the action of participation and the magic of mystique. It must have a high element of risk, drama, excitement and bullshit" (*Revolution* 103)

This event at the Pentagon was the largest demonstration of Abbie's organizing skills until it came to the Festival of Life in Chicago; the subject of my fourth chapter along with the subsequent conspiracy trial that followed. The Festival of Life was designed to counteract the 1968 Democratic Convention, deemed the "Convention of Death," which was taking place in Chicago. Democrats had been in office for the past eight years and were considered the party that got the U.S. into and kept it into the war in Vietnam. Abbie learned his lessons on the effectiveness of the use of media and large-scale symbols from the Pentagon Exorcism and began working on a giant protest in the form of a music and love festival. He was inspired by the development of the large music festivals popping up and their ability to bring together social/political thought and activism with the youth, hippie, drug, and arts culture. The first Be-In took place in San Francisco's Golden Gate Park on January 14, 1967. The Human Be-In "was meant to link the drug culture with the political movement, and to connect the aging Beats with the younger hippies. The 'cause' wasn't peace, justice, or freedom, but 'being' itself.'" (Raskin 91) Two months after the first Be-In another one was held in New York City, which Abbie attended. Of his experience at the Central Park Be-In Abbie wrote:

There were probably 30,000 people that Was-In. It was hard to tell -- it was all over the place. Everybody high on something: balloons, acid, bananas, kids, sky flowers, dancing, kissing. I had a ball -- totally zonked.

People kept giving away things free -- fruit, jellybeans, clothes, flowers, chicken, Easter eggs, poems. (*Revolution* 23)

To organize this festival Abbie and friends formed the Youth International Party, or YIP. The Yippies, as they were known, were in fact not an official party at all but rather a myth designed to confuse and fool the general public and encourage young people to go to Chicago. It was a giant, media put-on. Although they did have to use a tremendous amount of mobilizing skills there was never any official positions held by anyone and anyone could say they were a Yippie if they wanted. ("Who is a yippie? Anyone who wants to be." (Hoffman, *The Autobiography* 146)) The festival was planned in mind with two factors: the media and Mayor Daley's Chicago police. What was billed as a peace and love festival turned into a bloody confrontation with the law. The Yippies' strongest tool was their mastery understanding of the use of media and its effects on people. A piece of guerrilla theater would be just a stunt, an innocuous prank, if the media weren't there to record it. The yippies were not in favor of a revolution by blood but rather a revolution through information, the only form of exchange in the technological age. People weren't going to be persuaded to act by the assassination of political figures, but through exposing the given realities through performances played out through television and felt by Americans all across the country. Like Brecht directing a piece of epic theater for the stage, Abbie's performances were a means of exposing given realities.

The Chicago Riots and the subsequent conspiracy trial of the Chicago 8 (and later 7) are the largest examples of Abbie's functioning as a political clown. We see more examples of him putting the media on, creating more images and illusions of what he is doing than before, as well as being the most confrontational with the system. Although Abbie had been involved in riots where police were attacking protesters (himself included), Chicago was seen as the big one, the

demonstration that would be the bloodiest and, if so, would be the most effective for their movement through television. In addition to the actual riot the trial shows Abbie using his ability to turn the system on its head through his testimony on the stand, his use of costumes and physical stunts, as well as his, and his codefendants, general defiant attitude and behavior during court.

All of these silly and yet confrontational performances were designed to hook the next generation into the movement. Abbie was aiding middle-class white kids to turn their backs on their parents' lifestyles and to come find out what being involved was all about. He made it cool and fun to protest. Being "out" became more attractive than being "in." Instead of dropping out, which he did encourage, he was encouraging people to drop in to what was going on. Although Hunter S. Thompson, another notorious figure who emerged onto the literary scene around this time, has been quoted as saying, "If every Deadhead voted, the country would be a different place," Abbie was telling people that their vote didn't matter but their action was imperative.

(Jarnow 62)

"All the world's a stage,
And all the men and women merely players;"
Jaques in *As You Like It* (2.7.139-140)

To conclude my thesis the last chapter will be dedicated to taking a step back to review what Abbie's brand of political activism through theater, satire and clowning has to offer students, practitioners and scholars in the field of Performance Studies. I feel that this is an important topic for the field of Performance Studies for several reasons. First, the field of

Performance Studies has a unique and basic tenet that says, “Get up and do it.” We read scholarly works, we read history books, we look at art and listen to music, we study rituals and the everyday life and in the end we get up on stage and get these ideas into our bodies and the images we create. We test them to actualize their potential. To me, Abbie Hoffman is a prime example of someone who has taken artistic, philosophical and scholarly ideas and put them into action - into his body and the bodies of others in an environment outside the school walls.

The blending of all these ideas, filtered through the experience of everyday life, was the theoretical basis of what was to come. Halfway into the decade, the word revolution slowly crept into our vocabulary. And it wasn't thinkers that we sought out, it was doers. The time for study had passed. We no longer felt the need to justify decisions in intellectual terms. (Hoffman, *The Autobiography* 87)

Abbie Hoffman is a political clown who used his organizing skills and his mastery of the media to lead a revolution in the United States. A study of Abbie Hoffman allows Performance Studies scholars to touch on a great deal of the current topics we currently consider fair play to our diverse field. Studying him allows us to talk about the media, rituals, performance art, rhetoric, history, sociology and theater to name only a few. He is also a relevant topic due to our current state of world affairs. With a war about to be waged and millions of people throughout the world standing up in protest the use of theatrics and satire can be seen on an almost daily basis on the television, in the paper and on the streets. I attended an anti-war rally recently where I saw people dressed in costumes, holding up signs, and a large replica of President George Bush's face which made him look somewhat like a small chimp. 1960's America might have looked a lot different than it does in 2003 and the face of the protesters may not be the same, but a lot of the same tactics are still being used to rally support for peace.

The role of the political clown is an important one because it encourages laughter amongst members of a community. Laughter according to Mikhail Bakhtin, “destroys this limited seriousness and all pretense of an extra temporal meaning and unconditional value of necessity. It frees human consciousness, thought, and imagination for new potentialities” (Bakhtin, *Rabelais* 49). Abbie Hoffman was attempting to lead a revolution with this spirit of laughter, which made his revolution a unique occurrence in history. He believed the days of the long marches and serious speeches were over. IN were festivals, rock bands, costumes, “Bells, Flowers, Beads, Kazoos, Music...Pillows, Eats, Love and Peace,” (from a leaflet for a gathering in Grand Central Station (Raskin 134)) and above all FUN! Laughter is how one gains courage to face the odds. After appearing before the House Un-American Activities Committee in the uniform of a 1776 American revolutionary uniform, Jerry Rubin, fellow yippie conspirator, wrote, “We had to attack its very legitimacy. My action was addressed to a specific audience...young people across the nation, and I knew my uniform would communicate to them that you didn’t have to be scared, that you could turn your fear into courage.” (Raskin 118)

Diggers/Early Agit-prop Performances/Guerrilla Tactics and the Media

“I always held my flower in a clenched fist.”
Abbie Hoffman (qtd. in Raskin 106)

After leaving his professional career as a psychologist behind, Abbie “turned on” to the growing hippie, dropout lifestyle with his desire to improve society still intact. He was working at the Liberty House in New York, a store stocked with goods made by poor black women from Mississippi who were unable to sell them in their own city, when he began to take notice of the hippies with their new style of dress, free use of drugs and avoidance of all traditional work. At first he was unclear of the significance of this new counter-culture. “Dropping out I saw as copping out – turning on as tuning out to social causes I believed in. To me, hippies were just so many glassy-eyed zombies floating through the neighborhood head shops. To them, I was too ‘politico,’ ‘just another power freak’” (Hoffman, *Autobiography* 90). However, he eventually began to look at them as more of a movement against the same society Abbie wanted to change. He began to see the political nature of “turn on, tune in, drop out.” He did not fully agree with Timothy Leary and Richard Alpert (a.k.a. Baba Ram Dass) who advocated dropping out of society and taking acid (LSD) to fix one’s head. Although he kept the distinctions blurred, Abbie believed people should “drop out of their white-collar lives and use their skills as doctors, scientists, teachers, technicians, as he was using his: to create an alternative society that would lead to revolution” (Jezer 101). The Diggers of San Francisco set an example for the fusion between his activist goals and this new counter-culture.

The major influence on Abbie Hoffman and his brand of political clowning came from the Diggers. The Diggers were comprised mainly of actors from the San Francisco Mime

Troupe who began to use their talents on the streets instead of the stage. The Diggers had two main objectives. Because they believed that everything should be free, their first aim was to acquire (by donation, through hustling or through theft/"liberation") goods, food and services and give them away to poor people, especially the hippies of the Haight-Ashbury neighborhood. The hippies were poor dropouts, most of them young, who refused to participate in traditional American roles, especially nine-to-five jobs of their parents. As a means of feeding the hippies the Diggers would organize soup giveaways in Golden Gate Park; the soup was made from food taken from restaurants and supermarkets that had been discarded. These soup giveaways "became a social gathering, a mini be-in, with music, dancing and food and dope to share" (Jezer 86).

Their second objective was to begin performing guerrilla/agit-prop theater. The Diggers (which included such performers as Peter Berg, Peter Coyote and Emmett Grogan) viewed the theater/art house as a "safe" place, in much the same way Bertolt Brecht viewed traditional dramatic theater. The theater was a nice place to sit down and be entertained, even if the material was on a difficult subject. It was never about the audience taking action. In the theater you have to attract people to come to you, but in guerrilla theater the show goes to the people. The Diggers were as serious as any revolutionary in their actions. As Peter Coyote put it, "We were not trying to represent it [this new lifestyle] in art, we were trying to live it" (qtd. in Sloman 65). Their hope was that theater would "teach the young about revolution" (Raskin 100).

An example of the Diggers' more confrontational form of theater was Peter Berg's appearance on the Alan Burke show in New York. Alan Burke was known to be a confrontational interviewer, so Berg immediately went on the offensive when the cameras began

to roll. He told the audience how the media was in control of their lives because it was telling them what to do and not the other way around. When a woman stood up in the audience to rebut, Berg instructed his friend to “show the woman what we believe in,” and he threw a pie in the woman’s face. Berg then encouraged the audience, after telling Burke to shut up for interrupting, to leave their television sets and go outside. He said:

“Yes, I’d like to say something to people watching this, you’re watching a little box and we’re in a little box as well,” and I looked at the cameraman and said, “Will you pan the microphones and whatever?” He pans the superstructure, lights and cameras and I said, “Look at this box. The only way to get out of this is to walk away. I’m going to walk out of this box, I’m going to ask you to turn off your box. The way you do it is, you get up.” (qtd. in Sloman 74)

Berg then stood up and walked out the door marked exit. It was this kind of rough, unsympathetic performance that characterized the Diggers’ actions. Peter Berg said, “We were saying it’s not enough to just try to change the racial thing or the war thing, you’ve got to change the basis of the society from being exploitative and in a radical way, not in a do-gooder surface way” (qtd. in Sloman 73).

The Diggers were seeking ways to reclaim the media by putting their own version of reality on display. The television was already a dominating medium of communication in most Americans’ lives. “America has more television sets than toilets,” as Abbie quipped (*Autobiography* 85). Abbie, as well as the Diggers, believed the television “penetrate[s] our fantasy world. ‘This is reality,’ TV said. ‘Seeing is believing.’ Magic really. Through teleportation one could transport oneself bodily into the homes of strangers” (*Autobiography* 85). It is for this reason that Abbie suggested that “a modern revolutionary group headed for the television station, *not* for the factory” (*Autobiography* 86). By capturing airtime the Diggers

and Abbie believed they could set their myth, the myth of a hippie/digger utopia, against the official myth of capitalism.

The concept of FREE, the attraction to and use of the media and the concept of theater as a revolutionary tool for the street excited Abbie. Abbie described them in his autobiography as combining “Dada street theater with the revolutionary politics of free. Slum-alley saints, they lit up the period by spreading the poetry of love and anarchy with broad strokes of artistic genius” (122). He got to work right away and began identifying himself as a Digger (a relationship that would not last).

The rest of this chapter will describe and interpret four of these early agit-prop performances, all of which occurred during the summer of 1967, by Abbie with some of the Diggers and other cohorts of this time. I will use the terms agit-prop, guerrilla theater and direct theater interchangeably because they all refer to similar methods and goals. Jan Cohen-Cruz describes these methods and goals by giving a definition of agit-prop theater in her book *Radical Street Performance* as “a militant form of art intended to emotionally and ideologically mobilize its audience to take particular action vis-à-vis an urgent situation” (13). Abbie referred to it simply as “monkey warfare.”

The Flower Brigade

Two weeks after the April 15, 1967, march on the United Nations to protest the Vietnam War, a “Loyalty Parade” was scheduled by the Veterans of Foreign Wars. The parade was quite unsuccessful (only a few thousand showed up), so another parade was scheduled to take place two weeks later which would have a friendlier theme: Support Our Boys. Abbie and friends decided

they should have a spot in the parade, for they wanted to use the media opportunity to show that the anti-war movement was patriotic as well.

Of course, their group had a distinctly different character than others in the parade. Instead of hoisting signs reading “Support Our Boys” the protestors added the tagline “Bring Them Home.” The close to thirty performers came ready with flowers and costumes, posters and American flags. Abbie “wore a multi-colored cape with the word ‘Freedom’ on it. Anita [Hoffman, Abbie’s spouse] was all decked out in red, white and blue” (Hoffman, *Autobiography* 108).

The protestors lined up behind a group of Boy Scouts and, after being warned of the impending violence that would occur by the police and journalists, began to march in the parade. When they hit Fifth Avenue the bystanders became irate and began attacking the protestors. A policeman told a reporter for the Village Voice, “This was the most dangerous crowd I have ever seen in nineteen years on the job” (qtd. in Jezer 104). Abbie described it as, “Zonk! Fists, red paint, kicks, beer cans, spitting – The whole American Welcome Wagon treatment. They grab our American flags and rip them up” (Hoffman, *Revolution* 25). Vegetables were thrown along with fists and kicks. Although the demonstrators were not allowed to exhibit their patriotism within the parade, the media coverage of the event accomplished an even greater goal. Pictures were taken of adults in favor of the war beating the peaceful youth armed only with flowers.

After the pictures of the attack were released by the press, Abbie wrote an article for WIN magazine describing his version of what happened along with a warning to America:

We were poorly equipped with flowers from uptown florists. Already there is talk of growing our own. Plans are being made to mine the East River with daffodils. Dandelion chains are being wrapped around induction centers. Holes are being dug in street pavements and seeds dropped in and covered. (Raskin 97)

Abbie was, of course, putting America on. The lies he told to the magazine coupled with the very real action of the parade was designed to bolster the myth of the hippie revolution.

Planting Trees

Another form of this direct action/agit-prop theater was the planting of trees in New York City streets. In 1967 Abbie was hired by the city to be a part of a task force made up of people believed to have leadership qualities in each of the identified thirteen troubled areas of New York. Abbie lived and operated in the Lower East Side and was chosen for that neighborhood. Abbie and friends like Jim Furratt, organizer of the Be-In in Central Park, believed it to be a great way to take money from the city (\$75 to \$100 per week) and carry on their usual hippie organizing activities.

Among all the issues of the day, the environment was becoming an important concern to many. Abbie phoned Teddy Mastroianni, his contact man for the city, telling him that they should plant a tree. After making a few phone calls, Mastroianni came up with some money and gave it to Abbie to buy and plant a tree. What Abbie did with the money was not what the city had in mind. He ended up buying fifteen trees and planting them on the streets. Mastroianni remembers the tree planting as happening swiftly, “[H]e has these vans, they would pull up, the doors would open, they’d throw tons of dirt out into the middle of the goddamn street, put a tree in and plant it in the middle of the street and zoom away” (qtd. in Sloman 78).

Con Edison

In September of 1967 Abbie was involved in an agit-prop performance directed towards the executives of Consolidated Edison (or Con Ed, as it is commonly called), New York City’s public utilities company. According to an article printed in the *New York Provo* on September 7,

fifty people were involved in this performance that took place at the site of Con Ed's offices. Included in the performance were people "carrying soot, wearing Con Ed smokestacks, bearing soot-stained flowers. A banner read: 'Breathe at your own risk.'" When the executives began to leave the building the performers approached the executives and threw soot in their faces and on their clothing. They sprayed aerosol cans to make the air difficult to breath as well as detonated a few small smoke bombs in the lobby. All the while the protestors "danced on a carpet while tossing flower petals, laughed, and clowned" (Raskin 102).

Firefighters and the police showed up along with news crews. All was captured on tape. Abbie wrote, "The six o'clock news opened with clouds of smoke, a pan shot of the banner, and strange-looking guttersnipes running amok" (Hoffman, *Autobiography* 109). An article in the *Village Voice* described the scene as "a Digger drama improvised with the idea that a handful of soot down an executive's neck might be more effective than a pile of petitions begging for cleaner air" (Raskin 103).

New York Stock Exchange

On August 24, 1967, the first "mythical" event planned by Abbie Hoffman and Jim Fouratt took place at the New York Stock Exchange. It is considered mythical because there are so many conflicting reports by the press and those involved that it is difficult to know exactly what happened (a technique Abbie used often in future events). However, some facts can be discerned.

Abbie and friends met in front of the Stock Exchange and joined the ranks of people lining up to take a tour of the facilities. They were stopped by the captain of the security force, John Whighton, most likely for their appearance, and were accused of being hippies planning a

demonstration on the premises. Abbie retorted with a quick, “Who’s a hippie? I’m Jewish and besides we don’t do demonstrations, see we have no picket signs” (Hoffman, *Revolution* 32).

The guard did not want to be accused of anti-Semitism, so he let Abbie and his crew continue on the tour. When the group came to the railings overlooking the trading floor they began to throw out dollar bills to the stockbrokers below. Pandemonium broke loose. Traders began cheering and leaping over one another for a chance to grab at free money from the sky.

The whole performance was over within a matter of minutes. The performers were led out and greeted by a sea of reporters and cameramen where Abbie, Jerry Rubin and Stew Albert burned a five-dollar bill held aloft for all the press to see. When asked who he was, Abbie replied:

“I’m Cardinal Spellman.”

“Where did you get the money?”

“I’m Cardinal Spellman, you don’t ask me where I get my money.”

“How much did you throw out?”

“A thousand dollars in small bills.”

“How many of you are there?”

“Two, three, we don’t even exist! We don’t even exist!”

(Hoffman, *Revolution* 33)

The press reported various and contradictory “facts” about the event: that the money was play money, that it was torn up and then thrown, that it was a hundred dollars, that it was a thousand dollars, and that the bills were in varying denominations. The event was, in Abbie’s words, “a perfect myth” (Hoffman, *Autobiography* 102). Since there were no reporters who actually witnessed the event, they made it up for themselves. It was more evidence that the reality on the television and in the newspaper was “made up and that news was fiction” (Raskin 116).

* * * * *

“The only way you can understand is to join, to become involved. Our goal is to remain a mystery. Pure theater. Free, with no boundaries except your own.”

Abbie Hoffman (*Revolution* 66)

All of these performances are examples of Abbie’s work as a political clown. Each of them incorporates, in one way or another, a combination of Bertolt Brecht’s alienation technique and Mikhail Bakhtin’s notions of the clown and festival.

In *Rabelais and His World*, Bakhtin illuminates what he believes to be the most important and unique human capability, which is also our most valuable tool for understanding: laughter. Humor and the spirit of carnival give us “the chance to have a new outlook on the world, to realize the relative nature of all that exists, and to enter a completely new order of things” (34). Although there are state sanctioned holidays in which to actualize this carnival spirit, the clown, or fool, represents:

the carnival spirit in everyday life out of carnival season . . . they represented a certain form of life, which was real and ideal at the same time. They stood on the borderline between life and art, in a peculiar midzone as it were; they were neither eccentrics nor dolts, neither were they comic actors. (8)

Abbie, as a clown, played in this midzone. He helped to create a myth of revolution that sought to defy pigeonholing so as not to be controlled by the media, while at the same time demonstrating to others what other possibilities there were for life.

This is related to Brecht’s alienation effect because it too seeks to illuminate the possibilities beyond those given and improve understanding. As Brecht describes it in his essay, “Theater for Pleasure or Theater for Instruction”:

The spectator was no longer in any way allowed to submit to an experience uncritically (and without practical consequences) by means of simple empathy with the characters in a play. The production took the subject matter and the incidents shown and put them through a process of

alienation: the alienation that is necessary to all understanding. When something seems ‘the most obvious thing in the world’ it means that any attempt to understand the world has been given up.

What is ‘natural’ must have the force of what is startling. This is the only way to expose the laws of cause and effect. (71)

Brecht’s desire to create a form of theater that would seek the audience’s critical eye and subsequent action, rather than mere empathy, is precisely what Abbie Hoffman was seeking in his performances. In describing his own form of theater, he almost sounds like Brecht himself: “The goal of this nameless art form—part vaudeville, part insurrection, part communal recreation—was to shatter the pretense of objectivity” (Hoffman, *Autobiography* 114). Objectivity lets an audience off the hook. It keeps them from having to place themselves within the action.

In the example of the Flower Brigade, Abbie realized what the effects would be not only on those people present, but also for the millions of people who would be watching their televisions and reading the morning the paper. Anti-war activists were portrayed as anti-American. Because they did not want to go along with America’s actions in Vietnam they were seen as traitors. The hippie culture, mobilized and politicized, represented an alternative way of life to traditional American culture filled with peace, love and excess.

Abbie created a scenario by which to demonstrate the stark contrast between perceived notions of hippies and antiwar activist with conservative Americans in support of the Vietnam War. As the riot broke out and pictures were taken, an alienation effect was created. Photos of supposedly patriotic Americans tearing at the flag spoke a thousand words more than any speech could have. In these images anti-war activists are not portrayed as hating the soldiers being sent

to Vietnam. They are shown to truly care for the lives of those people involved only to be beaten down by a generation that hates them.

This generational conflict was Abbie's oedipal form of Marxist "class struggle." Although he was concerned with the distribution of wealth and the means of production, he perceived the heart of the problem lay in the conflict between children and their parents, one generation versus the next. Indeed, many of his performances were designed around/for this specific idea. Jonah Raskin, Hoffman's biographer and Yippie! Minister of Education, writes:

Indeed, Abbie's revolutionary genius lay in his ability to antagonize the fathers and the father figures while aiding and abetting the younger generation as it transformed personal animosity toward parents into political anger at the system. Abbie used Freud to fuel the rebellion against authority. (132)

In the example of the tree planting, Abbie again attempted to pull people out of the everyday. Guerrilla theater, agit-prop performance or monkey warfare gets in your way. If you can easily walk by a guerrilla performance without being inconvenienced, shocked, jostled, bewildered, amazed, pissed off or made to laugh, when you should be making it to work, then the performance was probably unsuccessful. So imagine if you're walking or, even better/worse, driving to work and you run headlong into a series of trees "planted" in the middle of the road.

The issue at hand was the environment and the question was: How do you get people to think about the earth when they are encased in a concrete jungle? Abbie's idea was to bring a bit of the earth back into their lives—directly in the way of traffic. It was engaging and confrontational with people's daily habits of getting around in their cars. It was performed with speed as Abbie "had argued that guerrilla theater should be performed as quickly as 'slapstick movies'" (Raskin 115). It is the same principle guerrilla fighters would use—strike quickly, then disappear back into the (concrete) jungle—but mixed in with a bit of Keystone Cops.

The performance at Con Edison was by far the most confrontational of all the pieces described, including the Stock Market. In this instance we have props being used as weapons to directly disrupt the lives of the antagonists, the executives. The scene must have looked like a small battle site with smoke everywhere and people running around crazy. What makes this performance interesting and different from the Stock Exchange event, which I will address next, is its intended audience.

It was, of course, primarily for the camera. If the scene had been described through word-of-mouth of the witnesses, it would have created a buzz, but when the camera catches it, thousands of people are able to “witness” what happened and spread the word. However, this performance was also for the executives involved as it was for people standing witness. Agit-prop performances are designed to move an audience to take action. But in this case we have an audience of executives who, despite their unwillingness, become spect-actors (as Boal would call them). The executives, hopefully, would begin to examine their own practices, which are the direct reasons for the performance, and change their company’s policies.

While the movement of the sixties was a peace movement, it was not always peaceful. There may not have been any guns on behalf of the dissenters, but there was certainly a great deal of mobilization, action and spectacle. The Con Edison performance was a lesson in how to confront the enemy. It is an example of Abbie’s belief that theater could be used for defensive and offensive fighting. In a tape recorded session during the Chicago riots of ’68 Abbie said:

Theatre, guerilla theatre, can be used as defense and as an offensive weapon. . . We had a demonstration in New York. We had seven gallons of blood in little plastic bags. You know, if you convince 'em you're crazy enough, they won't hurt ya. With the blood thing, cop goes to hit you, right, you have a bag of blood in your hand. he lifts his stick up, you take your bag of blood and go whack over your own head. All this blood pours out, see. Fuckin' cop standin'.

(“Inspirational”)

With these types of radical and shocking actions it would be impossible to brush dissenting opinions aside. Petitions can be neatly filed away in a cabinet, but soot gets you dirty. Exercises in our traditional methods of protest (petitions, rallies, calling senators, and so forth) can be ignored. By addressing the situation publicly, in creative and confrontationally non-violent ways, people on both sides of the fence have to take notice.

The last performance described, the Stock Exchange event, reveals Abbie's goals to be truly revolutionary in nature. Throwing money away and burning it was a symbol that there were fundamental flaws in the system itself. As a Digger Abbie believed it was more important to burn money instead of draft cards (a popular form of protest that could be performed by any male between the ages of 18 and 26). The reason for this lies in money's symbolic and real nature as the cornerstone of a capitalist society. To burn a draft card meant one refused to participate in the war. To burn money meant one refused to participate in the society. The society, as Abbie saw it, had basic flaws in its structure, which would lead to greater problems.

Bill Zimmerman, an antiwar activist, said the Stock Exchange incident:

began to tell the kids in America that there wasn't just a movement against the war, there was a different way of looking at the world, there was an ability to call things absurd that they could understand and relate to and that disengaged them from the reward structure that controlled them and kept them from opposing the war. (Sloman 95)

So, to create a scenario in which the money handlers who control the rise and fall of the economy, who invest millions of dollars in companies such as Dow (the leading maker of napalm used in Vietnam), crawl over one another to grab at free money exhibited what Abbie felt was the masked reality of the situation. In order for people to begin seeing money, capitalism and the Stock Market, specifically, as a part of our general social problem, they

needed to be alienated from the realm of the everyday. Instead of seeing the stock market as a normal factor in our everyday lives, where people go in order to make companies work, they had to see what was really going on. Throwing money created what Michael Rossman, an antiwar activist at the University of Berkley, called “a kind of elegant and caricatural simplicity to delight the mind of a fourth grader, but that did not keep it from being profound theater because it exhibited exactly what it purported to exhibit” (qtd. in Sloman 92).

Abbie delighted in it as a piece of guerilla theater, because “Showering money on the Wall Street brokers was the TV-age version of driving the money changers from the temple” (Hoffman, *Autobiography* 102). Most importantly, this image began a war with the system.

A spark had been ignited. The system cracked a little. Not a drop of blood had been spilled, not a bone broken, but on that day, with that gesture, an image war had begun. In the minds of millions of teenagers the stock market had just crashed. (Hoffman, *Autobiography* 102)

When Abbie left the Stock Market to burn the five-dollar bill and speak to the press his response was characteristic of his ability to put people on, keep them confused and fuel the myth while at the same time fueling the cause. The movement of the sixties was a populist movement that Abbie insisted “must allow people to define their own space, their own motives, to be their own critics. A good explanation is no explanation, keeping your mouth shut a correct response.” Abbie’s method was the opposite in form and the same in its goals. “The solution lies in the zen axiom: say everything by saying nothing, remain silent by telling all” (Hoffman, *Autobiography* 107). As Abbie saw it, anyone could join the movement and begin telling the press anything they wanted. Everything was allowed. Telling the press that he was Cardinal Spellman, that he did not even exist, was Abbie’s way of putting the press on. As a result, the media coverage of this event varied greatly.

Abbie learned a great deal from these early agit-prop performances inspired by the Diggers. He learned to take the hippies' pleasure-seeking ethos and channel it into protest for fun and education (or pleasure and instruction, to use Aristotle's and Brecht's terms). Through performances like the ones at Con Edison and the Stock Exchange, he learned how to confront the enemy with his new weapon of theater.

Above all, Abbie began to see the necessity in creating a myth for the revolution and how the media factors into its dissemination. Jacques Ellul, author of *Propaganda: The Formation of Men's Attitudes*, an extensive text on the function and uses of propaganda, wrote of the necessity of the myth for mobilizing the public:

By "myth" we mean an all-encompassing, activating image: a sort of vision of desirable objectives that have lost their material, practical character and have become strongly colored, overwhelming, all-encompassing, and which displace from the conscious all that is not related to it. Such an image pushes man to action precisely because it includes all that he feels is good, just, and true. (31)

Abbie was selling the revolution to people. He was on the street and on the television attempting to show people that the counter-culture lived a vision of utopia, that peace was better than war, that everyone had the right to self-actualize, and that it was FUN to do so. If people could see that the revolution was "good, just and true" then they would join it.

All these techniques and tropes (myth making, the use of media, satire, guerrilla theater and FUN) will be reused and transformed through Abbie's later performances. In his autobiography, Abbie noted the limitations of agit-prop performance for achieving its goals: "Never for a moment did I believe guerrilla theater or 'monkey warfare,' as I had come to call it, could alone stop the war in Vietnam. But it did extend the possibilities of involving the senses and penetrating the symbolic world of fantasy (television's primary aim)" (Hoffman,

Autobiography 126). In the next two chapters we will see how Abbie expanded his earlier performances to formulate much larger festivals for protest in Washington, D.C., and Chicago.

The Exorcism of the Pentagon

On 21 October 1967 a three-day demonstration, organized by the National Mobilization Committee to End the War in Vietnam (or Mobe), was scheduled to begin in Washington, D.C. None of the candidates running for president was willing to make the war in Vietnam an issue of the 1968 presidential election, so the Mobe, headed by Dave Dellinger, believed it was time to change its tactics from protest to “nonviolent confrontation to disrupt society and force the war onto the political agenda” (Jezer 114).

Chosen to be a project coordinator for the Mobe was Jerry Rubin, an organizer from Berkeley involved with the Vietnam Day Committee, who was burning money in front of the New York Stock Exchange with Abbie Hoffman only a day before the announcement was made for the October demonstration. Rubin was a lot like Abbie insofar as he did not initially identify with the hippies. He was a political organizer and believed in the movement. He also had a sense of theater, as is evident by his testifying before the House Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC) wearing the uniform of an American Revolutionary War soldier. Of his experience with HUAC Rubin wrote in his book *Do It!*:

I began thinking about HUAC as theater: I knew that I could not play on their stage, because they hold power in their gavel. I had to create my own theater to mindfuck HUAC and capture the nation’s attention. (59)

Together, Abbie Hoffman and Jerry Rubin became a notorious duo in the counter-culture known for their ability to coordinate events, manipulate the media and egotistically compete with one another for the spotlight.

Their alternative to a straight marching protest was to transform the event into a giant, magical, spiritual put-on. The plan was that on October 21, 1967, the marchers would encircle the Pentagon, chant in unison, and thereby force the giant military structure to levitate, exorcising all of the evil spirits out of it. The idea apparently originated with poet Gary Snyder, who passed it on to Ed Sanders. Sanders is a scholar, poet and founder of the notorious sixties rock group, The Fugs. Abbie recalls in his autobiography, Ed Sanders, “his eyes redder than a baboon’s ass from smoking pipefuls of weed,” being inspired to say, “A pentagon is a five-sided symbol of evil. . . . Lordy, Lord . . . suck my pork-pine of inspiration. . . . Make it rise, you motherfuckers. If you’re so goddam good, make it rise in the air” (Hoffman, *Autobiography* 129). The goal was to create an image of thousands of Americans confronting the largest symbolic and literal military structure in America. This event would be a very different form of protest for Abbie from his previous agit-prop performances discussed in the last chapter. Now, he would be working on a very large scale with thousands of participants.

In order for the event to materialize from grandiose scheme into a mythical, political reality Abbie, Jerry and the Mobe had a tremendous amount of organizing to do. Press conferences were held to raise awareness of the upcoming events. Abbie’s description of the levitation excited hungry news reporters and put the military on its guard. During a meeting between Washington and military representatives with the Mobe, a lengthy, surreal discussion developed over the height the Pentagon could be levitated. The military claimed that Abbie’s original plan to levitate the building twenty-two feet would be too high for structural reasons. According to a friend of Abbie’s, Sal Gianetta, who was in attendance at the meeting, “Ab came down from twenty-two feet to three feet, the military agreed to three feet and they sealed it with

a handshake. That's how Ab was, he could capture you in that fucking bizarreness" (qtd. in Sloman 98).

During another press conference Abbie explained that the protesters were willing to use a new, "high potency sex juice," which combined LSD with DMSO (a legitimate skin penetrating agent), to counter the Washington police's threats of using mace. When the purple potion, called Lace, was sprayed on someone, Abbie reported, they would become instantly horny. In order to quell any doubts in the press or public's mind, a demonstration was put on at Abbie and Anita's loft. The press was invited to watch and after a brief introduction the hippies sprayed one another with a purple liquid (which was actually a novelty item called "Disappear-O" that appeared purple on clothes and then disappeared), took off all their clothes and had an orgy. On another occasion, Abbie went down to a police precinct to spread the Lace rumor. He told the cops, "If I spray this stuff on any one of you guys, you're going to fuck each other." (qtd. in Sloman 97) The cops, not willing to find out whether the juice was real, chased Abbie out of the office.

Abbie and Marty Carey, a friend of Abbie's from his home in Worcester, MA, went down to the Pentagon in order to measure how many people would be necessary to encircle the whole structure and perform the ceremony. The two men were apprehended by MPs after a debate over the legality of performing any kind of ceremony on the sacred, government land. They were taken inside where Abbie joked with military officials about the upcoming demonstrations in Washington, the exorcism and the 50,000 people he would be bringing with him when he returned. Marty and Abbie were released after questioning to Abbie's dismay.

Abbie had hopes of being arrested so that he could stir up more publicity for the ceremony. He wrote in *Revolution for the Hell of It*, “The magic is beginning to work, but the media must be convinced” (44). A free show was put on at the Fillmore East where the Fugs played as a replica of the Pentagon was hoisted into the air and smoke bombs were detonated in a sort of “dress rehearsal” run of the events that were soon to take place. Articles were also being published in newspapers and magazines. Using the name George Metesky, Abbie wrote a bracing article in the *East Village Other*, entitled “TWA Never Gets You There on Time,” prophetically describing the scene that would take place at the Pentagon:

We will dye the Potomac red, burn the cherry trees, panhandle embassies, attack with water pistols, marbles, bubble gum wrappers, bazookas, girls will run naked and piss on the Pentagon walls, sorcerers, swamis, witches, voodoo, warlocks, medicine men, and speed freaks will hurl their magic at the faded brown walls... We will dance and sing and chant the mighty OM. We will fuck on the grass and beat ourselves against the doors. Everyone will scream “VOTE FOR ME.”... Schoolchildren will rip out their desks and throw ink at stunned instructors, office secretaries will disrobe and run into the streets, newsboys will rip up their newspapers and sit on the curbstones masturbating, storekeepers will throw open their doors making everything free, accountants will all collapse in one mighty heart attack, soldiers will throw down their guns. . . (*Revolution* 39)

The exorcism and the overall protest in Washington attracted a large crowd although only a small fraction of the 150,000 people who attended the rally made their way to the steps of the Pentagon. The crowd included:

college students, hippies, and middle-class suburbanites . . . intellectuals, writers, and celebrities, including Paul Goodman, Noam Chomsky, Dwight Macdonald, Robert Lowell, and Norman Mailer. (Raskin 121)

The Fugs played on top of flatbed trucks with Ed Sanders incanting, “In the name of the generative power of Priapus, in the name of totality, we call upon the demons of the Pentagon to rid themselves of the cancerous tumors of the war generals” (qtd. in Raskin 121). Some came

dressed as witches while others “were banging on bells, cymbals, beer cans, and drums, chanting Hindu mantras, and imploring to sundry deities for divine intervention: ‘Out demons out, out demons out!’” (Jezer 118). People carried signs reading such things as “LBJ, PULL OUT NOW, LIKE YOUR FATHER SHOULD HAVE DONE” and “NO VIETNAMESE CALLED ME NIGGER” (Raskin 121).

The exorcism was over within an hour; no one was allowed to surround the building. However, the demonstration at the steps of the Pentagon lasted until the next night. The protesters remaining conducted “a spontaneous teach-in with the troops on the steps of the Pentagon” that lasted from Saturday evening to Sunday night (Jezer 118). The tensions were high at the barrier between the protesters and the soldiers. People began singing songs, chanting “The war is over” and “Join us! Join us! We love you! We love you!” (Hoffman, *Revolution* 45). Superjoel, a well known LSD dealer, said he was between Abbie and Dr. Spock, the famous baby doctor and anti-war activist, when he grabbed a bunch of flowers and placed them into the barrels of the soldiers’ rifles, which subsequently became one of the most famous images of the 1960s.

Abbie’s role “faded for the most part into the anonymity of the immense crowd. Indeed, nothing he did that day—including urinating (‘pissing,’ he said) on the walls of the Pentagon—made him a memorable figure” (Raskin 121). He and Anita came dressed in costume and tripping on acid. Both of them were wearing Uncle Sam hats and Abbie was dressed as an Indian and Anita as Sergeant Pepper. According to Abbie, an MP stopped the couple after they jumped a fence and declared:

“We’re Mr. and Mrs. America, and we claim this land in the name of Free America.”

We plant the Flag and hold our ground. The troops are really shook. Do you club Uncle Sam? We're screaming incantations.

"You're under arrest. What's your name?"

"Mr. and Mrs. America, and Mrs. America's pregnant."

(Revolution 42)

Other than this short tale not even Abbie recalls much of his own action at the Pentagon.

Later Saturday night, after television crews left the scene for the evening, paratroopers moved through the crowd to split it in half with the police in tow to beat and arrest some of the protesters in their way. Members of the Students for a Democratic Society (SDS) encouraged people to leave, but only a few did. Throughout the night people ate, sang songs, smoked joints and spoke to the troops through a bullhorn. Sunday, the final day, was more of the same activity. The steps were cleared by that evening. Abbie and Anita were finally taken into custody.

* * * * *

"There need be no blindness in these matters once we have been notified that there is anything to observe."

Marshall McLuhan (48)

Although the Pentagon never actually came off the ground, the effects of the event were the same as if it had. Allen Ginsberg explains:

The levitation of the Pentagon was a happening that demystified the authority of the military. Its authority had been unquestioned and unchallenged until then. But once that notion was circulated in the air and once the kid put his flower in the barrel of the kid looking just like himself but tense and nervous, the authority of the Pentagon was psychologically dissolved. (qtd. in Sloman 100)

For this demonstration Abbie puts the power of the media to its full use. In order to understand the full ramifications of his use of media, television specifically, we must first take a look at Marshall McLuhan's writings on the effects of media. Abbie was highly influenced by McLuhan, although he claims he didn't understand McLuhan very well. What he claims to have

gotten from McLuhan was the method of his thinking about media. Abbie wrote in his autobiography that “[McLuhan’s] thinking made me focus on those flashing psychedelic news images that instantaneously seemed to penetrate our fantasy world. ‘This is reality,’ TV said. ‘Seeing is believing.’ Magic really” (85).

McLuhan’s seminal text, *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man*, illuminated the effects of all media on our senses as well as how they affect the way humans have developed. All too often we are enraptured by the content of television or film without considering what the overall effects of the act of watching television are. McLuhan writes, “Our conventional response to all media, namely that it is how they are used that counts, is the numb stance of the technological idiot” (18). What we fail to understand as consumers are the psychic effects of the various media technologies. The media become extensions of our senses: the telephone our ears, the television our touch, the computer our central nervous system. Along with the extension comes a sensation of numbness in order to maintain a sense of equilibrium in the body. “To listen to radio or to read the printed page is to accept these extensions of ourselves into our personal system and to undergo the ‘closure’ or displacement of perception that follows automatically” (McLuhan 46).

McLuhan divides all media into two different categories: hot and cold. “A hot medium is one that extends one single sense in ‘high definition.’ High definition is the state of being well filled with data” (22). For example, he places film, photography and radio into the category of “hot” media. A cool medium, therefore, is one that involves several of the senses with less information. McLuhan explains, “Any hot medium allows of less participation than a cool one, as a lecture makes for less participation than a seminar, and a book for less than dialogue.” (23)

As it is noted, these categories are not rigid and mediums, for the most part, are rated in comparison to other mediums.

The cool medium, by nature, demands a greater amount of participation on the part of the audience. The audience is not given all of the information and therefore must make connections on his/her own. McLuhan describes this by contrasting television images with the hot film images. He writes, “. . . many directors refer to the TV image as one of ‘low definition,’ in the sense that it offers little detail and a low degree of information, much like the cartoon. A TV close-up provides only as much information as a small section of a long-shot on the movie screen” (314). This is why television favors the display of processes rather than fixed products. Scenes are presented in a fragmented style and come together in the imagination. This process, known as synesthesia, is the same effect reported by people on LSD; people report tasting colors and seeing sounds. It is evident that, although Abbie claims not to have understood McLuhan very well, he was making connections between all these elements in an attempt to involve people’s imaginations in the service of rejecting traditional avenues of action for society.

For Abbie and his coconspirators their main goal was to advertise for the revolution, to give it life and to make a myth out of it. They believed in the power of media, especially television, because people engaged various forms of media every day. In a chapter of his autobiography entitled “America Has More Television Sets Than Toilets,” Abbie wrote, “Theater of protest expanded from the streets to the television studio and into the home” (113). Abbie was attempting to make contact with the youth of America through the television to bring them out of their homes and onto the front lines of a war to change the country.

All the events preceding the actual demonstration are examples of Abbie playing the role of a political clown; playing in the “midzone” between seriousness and humor to manipulate situations to his advantage with both the military and the media. He entices and scares people with threats of hippie strength. Do the hippies have a new drug weapon called “Lace?” Do they have magical powers to levitate the Pentagon? The facts of the situation were clouded with jokes and put-ons to keep people guessing. It scared the opposition and encouraged participation from those against the war. Of the event Bill Zimmerman, an anti-war activist present at the demonstration, said, “We didn’t know up until that point that we had physical power. We thought we had moral power, but we began to see that with sufficient numbers we had a kind of physical power” (qtd. in Sloman 103).

The exorcism of the Pentagon made the war at home to stop the war in Vietnam a reality for Americans. On the front line it was youth vs. youth, with one side armed with guns and the other with flowers. Cultures, generations and beliefs were clashing and things were getting rough. The nation was on the verge of massive change, revolution indeed. Or at least that is what you would think if you were watching the television. In the Pentagon demonstration Abbie combined large-scale imagery (the Pentagon building and a massive, protesting crowd) with pre-existing symbolism (pentagons being to some a symbol of evil) to create a stunning visual display designed for television. It was designed to make people believe that the revolution was in process.

Symbols are an essential element in the formation of myths. Jacques Ellul writes of symbols, “In propaganda, existing stereotypes are awakened by symbols. The symbol permits the formation of a favorable response that can be transferred to persons and objects associated

with it” (163). Favorable if you’re on the right side. Abbie sought to depict the military hierarchy as evil by focusing on the symbol of its headquarters. He was attempting to destroy the myth of the Pentagon by substituting the context of its symbolism. Its power as a symbol of America’s military might was challenged. Daniel Ellsberg, a Pentagon researcher who worked on the Pentagon Papers (a document detailing the United States’ actions in Vietnam), said of the exorcism, “Levitating the Pentagon struck me as a great idea because removing deference from any of these institutions is very important, and this is of course the kind of thing that Abbie understood instinctively” (qtd. in Sloman 98).

In this demonstration the nation can see the conflict between the official, mainstream American culture and the growing youth culture composed of hippie dropouts and New Left radicals. The picture taken of Superjoel putting his flower into a gun barrel was a spontaneous act, arrived through physical confrontation, which created an image as strong as, if not stronger than, the images of the Pentagon under siege. Flowers and “Flower Power” had come to be associated with hippies. They had become a symbol of their peaceful and happy outlook on life, connected with their belief in dropping out of mainstream society, and the power of psychedelic drugs to help envision and actualize these new beliefs. In the previous chapter I discussed the use of flowers in the “Support Our Boys” march, and here we see them again used as symbols, or props, on the front line. The idea for the use of flowers as a symbol and the construction of large-scale theatrical demonstrations came from Allen Ginsberg. He gave a speech to a crowd assembled for a Vietnam Day Committee (VDC) demonstration that had, in its last demonstration, been attacked by an outlaw motorcycle gang, the Hell’s Angels. In the speech entitled “How to Make a March/Spectacle,” Ginsberg advocated that people bring:

- Masses of flowers—a visual spectacle—especially concentrated in the front lines. Can be used to set up barricades, to present to Hell’s Angels, Police, politicians, and press & spectators whenever needed.
 - Marches should bring CROSSES, to be held up in front in case of violence; like in the movies dealing with Dracula.
 - Marchers should bring harmonicas, flutes, recorders, guitars, banjos & violins. Bongos and tambourines.
 - Marchers should bring certain children’s toys which can be used for distracting attackers: such as sparklers, toy rubber swords, especially the little whirling carbon wheels which make red-white-blue sparkles.
- (qtd. in Sloman 60)

Ginsberg was envisioning a new form of protest that would involve theatrics to combat the physical threat of brutality from any opposition. The point was to put on such a show that protestors would be safe and at the same time communicating their message. It was also a call to develop new techniques for protesting.

A myth was being created out of this younger generation armed with flowers. Ellul writes, “The myth does not leave man passive; it drives him to action” (116). Young people were encouraged to run away from their homes and schools in order to drop out of their middle-class lifestyles set for them by their parents. Abbie even goes so far as to suggest that, “Runaways are the backbone of the youth revolution” (*Revolution* 74). These youth were reached through the media, with events like the exorcism of the Pentagon, which showed them a different way of living. It drove them out of their homes in search of the possibilities the counter-culture offered. Millions of people around the country had witnessed the scene. It was a symbolic event that “needed no interpreter, no hocus-pocus” (Hoffman, *The Autobiography* 136).

The exorcism of the Pentagon moved Abbie out of the Lower East Side and into the national spotlight as a radical organizer with extraordinary skill at using the media to his advantage. He took the lessons of his early performances concerning the manipulation of images

and expanded them to grandiose scale. In the next chapter I will discuss how Abbie combined his experience with the media and large numbers of demonstrators with festival and fun to further the youth revolution at the Democratic National Convention in Chicago, 1968. The next chapter will also cover the subsequent trial of the Chicago 7/8, which became a national media trial of the seven/eight persons believed to be co-conspirators of a plot to cross state lines to incite a riot.

The Battle of Chicago and the Trial of the Chicago 8

“We must fight the state with the same weapons it uses against us. Terrorize the fat bosses, the greedy moneybags, the governmental gasbags. Terrorize the conformists. Then they’ll show us what they’re really like. Everyone will recognize their ugly mugs.”

Makhaisky from *Trotsky in Exile* (Weiss 21)

When you begin to look at all the factions and factors involved in the 1968 Democratic National Convention in Chicago you become entangled in a complex web of visions and interpretations. The blurring of truth with fantasies and plans versus outcomes makes the facts difficult to discern at times. What were the demonstrations supposed to be? Were they theater? Were they a culture clash? Were they, from the beginning, meant to become a bloody riot? Or were they designed to be another occasion for the counter-culture, joined by the New Left, to put its lifestyles, myths and politics on display? Reading people’s personal accounts of Chicago will only leave one guessing at the organizers’ motivations, Abbie Hoffman’s included. However, this blurring of facts were all a part of Abbie’s plan to make a myth out of Chicago. If a thousand differing stories were told after Chicago the myth of that event would be all the greater. The goal of this chapter is to examine the events that took place during the Chicago riots in 1968 and the trial of the eight defendants in the subsequent conspiracy trial as a next step in Abbie Hoffman’s clash with the official culture of the United States.

For a year Abbie had been going by the label of Digger. However, a quarrel had erupted between Hoffman and the original Diggers, namely Emmett Grogan, stemming from ideological issues and personal enmity. Much of their antagonism centered around their differing beliefs in the usefulness of hippies for social change. Whereas Abbie viewed them as a burgeoning new

culture in America, the Diggers believed the hippies were merely a product of advertising, “a gimmick to sell commodities” (Raskin 128).

When the Human Be-In, the first large-scale music festival of its kind, was held Emmett Grogan was turned off to the whole idea of hippies. He writes, “The Human Be-In was publicized as a ‘Gathering of the Tribes,’ but it was actually more a gathering of the suburbs with only a sprinkling of nonwhites in the crowd of three hundred thousand” (274). He was incensed that the HIP (Haight Independent Proprietors) produced the whole event for the purposes of increasing profits by attracting national attention to its new and unique hippie products. In addition, the HIP only provided one stage for an estimated 300,000 people. Grogan had spent many months working in the Haight-Ashbury neighborhood of San Francisco setting up Free Stores, arranging crash pads, intervening between people and the police and feeding hungry people in the park at the Diggers’ daily 4:00 p.m. feeding, which was mainly supplied through hustling and stealing. Suburban kids were indeed turned on by the myth of the Haight-Ashbury neighborhood, with its stories of a completely new way to live with free love and drugs. Many teenage suburbanites’ dream was to move to San Francisco where they could “live comfortably poor and take their place in the district’s kingdom of love” (Grogan 276). However, Grogan (and Bob Dylan) knew about the harsh realities that came along with living “Free.” So at the festival he “just sat on the grass and watched them pretend, wondering how long it was going to take before people stopped kidding themselves” (Grogan 275). For Grogan, Abbie Hoffman was a conman, not much different from the HIP. He “accused Abbie of stealing Digger ideas and exploiting the Digger mystique to aggrandize himself” (Raskin 128). After a year of calling himself a Digger, Abbie dropped the title but kept their ideas.

From this and other “Gatherings of the Tribes,” such as the Monterey Pop Festival, Abbie got the idea to use a music festival as a political rallying tool. While on vacation in Florida with Abbie and Anita Hoffman and Paul Krassner, editor of *The Realist*, Ellen Sander, a rock critic, spoke of her experience at the Monterey Pop Festival and the way it “intensified the hippies’ belief in themselves as a movement of destiny, a counter-cultural model for a peaceful, cooperative world” (Jezer 123). With this new idea burning in their heads, the four hopped on a plane for New York and began to scheme.

In 1968 the United States was being pulled apart at the seams with issues of rights, equality and, most importantly, the Vietnam War polarizing the nation. After the Exorcism of the Pentagon, radicals and activists saw the Democratic Convention as the time and site of the next large-scale demonstration. The Democrats had been in the White House since Kennedy was elected in 1960. Throughout the sixties, the Democrats were seen as the war party for keeping America in Vietnam.

In early January 1968, America began to feel relieved as the war appeared to have been calming down. For the Vietnamese, the lunar New Year, or Tet, was a time to join families and friends in celebration. The North Vietnamese took this opportunity to begin a major plan of deception and force. The North was offering peace plans while secretly sending arms down the Ho Chi Minh trail to plan for its surprise offensive. U.S. troops were being diverted away from their city posts to border towns, such as Khe Sanh and Loc Ninh, where the North had been fighting as a distraction. On the evening of January 30/31, the North Vietnamese rocked the country with a surprise attack. “By February 1, Saigon had been hit, along with 36 of 44 provincial capitals, five of six autonomous cities and 64 of 242 district capitals. More than

84,000 communist fighters had emerged, apparently from nowhere” (Page 355). It was a major blow to the U.S. All hopes that the war would soon be won were lost. It was the major turning point in the war.

The 1968 Democratic National Convention was seen by anti-war activists as the time to strike. Vietnam was too far away for people to be really aware of what was happening; every suburban home escaped enemy fire. For some the goal was to bring the war home so that the realities of the situation would be clear for them to see. For Abbie the goals for the demonstration were as follows:

1. The blending of pot and politics into a political grass leaves movement - a cross-fertilization of the hippie and New Left philosophies.
2. A connecting link that would tie together as much of the underground as was willing into some gigantic national get-together.
3. The development of a model for an alternative society.
4. The need to make some statement, especially in revolutionary action-theater terms, about LBJ, the Democratic Party, electoral politics, and the state of the nation. (Hoffman, *Revolution* 102)

Jerry Rubin’s goals were the same as Abbie’s but in different language. As Jerry put it the goal was to “freak out the Democrats so much that they disrupt their own convention. And meanwhile demonstrate to the world the alternative: our own revolutionary youth culture” (161).

In addition to organizing the festival, Abbie and friends also realized the usefulness of creating symbols and images for people to rally behind. Now that they were no longer using the moniker Digger, they sought to invent a new myth to bring people to Chicago. Their group was to be “a new organization that would be both mythical and mysterious, a paper party with make-believe leaders and an imaginary membership” (Raskin 128). As with the development of the Pentagon Exorcism, it all started one night at an apartment while the planners were high on marijuana.

Jerry Rubin, Paul Krassner and Nancy Kurshan were sitting around with Abbie and Anita at their apartment on New Year's Eve Day, 1967. While discussing their productions and progress from the previous year, they developed the idea of forming the Youth International Party or "YIP!" A Yippie! (the exclamation point was added to express the "excitement of the word's meaning") could be anyone. It was clear that there were key Yippie! organizers, but they were thought of as nonleaders or "cheerleaders," as Abbie put it (Jezer 125). Abbie told the *National Observer* that when the Yippies! set up an office in Chicago, the door was apparently left unlocked so that "anybody could wander in and answer the phone and be a Yippie spokesman" (qtd. in Raskin 129). Abbie describes a Yippie! in his autobiography as:

A political hippie. A flower child who's been busted. A stoned-out warrior of the Aquarian Age. "What's a yippie?" they would ask. "A yippie is someone who is going to Chicago." (137)

Despite the Yippies'! public encouragement of people to drop out and smoke dope, behind the scenes serious, grassroots political organizing occurred. Press conferences were held, articles began to be written, flyers were printed, buttons made, phone calls were made, and PR stunts were planned.

The Yippie! theater began when they made their first official request to use Grant Park for their so-called Festival of Life and to seek permission for attendees to sleep in the park and to have sanitation facilities and mobile kitchen units provided. David Stahl, Mayor Richard J. Daley's deputy, was assigned to handle the Yippies! Cameras and reporters filled the office as a beautiful young girl named Helen Runningwater handed the application form to Stahl and then pinned a Yippie! button onto his coat. The form, wrapped in a Playboy centerfold, was

addressed “To Dick with love, the Yippies.” Afterwards, Abbie and his cohorts played to the cameras and answered questions.

There were many roadblocks on the road to August that kept the Chicago event in a state of limbo. The first major blow was President Johnson’s announcement not to run for reelection. This was a surprise to everyone. He was the symbol of the warring Democrats and without him as a target the fate of the festival was in jeopardy. Abbie recalls, “He was so predictable when Yippie! began. And then *pow!* He really fucked us. He did the one thing no one had counted on. He dropped out. ‘My God,’ we exclaimed. ‘Lyndon is out-flanking us on our hippie side’” (Hoffman, *Revolution* 103).

If Bobby Kennedy had not been assassinated, the whole festival might have been canceled. Kennedy was a formidable deterrent to the protesters’ plans for Chicago. People felt he was earnest in his promises of working for civil rights and peace. It was even rumored that he tried smoking pot before. Polls were showing that “53 percent of the American public thought that sending troops to Vietnam had been a mistake” (Jezer 148). The anti-war movement was gaining momentum and fewer people were certain about the positive effects of a demonstration in August.

By the beginning of August a permit for the Festival of Life had yet to be granted. In June, Deputy Mayor Stahl had told the Yippies! that there was a possibility that they may be able to use Lincoln Park, which is located ten miles away from the convention site. So in July they submitted another application for the use of Lincoln Park for “a five-day ‘youth convocation to be known as the Festival of Life’” (Jezer 144). On the 22nd of August, still without a permit, the Yippies!, the Mobe and the Coalition for an Open Convention (a third group organized by Allard

Lowenstein) took their case to court in hopes of getting a permit on First Amendment grounds. All those involved believed it would be in the Mayor's favor to grant a permit so that the demonstrators could be contained. Unfortunately, Judge William Lynch, a former law partner of Mayor Daley, denied the suit. During his courtroom testimony on the subject Abbie stated, ". . . it was a setup, and Judge Lynch planned to lynch us in the same way that Stahl was stalling us" ("The Chicago" 9)

The mayor, known to be a tough power broker, was quite adept at using the media himself. In April, after rioting erupted in Chicago and across the country in reaction to Martin Luther King, Jr.'s assassination Daley issued his notorious "Shoot to kill" order, which gave police the license to use deadly force against anyone engaged in arson or looting. Although the edict was mainly directed, at the time, towards African Americans, it made many potential participants in the Festival of Life think twice about going to Chicago. Towards the end of April, Daley and the police superintendent ordered five hundred police officers to forcibly break up a peace rally of seven thousand people. The atmosphere in Chicago at the time was such that organizers knew they were not going to be welcomed. Abbie and Jerry Rubin had been working hard to book musical and theater acts to perform for the festival, but after the violence in Chicago that spring, a majority of them pulled out. The vision for Chicago was changing from a joyful celebration of a new culture in opposition to the old to a place where the country would become radicalized through violence.

When it became clear that Chicago was not going to issue them a permit, Abbie submitted the only Yippie! platform (the result of an egotistical argument with Jerry Rubin). It was signed "A. Yippie" and opened with the following:

This is a personal statement. There are no spokesman for the Yippies. . . . We are all our own leaders. . . . We demand a society built along the alternative community in Lincoln Park, a society based on humanitarian cooperation and equality, a society which allows and promotes the creativity present in all people and especially our youth.

(qtd. in Sloman 136)

The eighteen-point manifesto made radical demands of political and cultural concern. It demanded an end to the war in Vietnam, the abolition of censorship, “the legalization of marihuana and all other psychedelic drugs,” and “A society which works toward and actively promotes the concept of ‘full-unemployment,’” among other things (Sloman 136). The Festival of Life would be a celebration and a rallying cry for revolution in the United States.

With no permit and few events actually planned the Festival of Life was going ahead.

The outcome was uncertain. According to Abbie there were two possible outcomes:

We have two alternatives in Chicago, both of them OK. The opposition determines what will happen, they’re living actors in our theater. Suppose they choose to tolerate us. Then we’ll get a chance to deal with the problems of relating to people in a community, feeding them, sleeping them, living collectively. We’ll present a vision of a new life-style that will be projected across the country. Suppose they don’t tolerate us? Then they’ll face a bloody scene. We’ll have to adopt guerrilla techniques for dealing with them. And we’ll take home their message of a brutal society and deal with it in the local communities. (qtd. in Jezer 127)

A “Yip-In” was held in New York City’s Grand Central Station as a pre-show to Chicago to get people pumped up for the festival. On March 22, 1968, approximately three thousand youths, more than were expected, entered the station around midnight expecting to party till dawn to “Yip Up the Sun” (Jezer 130). The leaflet for the Yip-In advised people to bring ““Bells, Flowers, Beads, Kazoos, Music, . . . Pillows, Eats, Love and Peace”” (Raskin 134). Instead of a joyful gathering, the Yip-In at Grand Central Station was a pre-cursor to the violence in Chicago. A police presence began to build in the station, and the police soon began to urge

people to leave. Finally, when a couple of members of the East Village anarchist group, “Up Against the Wall Motherfuckers” (or simply “The Motherfuckers”), climbed upon a giant clock and pulled the hands off, proclaiming “Time is meaningless,” an officer yelled “wedge” and batons began to fly (Sloman 115). Some people were thrown through glass windows and others were clubbed over the head. Sid Davidoff, one of the Mayor’s assistants for Community Affairs, intervened. He told the police he would “negotiate with the leadership, [but] Abbie at one point was no place to be found. And there was nobody to talk to” (Sloman 115). It was a major failure for YIP! and, according to Ed Sanders, “was the beginning of the death of Yippie” (Sloman 116). A picture was taken of Abbie, who was dressed as an Indian, and Anita at the Yip-In. A cop stands between them, baton in hand, as they try to reach out for each other through the crowd. Abbie was later clubbed in the back. The Yip-In set a precedent for the Yippies! They began to see that bloodshed would be an inevitable component for Chicago.

The convention was scheduled to begin on Monday August 26th, but Yippie! activities were being organized for as early as Friday the 23rd. As part of the opening ceremony the Yippies! planned to nominate a pig for president. Originally the Hog Farm, a New Mexico commune started by beat poet Hugh Romney (a.k.a. Wavy Gravy), was supposed to supply the pig. However, with the ensuing threat of violence, the Hog Farm members pulled their support. So the Yippies! were left with the task of supplying the pig. Abbie and Anita had gone to a small town auction and returned with a small pig. Although the smaller pig would be easier to handle, Jerry Rubin felt that the cute pig was not the image they should project and insisted on a brutish, ugly pig. A shouting match ensued between Abbie and Jerry until finally it was decided that the uglier pig would be more appropriate. So Rubin drove out to a farm and purchased the

ugliest pig he could find. Once back in Chicago they drove to the Civic Center with their candidate, Pigasus, where they declared to the press in front of Picasso's statue, "We are proud to announce the declaration of candidacy for the President of the United States by a pig." After only five minutes or so, the police showed up and hauled the participating Yippies! to jail on charges of disorderly conduct. Pigasus was taken to an animal shelter. As a side note, Stew Albert had this to say about their stay in jail that day, "When we were in jail a cop came and said, 'I have bad news for you boys, the pig squealed.' That was the best cop joke I ever heard. The pig squealed" (qtd. in Sloman 133).

The next day the Yippies! opened their headquarters in Lincoln Park. Allen Ginsberg arrived in Chicago in hopes that his presence would be a calming one for all those eager and ready for violence. There were thousands of people making their way to Chicago and only a limited number of key organizers who could possibly control the violent attitudes of many of the youth, especially teenage boys, who came for a fight. After discussing the possible scenarios with Ginsberg, Paul Krassner and Ed Sanders, Abbie and Jerry agreed to the city's eleven o'clock curfew and the ban on sleeping in the park for the sake of avoiding violence. However, the two pranksters "would not give up their militant rhetoric" (Jezer 157).

Although the numbers were not of the epic proportions the Yippies! claimed were coming to Chicago, on Sunday the 25th there was an estimated 2,000 people in Lincoln park along with a gaggle of reporters and policemen poised and ready for whatever would occur. Abbie and Ed Sanders went to the park early that morning to prepare for the festival by organizing a first aid area, setting up a rudimentary Free Store and bringing in a stage for the music and theater acts. Abbie had chosen a large, flatbed truck to act as a mobile stage,

however, the police would not permit the vehicle to enter the park. After the police disrupted the MC5 from playing on the grass Abbie began to negotiate. During this negotiation period a bottle was thrown and police began moving through the crowd with their batons swinging and making arrests.

Just before eleven o'clock the police entered the park with tear gas, billy clubs and a jeep specially outfitted with a barbed wire front. Mike Royko, the famous Chicago editorialist, wrote of the Chicago police officers, "The club-swingers were so modest they didn't wear name tags or badges. Their modesty is much like that of the thief who wears a mask" (Royko 38). The scene became frantic. To escape, the crowd broke into two main factions with one group heading toward the hotel district and the other heading towards Old Town. Both groups eventually scattered through the city. It was the first night for demonstrators to experience the Chicago Police's brutality. Some people, like Jerry and Abbie, were elated to see "a few thousand young people provoking the police into a reaction that the situation did not warrant" (Jezer 161). If it went much further, according to their logic, Daley would declare a state of martial law that would cast a grim shadow of totalitarianism on the convention.

Monday the 26th was the first day of the convention. Rennie Davis, one of the future members of the Chicago 8, organized a march to the Central Police Station where Tom Hayden and Wolfe Lowenthal were being held for taking the air out of a squad car's tires. Afterwards the march continued on to Grant Park, which was located across the street from the Hilton Hotel where many of the convention's delegates were staying. As the sun went down and the police were gearing up for another round of clubbing protestors Davis told everyone to break up into small groups and return to Lincoln Park. Upon their return they found 3,000 people already in

the park. A group of clergy and laymen were holding a prayer service behind an eight-foot cross for the protestors. As with Sunday the organizers encouraged people to leave the park only to have the police enter at eleven to begin the beatings and arrests.

Abbie's most notable and important action on Tuesday the 27th was to hold a teach-in in Lincoln Park on politics and the media. His lecture was focused on "the challenge of political organizing in the electronic age. Instead of organizing individuals, he wanted to use television as a shortcut to 'educate' the viewing public en masse. He would excite its imagination with bold, flashy images rather than provide dull and didactic information" (Jezer 164). It was a lesson on what the Yippies! were putting into action in Chicago. With television cameras catching the ensuing violence, along with the Chicago police's refusal to differentiate between protestors and the press, the American public would be exposed to its government's abuse. The war in Vietnam was coming home to America.

That evening Yippies! and the Mobe combined forces in Grant Park. The police made no attempt to break them up that evening and instead formed a barrier in front of the Conrad Hilton Hotel (dubbed the "Conrad Hitler" by Abbie). The morning of Wednesday the 28th was the final day of the convention. It was the day for nominating the Democratic candidate and for carrying out a planned march on the convention. It was the day Abbie described as "the culmination of all we had worked for that year" and it would also be the day of the worst violence (*Autobiography* 159). On this morning Abbie was having breakfast in the Lincoln Hotel with Anita and Paul Krassner. In order to keep his face out of the media that day he used a marker to write the word "FUCK" on his forehead. He wore a cowboy hat to cover the obscenity while sitting at the breakfast table, but when several police officers came for him in the restaurant they

immediately demanded he remove his hat. “I lifted my hat and said ‘Bang bang!’ and they dragged me right across the table, through the bacon and eggs, across the floor, then threw me against a squad car, handcuffed me, and tossed me into a waiting paddy wagon” (Hoffman, *Autobiography* 159). Abbie was not released on bail as he thought he would be. Instead, he was hauled around to various precincts in the city for thirteen hours.

Meanwhile, the planned march on the convention was going forward. National Guardsmen and police officers blocked the protestors from leaving Grant Park, and Dave Dellinger, leader of the Mobe, stepped forward to negotiate. The talks dragged on and soon angry protestors found a hole in the National Guard’s line, ran over the Jackson Street Bridge and wound up on Michigan Avenue directly in front of the Hilton. It is estimated that 5,000 people gathered there that night. At first the scene was peaceful with police officers guiding people away from the building and making uncontested arrests, but soon the scene turned bloody. Protestors began resisting and the cops began to attack. People were clubbed to the ground and beaten. A few people were thrown through the glass windows of the Hilton. The news cameras captured it all as the crowd chanted together, “The whole world is watching!” (Jezer 167).

* * * * *

September 22, 1969

Dear Abbott,

On this, the eve of your coming trial, I hope and pray that you conduct yourself in a respectable manner. For, after all, the courts of our land are still our way of justice, and when they lose their respect, what have we left? After all is said and done, this is still a God given land and as one who has lived through two atrocities of man’s inhumanity to man, this country has exemplified itself in more ways than one. Please stop to realize that your manners and conduct in the courtroom will both act for and against you. I am not trying to be a preacher, but

just trying to give you a little advice. As a parent we still love you and wish you the best.

Dad

Letter from Abbie Hoffman's father (qtd. in Sloman 186)

In March of 1969 the United States District Court, Southern District of Illinois, Eastern Division announced its indictments of what were to be known as the Chicago 8: John R. Froines, Rennard C. Davis, David T. Dellinger, Thomas E. Hayden, Jerry C. Rubin, Lee Weiner, Bobby G. Seale and Abbott H. Hoffman. The charge was conspiring to cross state lines to incite a riot. On the day the indictments came out Jerry Rubin said they "had a champagne and grass party. We were thrilled" (qtd. in Sloman 172). Although it would seem that the Chicago 8 were facing a very grim and serious situation, they took it as an opportunity to go forward with the next step of their battle with the United States Government.

During pretrial discussions between the Chicago 8 and their lawyers, Gerry Lefcourt, Leonard Weinglass and William Kunstler, it was decided that the defendants were going to make a spectacle in and out of the courtroom. Their case would be "an opportunity to dramatize the cultural divisions in America and to ridicule the judicial system" (Raskin 202). Abbie told Jeff Nightbyrd, a leader in SDS, "Here's how I see it. Our only chance is to transform the trial into a theater which exposes the whole justice system for what it is. . . . I want to mock, belittle the court" (qtd. in Sloman 172). Indeed, the only dissenter from this strategy was Tom Hayden who believed they could win a straight case based on the facts through recreating the political protest. "The defendants all wanted to recreate Chicago 1968 in the courtroom, but they had different ideas about how to do so" (Raskin 202). Eventually Abbie and Jerry's plan to mock and destroy the legitimacy of the judicial system won out.

Abbie and Jerry flew into Chicago's O'Hare Airport "waving pennants and wearing Chicago Cubs baseball caps as well as buttons that read 'Screw Magoo' [an allusion to the presiding judge, Julius Hoffman, who bore an uncanny resemblance to the cartoon character Mr. Magoo]. . . . They belonged to the home team, they said, and they were in town for the 'World Series of Injustice'" (Raskin 198). The baseball imagery was also used as a design for a an "Official Conspiracy Program" that depicted an unruly mob of bound bodies armed with bombs, the Chicago Conspiracy, facing off against the Washington Kangaroos, a Nixon caricature morphed into a kangaroo, with a bat-wielding pig that resembled Mayor Daley. Calling the game was a gun-toting umpire with his sights set on the Chicago Conspiracy.

The trial of the Chicago 8 began in September of 1969. Abbie set the tone for the trial on the first day by doing a full somersault in front of the courthouse. "A photographer snapped a picture while I was in mid-flight, and it was in every paper in the country. The trial was circus—the photo proved it" (Hoffman, *Autobiography* 196). On that first day the defendants were introduced to the jury. When Abbie's name was called he "rose and blew the jury a kiss" (Hoffman, *Autobiography* 196). The Yippies! had no intention of changing anything about their appearance or attitudes. Their desk was constantly littered and disheveled with "letters, books, newspapers, vitamin bottles. We had hundreds of letters delivered to us each day in court, and during the more boring moments we spent the time reading them" (Hoffman, *Autobiography* 198).

The courtroom was set to become a theater for the image war to be waged. On one occasion the defendants placed an American flag side by side with a National Liberation Front flag. A marshal was ordered to remove the flags and Abbie leapt up to defend them. A tug-of-

war ensued. It was a physical image of the people versus the state. Upon returning from a lunch recess one day, Mayor Daley, who testified earlier that morning, retook his seat on the witness stand. Abbie, not wanting to miss the opportunity, paced in front of the defense table and then reached for imaginary pistols on his hips declaring to the Mayor, “To hell with this law stuff, why don’t you and I settle this here, right now!” (qtd. in Sloman 209). Even the Mayor broke out into laughter.

While the images and humor reigned inside the courtroom The Weathermen, “a remnant of SDS’s action-faction that had turned to urban terrorism,” were making their presence felt outside the courtroom (Jezer 218). A violent rally, entitled the Days of Rage, was scheduled to march to the home of Judge Hoffman. The protestors proceeded down the street smashing windows and vandalizing other property. They made it only five blocks before a violent clash between the protestors and the police ensued, resulting in the arrest of all the protestors. Abbie was itching to go, but according to a friend, he was put into a car and driven away. Jerry Rubin, in later years, criticized the demonstration as “the movement at its lowest point” (Sloman 194).

The Chicago 8 were early on reduced to the Chicago 7. Bobby Seale, having been unable to secure the lawyer of his choice, Charles Garry, made a motion to defend himself. That motion was denied and through subsequent days Seale continued to speak out of order to have his voice heard. Eventually, the court took drastic measures against his outbursts.

Mr. Seale: What about section 1982, Title 42 of the Code where it says the black man cannot be discriminated against in my legal defense?

The Court: Mr. Seale, you do know what is going to happen to you—

Mr. Seale: I have a right to defend myself.

The Court: We will take a recess. Take that defendant into the room in there and deal with him as he should be dealt with in this circumstance. (Sloman 196)

For repeated outbursts on October 29th Judge Hoffman ordered Seale to be bound and gagged. It was a deliberate tactic to provoke the court, according to Charles Garry. “We forced the situation that gagged Seale,” he said (qtd. in Sloman 195). Through the gag Seale continued to try to argue in his defense and eventually wrangled himself free. Marshals stuffed more gags in his mouth and used heavier shackles. He never gave up his struggle. It was a disturbing moment in the trial for everyone, including the other rowdy members of the Chicago 8. They discussed whether they should continue on as they had been. Of course they did continue, and in humorous fashion Abbie and Jerry retorted to the Judge’s orders by bringing in a cake for Seale on his birthday. The cake read “Free Huey. Free Bobby.” A marshal confiscated the cake with Abbie shouting, “That’s a cakenapping” (Raskin 205). On November 5th Bobby Seale was dismissed from the conspiracy trial to be tried alone. The Chicago 8 were now the Chicago 7.

Although the binding and gagging of Bobby Seale was a tragic moment in this comedic trial, the antics continued. Abbie and Jerry came to court one day dressed in judges’ black robes. “That was actually Abbie and I sitting down and consciously saying, what are all the things we can do to drive this judge crazy?” Rubin said (qtd. in Sloman 212). Judge Hoffman went nuts. “Another one of your brilliant ideas, Mr. Kunstler? Take the robes off,” he said (qtd. in Sloman 212). Underneath Abbie’s robes, unbeknownst to Jerry, he was wearing a Chicago policeman’s uniform. “That’s the essence of Abbie—that he goes one step beyond and doesn’t tell me, right?” Jerry says. “He stayed up an hour later, right?” (qtd. in Sloman 212). Even Tom Hayden “had to applaud their sense of theater” (Raskin 214).

Although it isn’t obvious in photographs from the trial, Jerry Rubin used a prop throughout the trial. Due to his head being shaved while on a short stint in Santa Rita prison

Jerry wore a wig throughout the entire case. As a promotional stunt Abbie put out an ad for “The Yippie Wig Contest,” asking for people to send hair clippings either for Jerry or Judge Julius; the judge, being in his 70s, was balding himself. “Every morning the marshal would give us twenty or thirty envelopes filled with hair,” according to defense attorney William Kunstler. “Pubic, underarm, head hair, leg hair, anything you can think of, people sent in.” (qtd. in Sloman 200). It was a contest that allowed for people to vote between the two men “depending on which yippie they favored” (Hoffman, *Autobiography* 199).

Part of the Yippies! repertoire was their keen use of satire and humor. In order to describe the characteristics of “American humor” Abbie suggested the defense attempt to bring in Groucho Marx as he would be an effective witness for the jury. At first Groucho was somewhat open to the notion of testifying only voicing his one fear, “Hey, I hear the judge you got up there is crazy. This guy is gonna put me in jail, right. . . . Well, I’m too old to become a homosexual” (qtd. in Sloman 214). After speaking with his lawyer and his agent Marx finally declined the offer to go to Chicago. It was left up to the Yippies! to explain themselves.

Whether people liked Abbie Hoffman’s methods and sense of humor in the courtroom or not, most people, the prosecution excluded, believed Abbie’s testimony to be the most brilliant moment of the 100-day trial. On December 23rd Abbie took the stand swearing in with a clenched fist and slyly making eyes at everyone in the court. While on the stand Abbie joked, talked back, played with the language and frustrated the court anyway he could. It began with the opening questions from the defense concerning basic identifying information. When he was asked where he was from Abbie replied, “I live in Woodstock Nation.” When questioned about its whereabouts he described it as “a nation of alienated young people. We carry it around with

us as a state of mind in the same way as the Sioux Indians carried the Sioux nation around with them” (“The Chicago” 1). The judge began to become frustrated. When asked where he was born Abbie stated, “Psychologically, 1960” (“The Chicago 1). Prosecuting attorney Schultz asked for the answer to be stricken. Requesting the jury to forget something they just heard was an amusing fact about the legal system for Abbie that would happen several more times during his days of testifying.

The defense’s goal during Abbie’s testimony appears to be to establish Abbie’s and the other defendants’ acts as falling under the guise of satire or put-on. The Chicago 7/8 were on trial for their “intent” and not the actual offenses that occurred. During the defense’s examination Weinglass walked Abbie through the incidents of the Pentagon Exorcism questioning him about his intention and the effects. When discussing the details of Abbie’s negotiations with Pentagon officials over the height the building would be raised Weinglass asked, “Did you mean literally that the building was to rise up 300 feet off the ground?” (“The Chicago” 4) Prosecutor Richard Schultz objected to the question and asked Weinglass to “get on with the trial of this case and stop playing around with raising the Pentagon 10 feet or 300 feet off the ground” (“The Chicago” 4). Schultz could not have chosen more useful language. It gave Weinglass the opportunity to say:

Your Honor, I am glad to see Mr. Schultz finally concedes that things like levitating the Pentagon building, putting LSD in the water, 10,000 people walking nude on Lake Michigan, and \$200,000 bribe attempt are all playing around. I am willing to concede that fact, that it was all playing around, it was a play idea of this witness, and if he is willing to concede it, we can all go home. (“The Chicago” 4)

The prosecution’s objection was sustained and the questioning continued.

For its final inquiry the defense asked Abbie the straightforward question of whether or not he and the other defendants had an agreement “to come to the city of Chicago for the purposes of encouraging and promoting violence during the Convention week?” (“The Chicago” 15). Abbie’s response wittily summed up the defense’s entire case in a perfect sound bite before sound bites were invented: “We couldn’t agree on lunch” (“The Chicago 15).

The jury retired for deliberations on Valentine’s Day and emerged with a verdict on the 18th. The jury found two of the defendants, Froines and Weiner, not guilty on all counts. The conspiracy charges were dropped against the other five, but Tom Hayden, Rennie Davis, Dave Dellinger, Jerry Rubin and Abbie Hoffman were all deemed guilty of crossing state lines with intent to incite a riot. Judge Hoffman gave each of the guilty parties the maximum sentence of five years in prison and a five thousand dollar fine, to which Abbie replied, “a \$3,500 fine would be far more reasonable” (Raskin 215). By the end of the trial the defendants and their attorneys garnered a total of 159 citations for contempt of court. The charges against the Chicago 8 would all be overturned within two years, including Bobby Seale’s, on the basis of “judicial and prosecution errors” (Jezer 209). Another court overturned most of the contempt charges and sentenced the defendants for the remaining charges to time served.

In his testimony, Abbie described his occupation as “cultural revolutionary” (Sloman 205). Defining exactly what Abbie meant by “cultural revolutionary” is not my chief concern. For this chapter my focus is on what methods Abbie used to push America towards a radical cultural change. In order to understand what took place in Chicago, both during the riots and during the trial, I believe it is best if we start with the story of a clown and his pig.

In 1907 a Russian man by the name of Vladimir Durov found himself in a spot of trouble in Kaiser Wilhelm II's Germany. Durov, a clown, was performing his "political number" with his partner, a pig, before an audience in Berlin:

Durov placed a German officer's cap, or "helm" as he called it, in the circus ring, and his trained pig ran to retrieve it. Using ventriloquism, Durov made the pig appear to be saying "Ich will helm," meaning "I want the helmet." (Schechter 2)

"Ich will helm" can be translated as "I want the helmet"; however, it can also be interpreted as a pun meaning "I am Wilhelm." The audience broke into applause and laughter. Although the joke seems somewhat innocuous the police and the Kaiser did not feel the same as the audience. Durov was arrested and put on trial.

What incensed the state to take such drastic measures against a clown (the pig was not prosecuted)? In that one instant Germany was democratized. By equating the Kaiser with a pig a "temporary redistribution of power" occurred that allowed "the public to feel itself equal to—or great than—rulers of state" (Schechter 4). Although Durov's one act would never lead the nation into revolution "it represented a freedom from state control" (Schechter 3). Symbols, along with myth, act as a pre-propaganda, which, as Jacques Ellul describes it, "create[s] conditioned reflexes in the individual by training him so that certain words, signs, or symbols, even certain persons or facts, provoke unfailing reactions" (31). Once the symbols of the state are subjected to an iconoclastic attack they are open to further disregard from others and hence they risk losing their value and effectiveness altogether.

Although Abbie calls himself a "cultural revolutionary" I would call him a political clown because it better characterizes the manner in which he went about making his revolution. The subject of political clowns such as Durov and Abbie is discussed at length in Joel

Schechter's book *Durov's Pig: Clowns, Politics and Theater*. He makes the connection between clowns and the uses of various forms of clowning through the twentieth century, such as Bertolt Brecht, Dario Fo and the San Francisco Mime Troupe, by explaining how they are all tied together through a shared sense of festive and satiric theatricality that they believe has potential for generating social progress. These actions attack social injustices, democratize citizens and encourage others "by direct address—to consent to the rebellion, join it, celebrate its utopian goals and speak out. . ." (Schechter 16).

Abbie's theatrical activism was attempting to do exactly what Schechter describes through his own unique methods. He attempted to bring a large-scale audience to Chicago in festive protest through the use of humor and media warfare to enact a myth of a new youth rebellion. One of his main devices for accomplishing this was the formation of the non-existent Youth International Party. Stew Albert, one of the core Yippies!, gives an excellent description of what Yippies! were up to:

Yippie was a blending of decadence and idealism. We appealed to idealism. But we also appealed to fucking off, decadence, taking dope and getting laid and doing weird drawings on your body, the stuff that's usually identified with the decline of civilization. And yet we somehow got it all packaged into some kind of romantic, idealist, revolutionary mode.
(qtd. in Sloman 111)

All political clowns perform a delicate balancing act of being serious political commentators and being mere fools. It is both the crowning and crucifixion of the political clown. By being comical the public will hear the clown's biting social criticism (and urges to revolt) for which others would easily be labeled as enemies of the state. If Abbie had been a revolutionary in the vein of Ernesto "Che" Guevara his tactics would have involved violence and physical seizure of property. But as a clown Abbie seizes the public square and governmental institutions

symbolically. On the other hand the political radical has the potential to lose all credibility and effectiveness in his/her message by using a clown's tactics. No matter what the revolutionary's opinion is s/he can be dismissed as being a fool without any real sense of how things work or, simply, as being merely entertaining.

One thing all political clowns face is the possibility of crossing that thin line between clown and radical. In Chicago we see how Abbie loses his balance with his audience and the situation shifts from laughter and festival towards violence and physical revolution. His outlook on the possibilities for Chicago is an example of how he foresaw the potentials of this delicate act to be received as he had intended it. However, Abbie is a trickster and like all tricksters he has an ace up his sleeve, a backdoor, which allows him to make a win-win situation out of Chicago for the movement. As Abbie put it, "We have two alternatives in Chicago, both of them OK. The opposition determines what will happen, they're living actors in our theater" (qtd. in Jezer 127). Whenever the police or the National Guard violently advanced on the protestors there was always a photographer, cameraman or reporter recording it all for the airwaves. It is a similar scenario to what happened in New York for the Flower Brigade parade. If the hippies would have been accepted in the parade their message of supporting the troops coupled with anti-war policies perhaps would have led to a new understanding of the hippie/New Left beliefs. Instead they were attacked and newspapers printed pictures of flags being ripped apart by average American citizens who believed in the righteousness of their country and yet hate their youth. No matter what the outcome, Abbie could always interpret the results as winning the image war in the media.

To avoid having the Festival of Life and Yippie! pigeonholed by the media Abbie kept the details muddled. By opening the meaning of Yippie! up for innumerable speculations Abbie was attracting people to Chicago by creating a “blank space,” which he describes in his book *Revolution for the Hell of It*: “Blank space is the transmission of information whereby the viewer has the opportunity to become a participant” (81). This technique for encouraging participation is representative of McLuhan’s notion of a cold medium, less information equals more participation. This is important because it is a reflection of Yippie!’s ends being informed by its means. By leaving membership open to anyone who wanted to call themselves a Yippie!, by not having any official leaders and by giving conflicting explanations of the organizations inner workings, a blank space was created in the media. People’s expectations of Chicago were limited only by their imaginations to fill in the blank. The hope was that it would be a useful device to bring people to Chicago, to become participants in making the event happen. Another example of his use of blank space can be found in a poster for Chicago. The poster was filled with short phrases and words that simultaneously gave a description of what was going to go on as well as left the door wide open. It read:

Spree—wowie—Arlo Guthrie—color—giggle—pleasure—happening—
dancing—joy—the politics of ecstasy—Country Joe and the Fish—
blankets—poetry—slapstick—venceremos—lights—challenge—yes—
Allen Ginsberg—free—tribes—experience—zig-zag. (Raskin 131)

The ambiguous press for the festival was Abbie enacting his own form of participatory democracy. Within Yippie! there was certainly a core group of organizers (Abbie, Jerry, Paul Krassner, Ed Sanders, Anita Hoffman, Stew Albert, Nancy Kurshan and Keith Lampe) who “personified Yippie in the public eye and were the strategic masterminds” (Jezer 127). However, everyone was invited to “do your own thing,” as the axiom of the day suggested (Jezer

125). By only insinuating the details the myth could grow on its own within local communities and, hopefully, excite people to journey to Chicago. However the danger of this tactic lies in the unpredictability of its outcome, and in the case of Chicago it resulted in rioting in the streets.

As with the riots, the goal of the trial involved the manipulation of images in the media through political clowning. In Abbie's autobiography he writes:

We wanted to reach young people. We wanted to 'show' we were different from those prosecuting us. We wanted to present a synopsis of the issues dividing the nation, thereby elevating our cause to equal footing with the government. We could never hope to accomplish this power struggle with arms; we could only begin to manage it with imagery. (188)

The theatricality of the Chicago trial attracted wide media attention. The trial was not only for those involved but also for everyone beyond the walls of the court. The carnivalesque moved outside the arena of the festival, into the courtroom and into homes across America. The choice to make a mockery of the court was deliberate in order to cross the boundary into people's everyday lives; to step beyond the fourth wall of the media and the government's "theater." As Schechter notes, "For these [political] clowns, the imaginary fourth wall exists only in order to be torn down, or stepped through" (12).

Durov chose to mock the court as well when he was in court on another charge involving his pig. This time he was arrested for "driving without a permit, obstructing public traffic and unauthorized advertising of the circus" for being pulled along the street in a cart hauled by a pig. By shifting the focus of the trial from his personal actions to arguing over the usefulness of a pig Durov made it appear as if the court were prosecuting the pig as well. "When the court dared to try a pig (or a clown) for a crime, it made its folly an extension of Durov's circus act" (Schechter 6). By the defendants' acting-out they encouraged the other actors involved in the courtroom

(the judge, prosecuting attorneys, bailiffs, the audience) to act out as well. If they could egg on the court enough then, according to their logic, the court would hang itself.

During the riots we see how the acts of political clowns have the potential to result in violence, but in the courtroom we see the opposite happen: radicals using humor for their defense. Their costumes (which include their everyday clothes), their demeanor, the stunts they performed, their testimony and their outbursts were used for the purposes of keeping the carnival spirit alive. This is also evident by the reactions to the image of very real violence against Bobby Seale. Rennie Davis called it “the most intense time of the trial” (Sloman 196). Some of the defendants questioned whether they should go on. One option they sought to explore was for all eight of the defendants to come chained and gagged; however, after discussing it with Seale, they realized the image of the lone black man in chains was more powerful. Instead, Jerry and Abbie responded with the appropriate action of a birthday cake reading “Free Huey. Free Bobby.” The message of the Chicago 8 could not be accomplished through grave images, but rather through constant clowning. If they were to continue to push their hard-line, revolutionary rhetoric then they would have crossed the line completely and abandoned the useful nature of the political clown to be elusive, indefinable and pertinent.

By the end of the trial we see how the clown, Abbie, makes an attempt to legitimize the new revolutionary movement in the United States. On 20th June 1970, in closing remarks after his sentencing, Abbie returns to being a political clown by combining humor with justifiable, revolutionary rhetoric. He allied the Yippie! values and actions with those of Thomas Jefferson, George Washington and Abraham Lincoln. He justified the actions of the demonstrators by invoking the words of Abraham Lincoln by saying:

“When the people shall grow weary of their constitutional right to amend the government, they shall exert their revolutionary right to dismember and overthrow that government.” If Abraham Lincoln had given that speech in Lincoln Park, he would be on trial right here in this courtroom, because that was an inciteful speech. (qtd. in Sloman 216)

As for the charges of inciting a riot Abbie responded with a poignant pun, “I don’t even know what a riot is. I thought a riot was fun. Riot means you laugh, ha, ha. I didn’t want to be that serious. I was supposed to be funny. . .” (qtd. in Sloman 216).

Conclusion

“He doesn’t have anything on!” the whole populace shouted at last. And the emperor shuddered, for it seemed to him that they were right. But then he thought, ‘Now I must go through with the procession.’ And he carried himself more proudly than ever, and the gentlemen-in-waiting carried the train that wasn’t there at all.”

“The Emperor’s New Clothes” (Hans Anderson 71)

In the preceding chapters I’ve attempted to explain the methods and theories behind Abbie Hoffman’s more notorious performances which have made him an iconic staple of 60’s radicalism. As is his fate as a political clown Abbie, as with the entire social experiment called the 60’s, has been relegated to a bizarre and ridiculous time in American history. Whatever staged revolt he performed in an attempt to bring about a second American Revolution ended and all of the shock value of the counter culture has since been absorbed into the mainstream fabric of America. Once the 1970’s began the movement, as it took shape in the mid to late sixties, disappeared. The utopian promise of peace and love eventually gave way under the weight of egoism, heavy drug use, fatalism and the government’s legal (and illegal) pressure. The Love Generation became the Me Generation and the idea that we should all turn our backs on politics affected the community building efforts made by political organizers, hippies and radicals. By the end of that turbulent decade some people were left feeling as though they were living in a complete myth with nothing to support their claims of a social revolution. Wolfe Lowenthal, the “minister of defense for the Yippie party,” said, “I started getting a very real sense that I was living in a complete myth, I had absolutely nothing to back it up.” (qtd. in Sloman 185) People began to wonder when the real change was going to happen.

Despite what happened to the radicals and the dreamers when the show was over significant strides were made in civil rights, Americans' attitudes were changed towards the Vietnam War, the American Dream was unmasked and the country began to expand its consciousness in part due to the efforts of a few thousand courageous individuals who were unwilling to go along with the crowd learned to pull their collective resources together and embody a spirit of festival. Where would we be if the counterculture never happened? What would our contemporary United States look like? Abbie knew what he was doing when he leapt into the role of hippie and as such he lived a lifestyle outside of the norms of American life and encouraged others to do the same. Abbie and other radicals helped to demystify our military and political institutions through their iconoclastic and yet hilarious performances. He aided in creating a revolution with a sense of humor where no one dies and everyone gets laid.

However the counterculture was around before Abbie and the amount of large scale social change we have seen during and since the Sixties has to be attributed to a number of people making small changes in their own lives and jobs over time and not simply the work of famous individuals. Individuals like Abbie Hoffman serve to encourage others, through example, to take action. The crowd is never let off the hook or allowed to rest assured that problems will take care of themselves because somebody does a performance. The political clown's act invites the audience "by direct address—to consent to the rebellion, join it, celebrate its utopian goals and speak out against injustice and oppression after the play ends." (Schechter 16)

In my opinion the performances, the rallies, the festivals and the media stunts enacted by Abbie Hoffman and his fellow troublemakers were sophisticated, well executed and unique

methods of protest in history. What I believe made these events so unique from other political demonstrations and revolutions in history was the intrinsic faith in laughter and humor to be a rejuvenating tool for social change. There was definitely a large amount of anger that fueled the radical movement of the Sixties as would be necessary for any sort of protest to take place; disapproval and dissatisfaction are implicit to protest. But Abbie and other radicals like him believed in the power of laughter, satire, confrontation and festival and with this faith they chose to avoid violence and instead use theatrical, humorous tactics to make strides towards their utopian goals. What I've attempted to demonstrate throughout this thesis is the way in which Abbie used performance to ignite a very real social revolution by creating a myth, rallying people behind that myth and getting them to congregate in a festive manner. There are many reasons for its effectiveness at getting people motivated, but no matter what side of the fence one falls on it's difficult to argue with someone who chooses not to hurt anyone to express their position.

Was Abbie in favor of strict non-violence though? In his notorious book *Steal This Book* (still stolen from Barnes and Noble today) Abbie gives directions on how to make Molotov Cocktails and in a chapter entitled "Piece Now" he gives the run down on a few basic guns. He starts the chapter by writing, "It's ridiculous to talk about a revolution without a few words on guns." (*Steal* 215) Was he serious? Was monkey warfare just a propaganda technique to rope people into the real and bloody revolution? It's difficult to know due to the large amount of conflicting stories, a result of Abbie's deliberate efforts. His unique style involved using humor, satire, confusion, rumor and festival combined with the bold earnestness of a revolutionary as a way of keeping his supporters talking excitedly and his enemies off guard.

Although Abbie and the movement were very anti-intellectual in order to negate history and all power structures, Abbie points to several intellectuals as his major sources of influence on how to understand his contemporary society and the means to affect change. Besides Marshall MacLuhan, whom I have already touched upon in earlier chapters, Abbie considered Herbert Marcuse to be an important influence on the 60's. Abbie, who studied under Marcuse at Brandeis University, describes in the chapter in his autobiography entitled "Some Voices of Guidance," how he was impacted by Marcuse's investigation of the means of control over the everyday man. In his book *One-Dimensional Man*, Marcuse emphasizes the ability of our existing social, economic and political institutions since the Industrial Revolution along with the mass media to "systematically" reduce individuals to one-dimensional beings who only serve the functions of the state. By reducing man to this form of functional cog he is limited in his ability to apply his imagination, innovation and common sense to the improvement of his world and through these same modes we are made to not mind the fact that it is happening.

As a result of this condition Marcuse writes that we are made to think and act in a rational manner set in motion by irrational situations. He explains:

Today, the mystifying elements are mastered and employed in productive publicity, propaganda, and politics. Magic, witchcraft, and ecstatic surrender are practiced in the daily routine of the home, the shop, and the office, and the rational accomplishments conceal the irrationality of the whole. For example, the scientific approach to the vexing problem of mutual annihilation--the mathematics and calculations of kill and over-kill, the measurement of spreading or not-quite-so-spreading fallout, the experiments of endurance in abnormal situations--is mystifying to the extent to which it promotes (and even demands) behavior which accepts the insanity. It thus counteracts a truly rational behavior--namely, the refusal to go along, and the effort to do away with the conditions which produce the insanity. (190)

It's easy to understand how hippies (and Yippies!) became a manifestation of Marcuse's suggestion that the "truly rational behavior" is to turn one's back and drop out. Those who were unwilling to go along with the Vietnam War and segregation were viewed as abnormal and anti-American. It took a jolt of aggressive antisocial behavior to pull the nation out of its hypnotic following of "what is" in order to make another step towards "what could be."

Marcuse and MacLuhan are similar in that both of their research is performed as a sort of alienation effect by serving to elucidate what is not seen in the everyday. They attempt to show us how and what we are reading as opposed to what we are reading about. Abbie's goals with each of his performances were attempts at reaching that same goal in hopes that the experience of this new knowledge would lead to its resolution in our world today and not in a far off future utopia.

Probably the biggest influence on Abbie's performances was another teacher of his at Brandeis University, the psychologist Abraham Maslow. Abbie took, "every class he gave and spent long evenings with him and his family," and believed "everything Maslow wrote [was] applicable to modern revolutionary struggle in America, especially when corrected by Marcuse's class analysis." (Hoffman, *The Autobiography* 26) Abbie has credited his psychological theories as laying "a solid foundation for the launching of optimism of the sixties." (*The Autobiography* 26) In no way did he consider Maslow a leader of social revolutions. In fact, Abbie writes, "He backed off from revolutionary struggle, believing that change came from influencing the top echelon of society." (Hoffman, *The Autobiography* 26) Maslow's theories, however, were considered revolutionary for his field considering the fact that so much of psychology was centered around the Freudian view of human beings as generally sick.

I recall my sophomore year in high school in Florida in which my warm hearted Health teacher explained to the class Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs. The triangular chart to explain this hierarchy was designed to demonstrate to the class how we as animals on the planet have certain base needs such as food, water and shelter that must be met if we are ever to reach our ultimate human need to reach our full potential, or self-actualize. Maslow has been attributed with saying that psychology has focused too much on "hostility, aggression, neuroses, and immaturities; likewise, too little attention has been given to love, creativity, joy, and 'peak experiences.'" (Corey 201) Abbie absorbed Maslow's attention to the human need for creativity and joy and attempted to create the necessary circumstances for people to reach these "peak experiences." A peak experience is considered to be one in which the individual has a moment of insight, realization and self-actualization to their potential. By reaching these experiences one gets closer to knowing what is right for them as individuals and, concurrently, for society. In psychotherapeutic terms Maslow's method "increases love, courage, creativity, and curiosity while it reduces fear and hostility. This kind of therapy does not create something from nothing; the implication is that it uncovers what was there in the first place." (Yalom 82)

We can see through a combination of these influences how Abbie developed this notion that if we give people the opportunity to see things for what they are and create the right circumstances for them to actualize their ideas that they will win themselves over to doing so. Once we combine this with Bakhtin's theories of laughter and festival, Brecht's alienation technique and a knowledge of the various mediums of mass communication we get Abbie Hoffman.

All this praise of Abbie's methods and techniques are not to say that he nor his performances were without folly. As I stated above, one problem which emerged from all of the myth making of the Yippies! is that some people eventually began to feel as if there was nothing to support their beliefs. In so many ways Abbie and his friends were running a cliché revolution. Todd Gitlin, a sociology professor from New York asks how effective can a revolutionary cliché be? According to him Abbie and Jerry's "ambition was to become clichés. But there was a further irony about the media that they didn't get, namely a revolutionary cliché is a cliché. It's not an act of liberation to be a media phenomenon, it's an act of submission unless you know where to draw the line." (qtd. in Sloman 200)

It is arguable that Abbie, Jerry Rubin and other radical leaders gave into their egos and lost sight of that line. A great deal of the arguments between radicals seems to be based on a lot of posturing of who had gone further with their convictions. It's a lot of nonsense, but nonsense was certainly the motif of the time. A major criticism of Abbie and Jerry is that they were merely working to make themselves look good; always looking to become celebrities within the movement as opposed to being hard working revolutionaries. Emmett Grogan calls the whole Yippie! phenomenon a lie. He says of Abbie and Jerry:

Those two geriatric longhairs were raising the underground to the height of its alternative shuck with a make-up title for a make-believe number that was to be the Yippie Festival of Life Convention in Chicago. Even though Emmett was in New York while the YIP propaganda was manipulating lame middle-class kids into its pseudo-street culture, he simply refused to believe that anyone real was going to fall for their obvious scam..." (477)

He calls Abbie and his friends' writings and actions "their quest for personal recognition as national figures in a mock-revolutionary movement of masquerade, just 'for the hell of it!'" (Grogan 344)

Emmett, comparatively, can be seen as more of an everyday man's radical because he is dedicated to causing a revolution from the bottom up by turning his back on the system all together and focusing on taking care of his people on the street. Grogan, while he was fully aware of the power of the media (which his why he put so much importance on his anonymity to keep from being co-opted by the media) he rejected the media-myth making process as a means to rally people to his side. With the Diggers he was involved in many guerrilla theater events and, regardless of his intentions, he became a mythical figure for the movement. But nonetheless he rejected the immigration of middle-class white kids coming to the Haight-Ashbury looking for peace and understanding. Whereas Abbie and Jerry felt that everyone should be roped into the revolution, however possible, Emmett understood that the selling of love and fun would eventually wear off and the hippies would all go back home to mom and dad.

The Yippie! and Digger attitude of everyone's a leader is a great idea. Everyone should be allowed to lead themselves and make decisions for themselves. But when it comes to getting large projects underway there have to be some innate leaders. In a section of *Revolution for the Hell of It* entitled "There Is No Way to Run a Revolution" Abbie suggested to people:

Revolution is in your head. You are the Revolution.
Do your thing
Do your thing
Do your thing
Do your thing (10)

But he knew there had to be a core group of people doing the organizing. It is true that the movement had a momentum all its own, but if it were not for organizers it probably never could have taken shape. Abbie Hoffman, Jerry Rubin and Emmett Grogan were all innate leaders. People would follow them because they were interesting. Peter Coyote, Digger cofounder, actor

and activist, said of his relationship with Emmett:

I think that one of the things that artists always speak for is the uniqueness of the individual. And it's no accident that much of the Digger energy came out of the San Francisco Mime Troupe. And that much of what we did was based on this idea of personal autonomy and personal authenticity. So you didn't follow Emmett Grogan because he was your leader, you did something that Emmett wanted to do because it was an interesting, compelling and fascinating thing to do. And if you came up with something equally compelling and fascinating, people would follow you. You could right now start living the way that you wanted to live, if you were inventive enough and fearless enough and committed enough. (Sloman 64)

Not everyone can or wants to be an effective leader although everyone should be given the opportunity and the space to actualize their full potential. To encourage everyone to do their own thing Abbie was attempting to lead them to self-actualization.

One day around November of 2002 I came in contact with an organization that was continuing a Digger-esque activity of feeding the poor for free. I went to a meeting for an organization called Food Not Bombs. It is an international organization that attempts to distribute free vegetarian meals to the poor: This organization :

is one of the fastest growing revolutionary movements active today and is gaining momentum. There are hundreds of autonomous chapters sharing free vegetarian food with hungry people and protesting war and poverty throughout the Americas, Europe, Asia and Australia...The first group was formed in Cambridge, Massachusetts in 1980 by anti-nuclear activists. Food Not Bombs is an all volunteer organization dedicated to nonviolence. Food Not Bombs has no formal leaders and strives to include everyone in its decision making process. Each group recovers food that would otherwise be thrown out and makes fresh hot vegetarian meals that are served in city parks to anyone without restriction. The groups also serve free vegetarian meals at protests and other events. The San Francisco Chapter has been arrested over 1,000 times in an effort to silence its protest against the Mayor's anti-homeless policies. ("The Food")

I thought it sounded great. It was just what the Diggers were up to in San Francisco! I met the group of five at the local coffee shop and the discussion began. It was explained to me at the

beginning of the meeting that there were no leaders and the secretarial duties were given to whomever was willing. Again, I thought it was great! Just like in the stories I had read; it was anarchistic and egalitarian. But throughout the hour talk it was clear to me that these guys didn't have their act together. For the most part they met their goals of feeding people, but there were the occasional irregularities and each week was always a desperate struggle. I gave the suggestion that they should put boxes with their logo and information on them in churches, schools, offices and stores asking people to bring in cans and dry goods so that they would be guaranteed to get a given amount of food each week to use. Their response overwhelmed me: They never thought to do that. When it came to getting basic tasks secured everything was a mess. It shocked me because here were five folks with high ideals, wonderful intentions, ambitious, good hearted, doing the right thing and they couldn't get their act together because it got in the way of their dogma. People can start doing the right thing today and should be encouraged to do so. But everyone has to be ambitious enough to put the dogma aside and just do it! It is the saving grace of the Yippies! that they had no dogma beyond "do your own thing." At their core the Yippies! were a group of ambitious people who were active and goal driven. They were a perfect mixture of drop out and radical as Abbie explains in *Revolution For the Hell of It*:

The radical will say to the hippie: "Get together and fight, you are getting the shit kicked out of you." The hippie will say to the radical: "Your protest is so narrow, your rhetoric so boring, your ideological power plays so old-fashioned." (108)

In my opinion these criticisms are all weak in the face of all the enormous change that happened as a result of the social, cultural, and political uprisings of the 1960's. Imagine what our world would look like had there not been a great deal of people brave and crazy enough to

stand up and do the right thing. For some people it meant marching, organizing sit-ins and giving speeches and for others it meant taking a lot of psychedelic drugs, putting on a costume and dancing at the unfriendly end of a rifle.

A great deal of the success of Abbie's performances came from the free interaction between participants and observers. No one was really allowed to sit on the sidelines. The performances either made you angry or made you laugh. Everything from the agit-prop performances to the staged television spectacles were all shaped very loosely, leaving the performance open to chance and giving anyone who wanted to be involved the opportunity to jump in and "do their own thing." Although none of the performances would be considered "polished" they sparked a tremendous reaction in people who saw them.

The unfinalizability of these performances, to borrow Bakhtin's term, allowed for spontaneity. Unfinalizability as a production concept aided Abbie in his mission of formulating a revolution and moving towards cultural change. Utopias are always unattainable in reality, but as a myth they serve to motivate people towards a future goal. Bakhtin writes, "Nothing conclusive has yet taken place in the world, the ultimate word of the world and about the world has not yet been spoken, the world is open and free, everything is still in the future and will always be in the future." (*Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics* 166)

I believe what makes these performances truly effective for both those who take the step to involve themselves and for the people who remain witnesses to the event is the amount of dialogue performances like Abbie's can generate. In order to explain, the following is a story that made me truly realize how effective a performance could be in expanding its influence beyond the time limits of the actual performance. A few years ago, when I was still in my

undergraduate studies, Louisiana State University and the local media began making focused attempts at curbing the alcohol consumption on our notorious campus after a young man died during a fraternity party due to drug and alcohol consumption. His blood was more than half alcohol when he died which probably would have been avoided if he hadn't ingested GHB. Hardly a safe substance, this bathtub drug sends males flying high and women into amnesiac blackouts. It also has the added side effect of retarding the gag reflex making people unable to vomit. However, his drug use was usually not mentioned in reports or it was reserved for a one line paragraph in the back pages of most articles. Although a great deal of LSU students could probably benefit from less drinking I was very upset over what I saw as the university and media's attempts to infringe on our personal choices.

The solution my friend, Casey, and I cooked up was to meet in Free Speech Alley (which has had its "soap box" removed) with a stack of newspaper articles on the subject and begin discussing the situation aloud with all of the students heading to the Union during the first week of class. Casey and I were to meet at lunch time, but somehow the times were confused, probably due to drinking. When he did not show up and the entire audience had already made their way into the Union I had to do something. I rolled up my stack of newspapers and put them in my back pocket and entered the Union. There must have been at least three thousand people on all floors of the building. In order to be as dramatic as possible I stood below a clock in front of the art gallery and waited for the hands to strike noon. When noon came I yelled at the top of my lungs causing the entire building to go instantly silent; a captive audience of three thousand! Then I shouted, "Everybody run for your lives! We're all going to die from drinking! Ahhhhhhhh!" I took off running through the cafeteria exclaiming, "Put down your drinks!

We're dropping like flies! Ahhhhhh!" When I reached the third side of the cafeteria I leapt on top of a counter and began speaking as quickly as I could. I was out of breath, but I knew I only had a few seconds to speak. With an *Advocate* featuring a story on the boy and his family in my hand, a lunchroom lady hitting my legs and an administrator yelling at me from the balcony I began telling everyone how we were being lied to, how it was drugs and not showing concern for others that lead to the boy's death and how it was OK to drink alcohol. I heard the administrator call for the police and within seconds they were there demanding that I shut up and get down. One person took a photograph of the police leading me to mini-cop prison for interrogations. After they determined that I was not crazy or on drugs they let me go with some admonishing remarks about how their kids at home had more sense than I did.

The greatest lesson I learned, beyond the fact that causing trouble for a good cause was a lot of fun, came a month and a half later at my menial job bussing tables. At the end of the evening there were only a few tables left. One of them was a table of three women, one of whom worked at the restaurant. She and I started a brief conversation during which she asked me if I had stirred up any more trouble over the drinking issue. One of her friend's eyes popped open as she asked, "Was that you in the Union?"

"Yes," I said with a smile, not thinking it was that big of a deal.

"Oh my God, my friends and I have been talking about that for over a month!"

Now the actual experience of running through the Student Union was definitely a "peak experience" for me, but when I heard someone whom I had never met tell me they had been talking about the issue as a result of my absurd act a consciousness bomb exploded in my brain. Everyday we are inundated with information through the newspaper, television, radio, billboards,

word of mouth and, if your in school, a ton of books that go in one ear and out the other. But one person acts out with their voice and body and it captured someone's attention. In discussing plans for Chicago Abbie said, "If you can't come away from a demonstration and tell a funny little story about it, it's not going to work." (Raskin 133) Although the performances were the opportunities for "peak experiences" the aftermath was where the myth took shape and spread. There is no way that these performances alone would change policies by themselves, as Abbie admits. "But," he writes in his autobiography, "it did extend the possibilities of involving the senses and penetrating the symbolic world of fantasy (television's primary aim)." (*The Autobiography* 126)

The idealism and the radicalism of the Sixties is often considered dead and buried. The shock value to middle America and the media of dope smoking hippies is, of course, gone. In fact, it takes a lot to shock most people these days. However, street theater and political protest still goes on. Since September 11th there have been hundreds of protests, of various sizes, in cities all throughout the world. The World Trade Organization can always count on thousands of protesters showing up whenever they hold a summit meeting. The protesters vary in age and method from the soccer mom to the masked, brick throwing anarchists. So the struggle continues on the street against Big Brother, the corporate conglomerates, the military machine and the mainstream media and their ability to negatively and anonymously affect our lives on a daily basis.

In the medium of print, Kalle Lasn, publisher of *Adbusters* magazine and author of *Culture Jam: How to Reverse America's Suicidal Consumer Binge--And Why We Must*, suggests that these peak experiences are "the force that makes life worth living. It is also what consumer

capitalism takes away from you every time it sells you brand-name 'cool' or this month's rebel attitude." (106) He is of a similar vein as Abbie Hoffman in the sense that his goal is to "uncool" the products and spectacles produced for us by the mainstream media using its own tools as weapons against it. His "subvertisements" or "uncommercials," aimed at everything from fast food and cigarettes to automobiles and the fashion industry, act as a Brechtian alienation effect by calling attention to facts not offered by advertisements.

One subvertisement consists of Camel cigarette's "Joe Camel," renamed "Joe Chemo," sitting on a hospital gurney looking gaunt and cancerous. Anti-ads like "Joe Chemo" and televised "Truth" commercials (not produced by Lasn) about the effects of smoking have influenced other states to join California in its ban on smoking in public places. Lasn continues to produce his magazine filled with subversive advertisements and conscientious articles on politics, the environment and culture along with maintaining a web site for "culture jammers" at www.adbusters.org.

One interesting phenomenon growing in popularity is the flash mob. Flash mobs are quick, anonymous and absurd gatherings of people in public spaces that are organized through the Internet. Members of flash mob sites will receive e-mails requesting their presence at an exact location and at an exact time. The participants show up and are given slips of paper which outline their simple and easy task to perform, where to perform it and the exact duration of time in which to perform. For example, a group of about 200 people, nearly materializing out of nowhere, entered the Hyatt Hotel in New York City and began to applaud passing guests. Within ten minutes the mob dispersed as quickly as it had formed. According to those involved there is no political or social message involved and its all for spontaneous fun. However, the

mechanism of the flash mob can be read in more depth despite the insistence of some of its participants. The originator of flash mob experiment, “Bill,” says:

It's a spectacle for spectacle's sake - which is silly, but is also, as I've discovered somewhat to my surprise, genuinely transgressive, which is part of its appeal, I think...People feel like there's nothing but order everywhere, and so they love to be a part of just one thing that nobody was expecting. (Hewitt)

The flash mob points to a lack of spontaneous social interaction in society. It is light and fun making it very accessible to those involved. By the act of participating they are involved in the message in much the same way that Abbie invited everyone to come to Chicago to come to a festival. He never said to bring your picket signs and be prepared to chant “Hell no we won’t go!” It made a participant out of the spectator. Flash mobs are a sign that there are still a few anonymous, silly folks out there interested in getting people together “for the hell of it.”

Performance Studies is not an exact science although at the heart of the field is a excited openness for experimentation. Throughout my education in this discipline I’ve been exposed to literature, art, music, theater, various theories, historical criticisms, cultural practices and so on and practically every time a new subject was introduced there was a period designated for putting down our books and pens and getting these ideas “into our bodies.” It’s a confusing concept for a novice student, but in time the pedagogical benefits of performing concepts and theories come to light. By encouraging people to act out and “just do it” Abbie and his contemporaries were encouraging people to get ideas about power, the means of communication and production, festival and revolution into their bodies.

When I think of where Abbie fits into that spectrum of individuals and groups who have used performance as a tool, or weapon, of communication to espouse their social, political and existential views I instantly recall the tales of Dadaists in Zurich hosting absurdist cabaret

evenings in defiance of their world climate. Hans Richter, one of Dada's founders, wrote the following which, in a way, sums up a lot of what the Dada movement and the counterculture movement were about:

However, the basic impulse of Dada is not despair and protest but a rebellious feeling of joy inspired by new discoveries. This joy was responsible for the manic, clowning aspect of Dada. Dada's aggressiveness is not the rage of the slave against his chains, but springs from a sensation of total freedom. Dada was unwilling to examine and weigh up the pros and cons of any argument; it preferred to let contradictory positions harden before setting them awhirl in spontaneous or deliberate antithesis one to the other, in the hope of stumbling on some more complete unity. This very fact would suggest that Dada was not the consequence of political events, but an event in cultural history that would probably have taken place even if there had been no war and no revolutions. (Richter 216)

The bizarre, theatrical outburst of energy of Abbie's performances and of the events of the 1960's are closely related to performance art movements such as Dada. But these performances are not limited to the scope of performance art. By examining Abbie's work the Performance Studies student would be exposed to media studies, agit-prop/guerrilla theater, the formation of propaganda, clowning/satire and political demonstrations. There are a wealth of avenues that can be taken to studying Abbie.

I have chosen to give an overview of his theatrical work so as to demonstrate the usefulness of his clowning in the struggle for social change. Through studying Abbie Hoffman's work the Performance Studies student learns an important fact as I did: The tools one gains through studying Performance Studies are not merely a language for communicating to others inside the academy walls but effective tools for affecting the world around you. It's very easy to get locked into thinking that by studying performance one's future lies within the academy writing and doing research. After all, "M.A. in Performance Studies" doesn't look very lucrative

on many job applications. Most people have never even heard of it. However, the point of an education is not to figure out what to think and where one fits in the big societal machine.

Instead, it is a time to figure out how to think critically and be exposed to the numerous possibilities for life before being cast into the great unknown. Abbie wrote, “Halfway into the decade, the word *revolution* slowly crept into our vocabulary. And it wasn’t thinkers that we sought out, it was doers. The time for study had passed. We no longer felt the need to justify decisions in intellectual terms.” (*The Autobiography* 87)

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Now that this thesis is coming to an end I plan to turn my attention away from these books and to more practical applications of all these big ideas. Next year I plan to go to New York for the 2004 Republican Convention for some creative protest of my own. The Republican Party is planning on holding their convention in Madison Square Garden so as to be close to the site of where the World Trade Center once stood. It will certainly be an awesome site reminiscent of the Nazi rallies in a Leni Reifenschal movie with Ground Zero as a backdrop. If Maslow was right, and I think he was, then knowledge and action happen almost simultaneously. So the only logical conclusion to my work is to close all the books and do it! If there is one thing that can be learned from all these performances it’s that it is a helluva lot of fun getting together with others to joyfully tell your enemies to fuck off. See you in New York!

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Vita

Bruce France may have been born in New Orleans, Louisiana to Bruce and Kermit France on the 27th of February 1978, but he is a child of America. By the time he was eighteen, thanks to the United States Navy, he had moved eighteen times, an experience which allowed him to see a great deal of the places and people in his native country. He attended Louisiana State University in Baton Rouge where he received his Bachelor of Arts and Master of Arts degrees in Communication Studies with an emphasis in Performance Studies. After his studies he moved to New Orleans where he is currently producing work and searching for a location to open a multi-disciplinary arts space with his production company Mondo Bizarro. When he is not involved in a production, or working to pay the bills he is busy getting people excited about having a riot at the 2004 Republican National Convention in New York.