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the conquest of cool

BUSINESS CULTURE, COUNTERCULTURE, AND THE RISE OF HIP CONSUMERISM

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chapter one

A CULTURAL PERPETUAL MOTION MACHINE: MANAGEMENT THEORY AND CONSUMER REVOLUTION IN THE 1960s

Why do this kind of advertising if not to incite people to riot?

— NIKE COPYWRITER, 1996

of commerce and counterculture

For as long as America is torn by culture wars, the 1960s will remain the historical terrain of conflict. Although popular memories of that era are increasingly vague and generalized—the stuff of classic rock radio and commemorative television replayings of the 1968 Chicago riot footage—we understand "the sixties" almost instinctively as the decade of the big change, the birthplace of our own culture, the homeland of hip, an era of which the tastes and discoveries and passions, however obscure their origins, have somehow determined the world in which we are condemned to live.

For many, the world with which "the sixties" left us is a distinctly unhappy one. While acknowledging the successes of the civil rights and antiwar movements, scholarly accounts of the decade, bearing titles like *Coming Apart* (1971) and *The Unraveling of America* (1984), generally depict the sixties as a ten-year fall from grace, the loss of a golden age of consensus, the end of an edenic epoch of shared values and safe centrism. This vision of social decline, though, is positively rosy compared with the fire-breathing historical accusations of more recent years. For Allan Bloom, recounting with still-raw bitterness in his best-selling *The Closing of the American Mind* the student uprising and the faculty capitulation at Cornell in 1969, the misdeeds of the campus New Left were an intellec-

tual catastrophe comparable only with the experiences of German professors under the Nazis. "So far as universities are concerned," he writes in his chapter entitled, "The Sixties," "I know of nothing positive coming from that period; it was an unmitigated disaster for them." Lines like "Whether it be Nuremberg or Woodstock, the principle is the same," and Bloom's characterization of Cornell's then-president as "of the moral stamp of those who were angry with Poland for resisting Hitler because this precipitated the war," constituted for several years the high watermark of anti-sixties bluster.[1] But later texts topped even this.

By 1996 it had become fashionable to extend sixties' guilt from mere academic developments to portentous-sounding things like the demise of "civility" and, taking off from there, for virtually everything that could be said to be wrong about America generally. For Robert Bork, "the sixties" accomplished nothing less than sending America *Slouching Towards Gomorrah*: thanks to the decade's "revolutionary nihilism" and the craven "Establishment's surrender," cultural radicals "and their ideology are all around us now" (a fantasy of defeat which, although Bork doesn't seem to realize it, rephrases Jerry Rubin's 1971 fantasy of revolution, *We Are Everywhere*).[2] Political figures on the right, waxing triumphal in the aftermath of the 1994 elections, also identify "the sixties," a term which they use interchangeably with "the counterculture," as the source of every imaginable species of the social blight from which they have undertaken to rescue the nation. Republican speechwriter Peggy Noonan puts the fall from grace directly, exhorting readers of a recent volume of conservative writing to "remember your boomer childhood in the towns and suburbs" when "you were safe" and "the cities were better," back before "society strained and cracked," in the storms of sixties selfishness.[3] Former history professor Newt Gingrich is the most assiduous and prominent antagonist of "the sixties," imagining it as a time of "countercultural McGoverniks," whom he holds responsible not only for the demise of traditional values and the various deeds of the New Left, but (illogically and anachronistically) for the hated policies of the Great Society as well. Journalist Fred Barnes outlines a "theory of American history" related to him by Gingrich

in which the 1960s represent a crucial break, "a discontinuity." From 1607 down till 1965, "there is a core pattern to American history. Here's how we did it until the Great Society messed everything up: don't work, don't eat; your salvation is spiritual; the government by definition can't save you; governments are into maintenance and all good reforms are into transformation." Then, "from 1965 to 1994, we did strange

and weird things as a country. Now we're done with that and we have to recover. The counterculture is a momentary aberration in American history that will be looked back upon as a quaint period of Bohemianism brought to the national elite."[4]

The conservatives' version of "the sixties" is not without interest, particularly when it is an account of a given person's revulsion from the culture of an era. Their usefulness as history, however, is undermined by their insistence on understanding "the sixties" as a causal force in and of itself and their curious blurring of the lines between various historical actors: counterculture equals Great Society equals New Left equals "the sixties generation," all of them driven by some mysterious impulse to tear down Western Civilization. Bork is particularly given to such slipshod historiography, imagining at one point that the sixties won't even stay put in the 1960s. "It was a malignant decade," he writes, "that, after a fifteen-year remission, returned in the 1980s to metastasize more devastatingly throughout our culture than it had in the Sixties, not with tumult but quietly, in the moral and political assumptions of those who now control and guide our major cultural institutions."[5] The closest Bork, Bloom, Gingrich, and their colleagues will come to explanations is to revive one of several creaking devices: the sixties as a moral drama of millennialist utopians attempting to work their starry-eyed will in the real world, the sixties as a time of excessive affluence, the sixties as a time of imbalance in the eternal war between the generations, or the sixties as the fault of Dr. Spock, who persuaded American parents in the lost fifties to pamper their children excessively.

Despite its shortcomings, the conservatives' vision of sixties-as-catastrophe has achieved a certain popular success. Both Bloom's and Bork's books were best-sellers. And a mere mention of hippies or "the sixties" is capable of arousing in some quarters an astonishing amount of rage against what many still imagine to have been an era of cultural treason. In the white suburban Midwest, one happens so frequently across declarations of sixties- and hippie-hatred that the posture begins to seem a sort of historiographical prerequisite to being middle class and of a certain age; in the nation's politics, sixties- and hippie-bashing remains a trump card only slightly less effective than red-baiting was in earlier times. One bit of political ephemera that darkened a 1996 congressional race in south Chicago managed to appeal to both hatreds at once, tarring a Democratic candidate as the nephew of a bona fide communist *and* the choice of the still-hated California hippies, representatives of whom (including one photograph of Ken Kesey's famous bus, "Furthur") are pic-

tured protesting, tripping, dancing, and carrying signs for the Democrat in question.[6]

In mass culture, dark images of the treason and excess of the 1960s are not difficult to find. The fable of the doubly-victimized soldiers in Vietnam, betrayed first by liberals and doves in government and then spat upon by members of the indistinguishable New Left/Counterculture has been elevated to cultural archetype by the Rambo movies and has since become such a routine trope that its invocation—and the resulting outrage—requires only the mouthing of a few standard references.[7] The exceedingly successful 1994 movie *Forrest Gump* transformed into archetype the rest of the conservatives' understanding of the decade, depicting youth movements of the sixties in a particularly malevolent light and their leaders (a demagogue modeled on Abbie Hoffman, a sinister group of Black Panthers, and an SDS commissar who is attired, after Bloom's interpretation, in a Nazi tunic) as diabolical charlatans, architects of a national madness from which the movie's characters only recover under the benevolent presidency of Ronald Reagan.

But stay tuned for just a moment longer and a different myth of the counterculture and its meaning crosses the screen. Regardless of the tastes of Republican leaders, rebel youth culture remains the cultural mode of the corporate moment, used to promote not only specific products but the general idea of life in the cyber-revolution. Commercial fantasies of rebellion, liberation, and outright "revolution" against the stultifying demands of mass society are commonplace almost to the point of invisibility in advertising, movies, and television programming. For some, Ken Kesey's parti-colored bus may be a hideous reminder of national unraveling, but for Coca-Cola it seemed a perfect promotional instrument for its "Fruitopia" line, and the company has proceeded to send replicas of the bus around the country to generate interest in the counterculturally themed beverage. Nike shoes are sold to the accompaniment of words delivered by William S. Burroughs and songs by The Beatles, Iggy Pop, and Gil Scott Heron ("the revolution will not be televised"); peace symbols decorate a line of cigarettes manufactured by R. J. Reynolds and the walls and windows of Starbucks coffee shops nationwide; the products of Apple, IBM, and Microsoft are touted as devices of liberation; and advertising across the product-category sprectrum calls upon consumers to break rules and find themselves.[8] The music industry continues to rejuvenate itself with the periodic discovery of new and evermore subversive youth movements and our televisual marketplace is a 24-hour carnival, a

showplace of transgression and inversion of values, of humiliated patriarchs and shocked puritans, of screaming guitars and concupiscent youth, of fashions that are uniformly defiant, of cars that violate convention and shoes that let us be us. A host of self-designated "corporate revolutionaries," outlining the accelerated new capitalist order in magazines like *Wired* and *Fast Company*, gravitate naturally to the imagery of rebel youth culture to dramatize their own insurgent vision. This version of the countercultural myth is so pervasive that it appears even in the very places where the historical counterculture is being maligned. Just as Newt Gingrich hails an individualistic "revolution" while tirading against the counterculture, *Forrest Gump* features a soundtrack of rock 'n' roll music, John Lennon and Elvis Presley appearing in their usual roles as folk heroes, and two carnivalesque episodes in which Gump meets heads of state, avails himself grotesquely of their official generosity (consuming fifteen bottles of White House soda in one scene), and confides to them the tribulations of his nether regions. He even bares his ass to Lyndon Johnson, perhaps the ultimate countercultural gesture.

However the conservatives may froth, this second myth comes much closer to what academics and responsible writers accept as the standard account of the decade. Mainstream culture was tepid, mechanical, and uniform; the revolt of the young against it was a joyous and even a glorious cultural flowering, though it quickly became mainstream itself. Rick Perlstein has summarized this standard version of what went on in the sixties as the "declension hypothesis," a tale in which, "As the Fifties grayly droned on, springs of contrarian sentiment began bubbling into the best minds of a generation raised in unprecedented prosperity but well versed in the existential subversions of the Beats and *Mad* magazine."[9] The story ends with the noble idealism of the New Left in ruins and the counterculture sold out to Hollywood and the television networks.

So natural has this standard version of the countercultural myth come to seem that it required little explanation when, on the twenty-fifth anniversary of the historical counterculture's greatest triumph, a group of cultural speculators and commercial backers (Pepsi-Cola prominent among them) joined forces to put on a second Woodstock. But this time the commercial overtones were just a little too pronounced, and journalists rained down abuse on the venture—not because it threatened "traditional values" but because it defiled the memory of the apotheosized original. Woodstock II was said to be a simple act of ex-

ploitation, a degraded carnival of corporate logos, endorsements, and product-placement while the 1969 festival was sentimentally recalled as an event of youthful innocence and idealistic glory.

Conflicting though they may seem, the two stories of sixties culture agree on a number of basic points. Both assume quite naturally that the counterculture was what it said it was; that is, a fundamental opponent of the capitalist order. Both foes and partisans assume, further, that the counterculture is the appropriate symbol—if not the actual historical cause—for the big cultural shifts that transformed the United States and that permanently rearranged Americans' cultural priorities. They also agree that these changes constituted a radical break or rupture with existing American mores, that they were just as transgressive and as menacing and as revolutionary as countercultural participants believed them to be. More crucial for our purposes here, all sixties narratives place at their center the stories of the groups that are believed to have been so transgressive and revolutionary; American business culture is thought to have been peripheral, if it's mentioned at all. Other than the occasional purveyor of stereotype and conspiracy theory, virtually nobody has shown much interest in telling the story of the executives or suburbanites who awoke one day to find their authority challenged and paradigms problematized.[10] And whether the narrators of the sixties story are conservatives or radicals, they tend to assume that business represented a static, unchanging body of faiths, goals, and practices, a background of muted, uniform gray against which the counterculture went through its colorful chapters.

But the actual story is quite a bit messier. The cultural changes that would become identified as "counterculture" began well before 1960, with roots deep in bohemian and romantic thought, and the era of upheaval persisted long after 1970 rolled around. And while nearly every account of the decade's youth culture describes it as a reaction to the stultifying economic and cultural environment of the postwar years, almost none have noted how that context—the world of business and of middle-class mores—was itself changing during the 1960s. The 1960s was the era of Vietnam, but it was also the high watermark of American prosperity and a time of fantastic ferment in managerial thought and corporate practice. Postwar American capitalism was hardly the unchanging and soulless machine imagined by countercultural leaders; it was as dynamic a force in its own way as the revolutionary youth movements of the period, undertaking dramatic transformations of both the way it operated and the way it imagined itself.

But business history has been largely ignored in accounts of the cultural upheaval of the 1960s. This is unfortunate, because at the heart of every interpretation of the counterculture is a very particular—and very questionable—understanding of corporate ideology and of business practice. According to the standard story, business was the monolithic bad guy who had caused America to become a place of puritanical conformity and empty consumerism; business was the great symbolic foil against which the young rebels defined themselves; business was the force of irredeemable evil lurking behind the orderly lawns of suburbia and the nefarious deeds of the Pentagon. Although there are a few accounts of the sixties in which the two are thought to be synchronized in a cosmic sense (Jerry Rubin often wrote about the joys of watching television and expressed an interest in making commercials; Tom Wolfe believes that Ken Kesey's countercultural aesthetic derived from the consumer boom of the fifties), for the vast majority of countercultural sympathizers, the only relationship between the two was one of hostility.

And from its very beginnings down to the present, business dogged the counterculture with a fake counterculture, a commercial replica that seemed to ape its every move for the titillation of the TV-watching millions and the nation's corporate sponsors. Every rock band with a substantial following was immediately honored with a host of imitators; the 1967 "summer of love" was as much a product of lascivious television specials and *Life* magazine stories as it was an expression of youthful disaffection; Hearst launched a psychedelic magazine in 1968; and even hostility to co-optation had a desperately "authentic" shadow, documented by a famous 1968 print ad for Columbia Records titled "But The Man Can't Bust Our Music." So oppressive was the climate of national voyeurism that, as early as the fall of 1967, the San Francisco Diggers had held a funeral for "Hippie, devoted son of mass media."[11]

This book is a study of co-optation rather than counterculture, an analysis of the forces and logic that made rebel youth cultures so attractive to corporate decision-makers rather than a study of those cultures themselves. In doing so, it risks running afoul of what I will call the co-optation theory: faith in the revolutionary potential of "authentic" counterculture combined with the notion that business mimics and mass-produces fake counterculture in order to cash in on a particular demographic and to subvert the great threat that "real" counterculture represents. *Who Built America?*, the textbook produced by the American Social History project, includes a reproduction of the now-infamous "Man Can't Bust Our Music" ad and this caption summary of co-optation theory: "If you can't beat 'em, absorb 'em." The text below ex-

plains the phenomenon as a question of demographics and savvy marketing, as a marker of the moment when "Record companies, clothing manufacturers, and other purveyors of consumer goods quickly recognized a new market." The ill-fated ad is also reproduced as an object of mockery in underground journalist Abe Peck's book on the decade and mentioned in countless other sixties narratives.[12] Unfortunately, though, the weaknesses of this historical faith are many and critical, and the argument made in these pages tends more to stress these inadequacies than to uphold the myths of authenticity and co-optation. Apart from certain obvious exceptions at either end of the spectrum of commodification (represented, say, by the MC-5 at one end and the Monkees at the other) it was and remains difficult to distinguish precisely between authentic counterculture and fake: by almost every account, the counterculture, as a mass movement distinct from the bohemias that preceded it, was triggered at least as much by developments in mass culture (particularly the arrival of The Beatles in 1964) as changes at the grass roots. Its heroes were rock stars and rebel celebrities, millionaire performers and employees of the culture industry; its greatest moments occurred on television, on the radio, at rock concerts, and in movies. From a distance of thirty years, its language and music seem anything but the authentic populist culture they yearned so desperately to be: from contrived cursing to saintly communalism to the embarrassingly faked Woody Guthrie accents of Bob Dylan and to the astoundingly pretentious works of groups like Iron Butterfly and The Doors, the relics of the counterculture reek of affectation and phoniness, the leisure-dreams of white suburban children like those who made up so much of the Grateful Dead's audience throughout the 1970s and 1980s.

This is a study of business thought, but in its consequences it is necessarily a study of cultural dissent as well: its promise, its meaning, its possibilities, and, most important, its limitations. And it is, above all, the story of the bohemian cultural style's trajectory from adversarial to hegemonic; the story of hip's mutation from native language of the alienated to that of advertising.

It is more than a little odd that, in this age of nuance and negotiated readings, we lack a serious history of co-optation, one that understands corporate thought as something other than a cartoon. Co-optation remains something we vilify almost automatically; the historical particulars which permit or discourage co-optation—or even the obvious fact that some things are co-opted while others are not—are simply not addressed. Regardless of whether the co-opters deserve our vilification or not, the

process by which they make rebel subcultures their own is clearly an important element of contemporary life. And while the ways in which business anticipated and reacted to the youth culture of the 1960s may not reveal much about the individual experiences of countercultural participants, examining their maneuvers closely does allow a more critical perspective on the phenomenon of co-optation, as well as on the value of certain strategies of cultural confrontation, and, ultimately, on the historical meaning of the counterculture.

To begin to take co-optation seriously is instantly to discard one of the basic shibboleths of sixties historiography. As it turns out, many in American business, particularly in the two industries studied here, imagined the counterculture not as an enemy to be undermined or a threat to consumer culture but as a hopeful sign, a symbolic ally in their own struggles against the mountains of dead-weight procedure and hierarchy that had accumulated over the years. In the late 1950s and early 1960s, leaders of the advertising and menswear businesses developed a critique of their own industries, of over-organization and creative dullness, that had much in common with the critique of mass society which gave rise to the counterculture. Like the young insurgents, people in more advanced reaches of the American corporate world deplored conformity, distrusted routine, and encouraged resistance to established power. They welcomed the youth-led cultural revolution not because they were secretly planning to subvert it or even because they believed it would allow them to tap a gigantic youth market (although this was, of course, a factor), but because they perceived in it a comrade in their own struggles to revitalize American business and the consumer order generally. If American capitalism can be said to have spent the 1950s dealing in conformity and consumer fakery, during the decade that followed, it would offer the public authenticity, individuality, difference, and rebellion.

If we really want to understand American culture in the sixties, we must acknowledge at least the possibility that the co-opters had it right, that Madison Avenue's vision of the counterculture was in some ways correct.

look at all the lonely people

The standard story of the counterculture begins with an account of the social order against which it rebelled, a social order that was known to just about everyone by 1960 as the "mass society." The tale of postwar

malaise and youthful liveliness is a familiar one; it is told and retold with the frequency and certainty of historical orthodoxy. Author after author warned in the 1950s that long-standing American traditions of individualism were vanishing and being buried beneath the empires of the great corporations, the sprawl of prefabricated towns, and the reorientation of culture around the imperative of consuming homogenized, mass-produced goods. Although the poverty and deprivation of earlier times had been largely overcome, in the "affluent society" that had succeeded those difficult decades the descendants of the pioneers were in danger of being reduced to faceless cogs in a great machine, automatons in an increasingly rationalized and computerized system of production that mindlessly churned out cars, TVs, bomber jets, and consciousness all for the sake of the ever-accelerating American way of life.

By the end of the 1950s, there could have been very few literate Americans indeed who were not familiar with the term with which these problems were summarized: "conformity." It was said to be a time of intolerance for difference, of look-alike commuters clad in gray flannel and of identical prefabricated ranch houses in planned suburban Levittowns, all stretching moderately and reasonably to the horizon. Conformity was not supposed to be merely a transitory problem of the moment, an intolerance which would fade eventually like the red scares of the past. According to its more sociologically and historically oriented observers, conformity was forever, a symptom of vast economic and social shifts, part of a permanent cultural sea-change that accompanied the ongoing transformation of the American economy. Sociologist David Riesman asserted in 1950 that the advanced prosperity of the United States had brought with it a new dominant "characterological" type: the "other-directed" man who, unlike his "inner-directed" predecessors, looked for guidance not to abstract, unchanging ideals, but to the behavior and beliefs of those around him.[13] In 1956, business writer William H. Whyte, Jr., tagged this new American with what would be his most durable moniker: "Organization Man." Whether employed by a gigantic private corporation or by the government, he was the well-adjusted product of ever-increasing bureaucracy and collectivism. For this new figure the Protestant ethic and the traditional American ideology of individualism were obsolete; the honor once perceived in entrepreneurialism and the lonely upward struggle had evaporated. In their place Organization Man elaborated a "Social Ethic" to better explain his new situation, a belief in the transcendent value of the Organization and in the power of "science" to solve any problems.[14]

Today, with the hierarchy that once allowed easy distinctions between "high" and "low" culture having been long demolished, it is a commonplace of academic cultural writing to dismiss the mass culture theory of the 1950s as "elitist," that most retrograde and loathsome of intellectual qualities. Whatever its particular, immediate qualities, we now find in the scornful criticism of television, movies, and popular music leveled by everyone from Irving Howe to Theodor Adorno simple and unforgivable snobbery. Historian Andrew Ross strikes a typical note when he writes, in *No Respect: Intellectuals and Popular Culture*, that Dwight MacDonald's excoriation of what he called "midcult" served largely "to guarantee and preserve the channels of power through which intellectual authority is exercised."[15] But the historical effects of mass culture theory are not so easily brushed off. The tumult of the 1960s is impossible to understand apart from the central fact that the mass culture critique was, if not populist, enormously popular. *The Lonely Crowd* and *Partisan Review*, which dissected the mass culture threat in a famous 1952 symposium, may have been accessible to highbrow audiences only, but both *Organization Man* and John K. Galbraith's *The Affluent Society* were read by large portions of the general public. By the middle of the 1950s, talk of conformity, of consumerism, and of the banality of mass-produced culture were routine elements of middle-class American life.[16] The mass society refrain was familiar to millions: the failings of capitalism were not so much exploitation and deprivation as they were materialism, wastefulness, and soul-deadening conformity; sins summoned easily and effectively even in the pages of *Life* magazine and by the sayings of characters in the cartoon *Peanuts*. One could read the building moral panic in the vast suburban exodus, in the ecstatic baroquerie of the ever-ascending tailfins on cars—both phenomena that, before they became symbols of conformity themselves, had originally promised somehow to put us back in touch with primal vigor and jet-age excitement. In the last few years of the decade, journalist Vance Packard penned a series of extraordinarily popular analyses of the various aspects of the mass society malaise: *The Hidden Persuaders* (1957) discussed the perfidy of the advertising industry; *The Waste Makers* (1960) dissected the sinister strategies of planned obsolescence; *The Pyramid Climbers* (1962) pronounced the futility of the junior executive's long struggle for power. Meanwhile, social critic John Keats hammered both the suburban way of life (*The Crack in the Picture Window*, 1957) and the culture of the automobile (*The Insolent Chariots*, 1958). When articles decrying conformity had finally appeared in no less august a periodical than *Reader's Digest*, Daniel Bell wrote that

no one in the United States defends conformity. Everyone is against it, and probably everyone always was. Thirty-five years ago, you could easily rattle any middle-class American by charging him with being a "Babbitt." Today you can do so by accusing him of conformity. The problem is to know who is accusing whom.[17]

The most important contribution to the mass society literature was made by Norman Mailer, who wrote in 1957 not just another rendering of suburban anomie but an actual solution for the problem of the age, a blueprint for the cultural eruption by which the civilization of conformity would be overturned. The answer to conformity was hip, he announced in his essay, "The White Negro," thereby founding one of the great public myths of our times, the earliest and most compelling statement of the scheme by which the over-organized postwar world would be resisted. "The only life-giving answer" to the deathly drag of American civilization, Mailer wrote, was to tear oneself from the security of physical and spiritual certainty, to live for immediate pleasures rather than the postponement of gratification associated with the "work ethic," "to divorce oneself from society, to exist without roots, to set out on that uncharted journey with the rebellious imperatives of the self." The antithesis to the man in the gray flannel suit was a figure Mailer called the Hipster, an "American existentialist" whose tastes for jazz, sex, drugs, and the slang and mores of black society constituted the best means of resisting the encroachments of Cold War oppression. The choice was clear for Mailer, as it would be for the rebels of the 1960s and the admen of the 1990s: "one is Hip or one is Square . . . , one is a rebel or one conforms, . . . trapped in the totalitarian tissues of American society, doomed willy-nilly to conform if one is to succeed." Unlike the "over-civilized man" with his diligent piling of the accoutrements of respectability, the hipster lives with a "burning consciousness of the present," exists for ever-more-intense sensation, for immediate gratification, for "an orgasm more apocalyptic than the one which preceded it."[18]

None of this was entirely new in the 1950s. Since its earliest manifestations, aesthetic modernism has been defined by its discovery that the fundamental moral and religious values of Western civilization lack credibility and meaning; that traditional culture serves more to stifle and constrict the individual than to bring him closer to God. As Jackson Lears has noted, this sense of the "unreality of modern existence," of alienation from the nation's "official culture"—the bland, optimistic credos of progress and success that Lears labels "evasive banality"— was a standard element of late nineteenth-century religious and aesthetic movements.[19]

In the 1910s and 1920s, this spirit of disaffection would inspire cultural revolt against the meaninglessness of received ways and the banality of the provincial Babbitry, would make of "art" a lifestyle credo, and would cause the founding of bohemias in Greenwich Village and numerous lesser enclaves across the country, places where one could experiment openly with the forbidden pleasures of sex and drugs. But Mailer's invocation of the old bohemian idea, of the quest for authentic experience, marked a drastic change: this was the democratization of the modernist impulse, the extension of highbrow disaffection with over-civilization (reflected in the common countercultural disdain for such tasteless travesties of the mass society as white bread, suburbs, tailfins, and "plastic") and elite concerns with individual fulfillment to the widest possible audience.[20] By the end of the 1950s, the culture of "unreality" had been elaborately analyzed in popular books and magazines and its shortcomings made familiar to millions of Americans. During the decade that followed, bohemia itself would be democratized, the mass society critique adopted by millions of Organization Men, and the eternal conflict of artist and bourgeoisie expanded into a cultural civil war.

The meaning of "the sixties" cannot be considered apart from the enthusiasm of ordinary, suburban Americans for cultural revolution. And yet that enthusiasm is perhaps the most problematic and the least-studied aspect of the decade. Between the denunciations of conservatives and the fond nostalgia of 1960s partisans, we have forgotten the cosmic optimism with which so many organs of official American culture greeted the youth rebellion. It was this sudden mass defection of Americans from square to hip that distinguished the culture of the 1960s—everything from its rock music to its movies to its generational fantasies to its intoxicants—and yet the vast popularity of dissidence is the aspect of the sixties that the contemporary historical myths have trouble taking into account. The fact is that the bearers of the liberal cultural order were strangely infatuated with the counterculture (especially after 1967), hailing the Beatles with breathless reverence and finding hope and profundity in different aspects of the insurgent youth culture.[21]

This was phase two of the critique elaborated during the 1950s by Riesman, Whyte, and the Frankfurt School: the youth movement showing up everywhere now was to be the bona fide solution to the ills of mass society. In *Life* magazine it appeared in an April, 1967, series of articles entitled, "Modern Society's Growing Challenge: The Struggle to Be an Individual." The first installment ("Challenge for Free Men in a Mass Society") consisted of rather predictable art photographs (pictures of

commuters, aerial views of freeway interchanges, new suburban developments) supposed to "evoke . . . the modern mood of uniformity under pressure, of distorted scale and distorted values, that can lead to a sense of emptiness and anonymity." The second proposed the solution: "The Search for Purpose: Among the Youth of America, a Fresh New Sense of Commitment." The obligatory article on Esalen and the psychic healing to be found there followed in July of 1968.[22]

But all that was a sideshow. The most influential contemporary accounts of the cultural revolution focused almost exclusively on the young and emphasized their purity of intent, exaggerated the contrast between them and a larger, oppressive culture, and were prone to flights of ecstasy over the millennial promise of the movement. *The Making of a Counter Culture*, written in 1968 and 1969 by Theodore Roszak, a professor of history, and *The Greening of America*, a 1970 best-seller by Yale law professor Charles A. Reich, both found in the counterculture the solution to the meaninglessness, alienation, and absurdity familiar to 1950s readers of *Life* and *Reader's Digest*. The counterculture, Roszak wrote, "looks to me like all we have to hold against the final consolidation of a technocratic totalitarianism in which we shall find ourselves ingeniously adapted to an existence wholly estranged from everything that has ever made the life of man an interesting adventure."[23] Charles Reich was even more sanguine. The counterculture had given rise to no less than a new "Consciousness," a way of envisioning the world that was utterly at odds with the prevailing mores of the over-organized society. Under the "corporate state," Americans had been trained in the ways of what Reich calls "Consciousness II": they became automatons, thinking of themselves in terms of their duties as workers and consumers. They endured "a robot life, in which man is deprived of his own being, and he becomes instead a mere role, occupation, or function." But unlike their parents, the young of the 1960s retained a "capacity for outrage," a sense of "betrayal" of the "promises" made by the postwar society of abundance, the vast gulf between the official talk of "freedom" and "liberty" and the dreary, conformist lives of their parents. The youth counterculture was thus the historical bearer of "Consciousness III," which encourages people to pursue their own liberation from the imposed values of the "corporate state," to choose liberation and self-direction over the conformity and other-direction of the mainstream.[24]

Although the millennial ecstasies of these books are now more than a little embarrassing, their binary understanding of the counterculture as the life-affirming opponent of mass society—hip as mortal foe of square—has continued to characterize scholarly writing on the 1960s. Serious works, such as Morris Dickstein's 1977 literary study, *The Gates of Eden*, although more balanced and enlightening than the popular tracts of the early 1970s, still insist on this binary structure, recapitulating the oppressions of mass society and casting the counterculture as its historical negation. The titles that follow this trajectory seem to multiply by some logic of their own year after year: academic histories run again over the usual roster of bright antecedents (the Beats, *Mad* magazine, C. Wright Mills) and down the familiar list of confrontations and media events (Human Be-in, Chicago, Woodstock); these are supplemented with countercultural memoirs and nostalgic looks back at the golden age of rock or muscle cars or television sitcoms.[25] Even writing on the culture of the fifties itself is now sometimes done with the binary historiography of the counterculture in mind: W. T. Lhamon goes out of his way to remind the readers of his book *Deliberate Speed* that the cultural rebellion of the sixties had its roots in those very years cursed with a "5" as their third digit.[26]

What might be called the standard binary narrative goes something like this: spearheaded by a dynamic youth uprising, the cultural sensibility of the 1960s made a decisive break with the dominant forces and social feeling of the postwar era. Rebellion replaced machinelike restraint as the motif of the age. Conformity and consumerism were challenged by a new ethos that found an enemy in the "Establishment," celebrated difference and diversity, and sought to maximize the freedom and "self-realization" of the individual. The "rationality" that had fueled a Cold War and subordinated people to the necessities of industrial efficiency was discredited in favor of more subjective, spontaneous, less mediated ways of knowing. The long-standing cultural and social monopoly of white males was broken, with the values of formerly subaltern groups rising suddenly to the fore. So familiar has the historical equation become (conformist fifties, rebellious sixties) that it now functions like the "historical boundary" used by Henry May to describe the way his generation remembered the teens and twenties: on one side is a stilted, repressed, black-and-white "then"; on our own is a liberated, full-color "now."[27]

Most important of all, the counterculture is said to have worked a revolution through lifestyle rather than politics, a genuine subversion of the status quo through pleasure rather than power: "When the mode of the music changes, the walls of the city will shake," as the saying had it.[28] Despite its apparent enthusiasm, goes the standard binary narrative, the Establishment was deeply threatened and in mortal conflict with a coun-

terculture that aimed to undermine its cherished ethics of hard work and conformity. *Easy Rider* concludes with its hip heroes murdered by white Southerners; the hero of *Zabriskie Point* and those of *Bonnie and Clyde* are shot as well; the hero of *Hair* disrupts a society dinner party, is arrested, and then is killed in Vietnam; and in *Shampoo*, a free-spirited hairdresser is bested by a loathsome financier. "This society fears its young people deeply and desperately and does all that it can to train those it can control in its own image," wrote Ralph Gleason, one of the founding editors of *Rolling Stone*, in January, 1969.[29] Theodore Roszak compared the counterculture's battle against the dominant forms of social organization to an "Invasion of the Centaurs" of Greek mythology. So strange were the ideas of the young, so hostile to prevailing mores, "so radically disaffiliated from the mainstream assumptions of our society that it scarcely looks to many as a culture at all, but takes on the alarming appearance of a barbaric intrusion." The young were demanding an "epochal transformation"; the conflict was Manichean, and the war was to be a total one.[30]

But of course it wasn't. Enter the theory of co-optation. According to the standard binary narrative, the cascade of pseudo-hip culture-products that inundated the marketplace in the sixties were indicators not of the counterculture's consumer-friendly nature but evidence of the "corporate state's" hostility. They were tools with which the Establishment hoped to buy off and absorb its opposition, emblems of dissent that were quickly translated into harmless consumer commodities, emptied of content, and sold to their very originators as substitutes for the real thing. The co-optation theory has been an inescapable corollary of the hip-as-resistance thesis since its inception: Norman Mailer even discussed it in an essay on the redemptive power of hip back in 1959.[31] Toward the end of the 1960s, when both talk of the counterculture's redemptive power and mass-cult knockoffs were at their zenith, co-optation was the subject on everybody's lips. In December, 1968, Ralph Gleason ran down the list: an automaker proselytized for the "Dodge Rebellion," AT&T used the slogan, "The Times, They Are A-Changin'," and Columbia Records ran ads featuring the line "If you won't listen to your parents, The Man, or the Establishment, why should you listen to us."[32] According to Theodore Roszak, the counterculture was in danger of being "swamped with cynical or self-deceived opportunists," media and fashion figures who market themselves as the bearers of "'the philosophy of today's rebellious youth'" and imperil the counterculture with "exploitation as an amusing side show of the swinging society" (the attention of academics like himself was presumably benign). But however the technocracy may imitate, the essence

of the counterculture remained unco-optable: "there is, despite the fraudulence and folly that collects around its edges, a significant new culture a-borning among our youth. . . ."[33]

hip as hegemon

Contemporary academic readings of youth culture are considerably more sophisticated than those of the 1960s and 1970s, but they continue to echo a recognizable version of the Mailer thesis—that hip constitutes some kind of fundamental adversary to a joyless, conformist consumer capitalism. Recent cultural studies are much more willing than the standard sixties authorities to admit the power of marketing over the ingenuous revolutionary potential of the young, but still the battle lines are clearly drawn. Taking for granted that youth signifiers are appropriated, produced, and even invented by the entertainment industry, recent writers argue that resistance arises from the ways in which these signifiers are *consumed* by the young, used in ways that are divergent or contradictory to their manufacturers' oppressive intent. Whatever form prefabricated youth cultures are given by their mass-culture originators ultimately doesn't matter: they are quickly taken apart and reassembled by alienated young people in startlingly novel subcultures. As with the counterculture, it is *transgression* itself, the never-ending race to violate norms, that is the key to resistance.

John Fiske, for example, argues that mass-produced culture is both a site of oppression and rebellion: even as it is calculated to exploit consumers, it unintentionally provides various groups and individuals with the implements of empowerment. The results are "popular culture," which Fiske affirms with enthusiasm: window-shopping consumes space and air conditioning without anything being purchased and is hence an "oppositional cultural practice"; actual shopping, if it's done by women, is liberating, "an oppositional, competitive act, and as such . . . a source of achievement, self-esteem, and power." Similar readings by others are commonplace almost to the point of self-parody: Madonna subverts gender norms; dancing subverts religious order; the Rolling Stones subvert musical hierarchies.[34] And all without the culture industries that have produced these things catching on. Again the narrative is predictable: what Fiske calls the "power-bloc" intends that the public be conformist, complacent consumers while the "people" rebel through a million ineluctable, unfinalizable, individualistic devices:

> The opposition can . . . be thought of as one between *homogeneity*, as the power-bloc attempts to control, structure, and minimize social differences so that they serve its interests, and *heterogeneity*, as the formations of the people intransigently maintain their sense of social difference that is also a difference of interest.

In order for mass culture to be "popular," it must make concessions to this impulse toward "heterogeneity," it must contain elements of such facets of "liberation" as "the carnivalesque," "evasion," and "*jouissance*"; it must allow for rebellion against the "patriarchy;" it must make gestures toward an "inversion" of values. And when these various things appear in mass culture, Fiske hails them as instruments of subaltern empowerment.[35] The values of consumer society are still those attacked by the mass society theorists: by its nature, capitalism requires rigid conformity and patriarchy in order to function. The transgressive practices of the hipster are innately modes of resistance, and mass culture only makes concessions to them from necessity.

From both the anti-sixties bombast of Newt Gingrich and from cultural studies' celebration of difference, transgression, and the carnivalesque, a curious consensus emerges: business and hip are irreconcilable enemies, the two antithetical poles of American mass culture. Whether it is the crude rendering of Jerry Rubin and Charles Reich or the complex analysis of later academics, the historical meaning of hip seems to be fixed: it is a set of liberating practices fundamentally at odds with the dominant impulses of postwar American society. As in the standard binary narrative of the sixties, cultural studies tends to overlook the trends, changes, and intricacies of corporate culture, regarding it as a monolithic, unchanging system with unchanging values. Described variously as the "technocracy," "the power bloc," "hegemony," or "everyday life," its cultural requirements are assumed to be static, hierarchical, patriarchal, and conformist, having changed very little since the 1950s. Despite its ever-changing surface and curious excesses, management theory is, generally speaking, not a popular subject of cultural studies, and few cultural theorists bother with the various histories of American business that have appeared in recent years.[36]

Yet the subject couldn't be more compelling. Today corporate ideologues routinely declare that business has supplanted the state, the church, and all independent culture in our national life. Curiously enough, at the same time many scholars have decided it is folly to study business. For all of cultural studies' subtle readings and forceful advocacy, its practitioners often tend to limit their inquiries so rigorously to the

consumption of culture-products that the equally important process of cultural production is virtually ignored. While the most fanciful of motives may be safely attributed to rock stars and culture consumers, efforts to study the doings of the culture industry are widely regarded with a sort of suspicious disdain, as tantamount to accepting the snobbish contempt for popular culture once expressed by the now-discredited theorists of mass society. Worse, to analyze the machinations of advertising or record company executives suggests that one believes the public to be mere "cultural dopes," pawns of a malevolent and conspiratorial culture industry.

These oversights have more serious consequences for scholarship than they might seem at first: as analysts from Marx to the editors of *Wired* have noted, capitalism is dynamic stuff, an order of endless flux and change. Both the way businesspeople think and the way corporations are organized have shifted dramatically over the last forty years; by glibly passing over these changes when describing the culture of capitalism—even were one to grant that only cultural reception matters—one seriously miscontextualizes American daily life. Ultimately, though, something much greater than simple academic error is at stake: recent cultural studies are concerned with the nature and practice of dissent itself; and to identify capitalism, its culture-products, and its opponents according to an inflexible scheme of square and hip—"homogeneity" versus "heterogeneity," the "power bloc" versus "the people," conformity versus individualism—is to make a strategic blunder of enormous proportions.

It is also to contradict rather directly some of the basic findings of recent American cultural history. Despite the homogeneity, repression, and conformity critique favored by so many avatars of cultural studies, historians like Warren Susman, William Leach, and Jackson Lears have pointed out that the prosperity of a consumer society depends not on a rigid control of people's leisure-time behavior, but exactly its opposite: unrestraint in spending, the willingness to enjoy formerly forbidden pleasures, an abandonment of the values of thrift and the suspicion of leisure that characterized an earlier variety of capitalism. Susman placed the battle between these two philosophies, a "culture that envisioned a world of scarcity . . . , hard work, self-denial . . . , sacrifice, and character" and a new order emphasizing "pleasure, self-fulfillment, and play" at the center of his understanding of twentieth-century America.[37] Leach points out that early ideologues of consumerism described the new regime not as one of repressive adherence to tradition or patriarchy but as a valorization of constant change, of individuality, and of the eternal new. Consumer capitalism, he notes, has taught a "concept of humanity" according to

which "what is most 'human' about people is their quest after the new, their willingness to violate boundaries, their hatred of the old and the habitual . . . , and their need to incorporate 'more and more'—goods, money, experience, everything." Consumer capitalism did not demand conformity or homogeneity; rather, it thrived on the doctrine of liberation and continual transgression that is still familiar today: for one department store chief whom Leach studies, "modern capitalism was positively liberating; by its very nature, it rejected all traditions and embraced desire."[38]

American business was undergoing a revolution in its own right during the 1960s, a revolution in marketing practice, management thinking, and ideas about creativity. It was a revolution as far-reaching in its own way as the revolutions in manners, music, art, and taste taking place elsewhere, and it shared with those revolutions a common hostility for hierarchy, for inherited wisdom, and for technocratic ideas of efficiency. The strange relationship of corporations and counterculture becomes considerably less strange when examined from the perspective of management literature. During the 1950s and 1960s, management thinkers went through their own version of the mass society critique, first deploring the demise of entrepreneurship under the stultifying regime of technocratic efficiency (*The Organization Man*), then embracing all manner of individualism-promoting, bureaucracy-smashing, and antihierarchical schemes (*The Human Side of Enterprise, Up the Organization*). Infatuation with youthful cultural insurgency came almost as naturally for them as it did for Charles Reich and Theodore Roszak: it seemed to be a lively cultural fermentation dedicated to many of the same principles as were the leaders of the business revolution.

The only episode in the development of management literature to have attracted much attention outside of business schools is the scheme of time-and-motion studies performed by Frederick Winslow Taylor and the body of theory which arose in their wake. Applied to the shop floor, Taylor's theories brought about the meaningless, alienating labor lampooned by Charlie Chaplin in *Modern Times*; applied to office work, they gave rise to the hyperorganized world of the pre-1960s corporation, to the values of conformity and hierarchy that still form such an enormous part of the popular vision of capitalist life. The Taylorist impulse dominated business thinking well into the 1950s, with efficiency, hierarchy, and organization long thought to be the keys to productivity. Business historian Art Kleiner calls it a time of "the numbers," an era in which rigid orderliness took on a certain metaphysical value: "At General Electric, AT&T, Procter & Gamble, and nearly every other large company, encyclopedic manuals . . . dictated every aspect of workplace practice, from the layout of stamping machines to the format of quarterly reports to the placement of pencils on a secretary's desk."[39] This, of course, is the familiar world of mass society and its good citizen, Organization Man, easily summoned up to this day by photos of look-alike executives in narrow ties, gray suits, and horn-rimmed glasses.[40] Its classic text, Alfred Sloan's *My Years With General Motors*, is a terrifyingly boring tale of committees and calculation and flow charts and layer upon layer of organization.[41]

But even in the most complacent management literature of the fifties one finds harbingers of dissidence and upheaval. The February 1951 edition of *Fortune*, for example, was a special issue devoted to laying out a manifesto for American world dominance and conducting a snarling defense of the middle-class consensus against all who doubted it. But, as the issue's cubist illustrations and title (borrowed openly from Trotsky—"U.S.A. The Permanent Revolution") make clear, all was not perfect in the corporation, that "organization of vast powers, which exacts of its managers purely impersonal decisions," and the eternal rebellion of the individual which the magazine celebrated would continue in unpredictable ways in the future.[42] *Fortune* also featured a number of prominent intellectuals on its editorial staff: Dwight MacDonald, Reuel Denney, and Daniel Bell all wrote for Henry Luce's business publication, as did James Agee and Archibald MacLeish. However absurd management literature would eventually become, during this period (a time when *Fortune* also printed serious labor journalism, something virtually unknown today) it was capable of something close to real social criticism. And within a few years, the proto-dissidence that glimmers in "The Permanent Revolution" would be in full outcry against the dangers of conformity. Before long, management texts would be counseling against hierarchy, sneering at the old Taylorist management theories, celebrating human qualities, and downplaying the abilities of computers.

It is somehow appropriate that the book through which the culture of the American 1950s will always be remembered was written by an editor of *Fortune*. *The Organization Man* may have been astute social criticism, and it may have been one of the first sparks in the cultural uprising that would later become the counterculture, but it was also a management book, a sweeping study of American business and its problems. For Whyte, apparently unconcerned with the propaganda requirements of

the Cold War or with imagining America as a place of finely tuned balance, the triumph of "group-mindedness" had serious negative consequences for the conduct of business as well as for American life. The most deleterious effect of the "social ethic," he warned, was that it inhibited creativity. Only individuals were capable of offering "the bold new plan," but "it is the nature of a new idea to confound current consensus." Indeed, certain large corporations were taking active measures to weed creative people out of the white-collar workforce.[43]

Business concern over the creativity crisis roughly paralleled the larger culture's worries about conformity. As the 1960s began, an array of management texts appeared addressing the problems of the 1950s and suggesting, as one book's rather direct title put it, *How to Be a More Creative Executive*.[44] In 1960, Douglas McGregor published *The Human Side of Enterprise*, one of the most popular business texts of the era, codifying Whyte's analysis of corporate life into one of the elaborate metatheories to which management literature has always been partial. All American corporations subscribed to one of two grand schemes of human organization, McGregor insisted: "Theory X," the Taylorist "traditional view," according to which workers must be "coerced," supervised, and "directed" by a hierarchy of power; and "Theory Y," a more sophisticated approach according to which workers' ingenuity is recognized, and they are motivated by progress toward an objective rather than fear of punishment. "Theory Y" promised, through participative strategies, to "link improvement in managerial competence with the satisfaction of higher-level ego and self-actualization needs," to open the way for "developments . . . with respect to the human side of enterprise comparable to those that have occurred in technology."[45] Just as Mailer's "White Negro" suggested a solution to conformity, *The Human Side of Enterprise* set out the alternative to the creativity-stifling "social ethic." It was an enormously influential book, spawning dozens of spinoffs and winning disciples across the corporate spectrum. Today, with popular business writers vying constantly to come up with an evermore transgressive strategy for disrupting corporate hierarchy, the bloated corpus of recent management literature seems like one long tribute to McGregor's thought, an interminable string of corollaries to "Theory Y." Yet neither McGregor nor his book are mentioned in any of the standard academic accounts of the 1960s.[46]

Nonetheless, the 1960s were a time of radical change in business theory, what Kleiner calls an "age of heretics." In the wake of *The Human Side of Enterprise* and with hierarchy discredited, conformity under attack,

and "creativity" and "leadership" back in the fore, the old Taylorist "Theory X" principles were headed toward theoretical extinction. The characteristic business text of 1970—published at just about the same time that Timothy Leary was denouncing corporate America as a "humanoid robot whose every Federal Bureaucratic impulse is soulless, heartless, lifeless, loveless"—was a diatribe against hierarchy, entitled *Up the Organization: How to Stop the Corporation from Stifling People and Strangling Profits*, written by Robert Townsend, an executive at a company (Avis Rent-a-Car, whose rule-breaking ads were made by Doyle Dane Bernbach) that had grown dramatically over the decade by aggressively defying the conventions of marketing and advertising.[47] A pugnacious champion of "Theory Y," Townsend declares himself for those corporate "subversives" who have "a talent for spotting the idiocies now built into the system" and roundly denounces "monster corporations" where, "trapped in the pigeonholes of organization charts, [employees and executives have] been made slaves to the rules of private and public hierarchies that run mindlessly on and on because nobody can change them." *Up the Organization* is composed of terse declarations of revolutionary ardor: "True leadership must be for the benefit of the followers, not the enrichment of the leaders"; "Don't hire Harvard Business School graduates"; "We've become a nation of office boys." And in a savage rebuke to Alfred Sloan, whose book boasts of his massive contributions to the various war efforts of the twentieth century, Townsend holds up none other than Ho Chi Minh as exemplary of Theory Y, which explains his "unbelievable twenty-five year survival against the mighty blasts of Theory X monsters of three nations."[48]

Ho Chi Minh indeed. The shift in American business writing during those high-water years of prosperity was also accompanied by a revolution in industrial organization of the most tangible sort. The 1960s saw the maturation of the economic regime that theorists of marketing call "market segmentation," the discovery of demographics and the now-commonplace insight that targeting slightly different products to specific groups of consumers is significantly more effective than manufacturing one uniform product for everyone. Business historian Richard S. Tedlow describes market segmentation as a stage of development in which demographics and "psychographics" are used "to create divisions in markets that [marketers] can exploit with competitive advantages." Physical characteristics of products are no longer as important as before: under market segmentation, competitive battle is joined over issues like brand image and consumer identity, with advertising taking an ever-more prominent

part in business development.[49] The epic battle of Coca-Cola and Pepsi is the best-known illustration of the change in which uniformity quite literally gave way to diversity. Over the first half of this century, Coke built an unrivaled dominance of the once-localized soft-drink marketplace: it offered a single product that was supposed to be consumable by people in every walk of life—rich and poor, old and young, men and women—and in every part of the country. It was the "brand beyond competition," with a single, zealously guarded formula and a single container size that was supposed to be adequate for everyone. Pepsi's rise during the 1960s, more than any other single event, signaled the arrival of the segmented market. By appealing to youthfulness and the young as a philosophy and a people apart from the values associated with Coca-Cola, Pepsi transformed itself quickly into a competitor to be reckoned with. The ensuing "Cola Wars" have had much less to do with the rival companies' actual products than with the "psychic benefit" promised by each, with the war of symbolism in which both have invested so much.[50]

At its most advanced stages, according to business writers, this new species of marketing is concerned with nothing other than the construction of consumer subjectivity, as manufacturers and advertisers attempt to call group identities into existence where before there had been nothing but inchoate feelings and common responses to pollsters' questions. About this rather startling point Tedlow is completely candid. "Segmentation based not on logistics or on some genuine product characteristics but on demographic and psychographic groupings carved out of the general population is an invention of late twentieth-century American marketing," he writes.

> The old fragmentation was based on realities [primarily geographic], but this new segmentation springs wholly from the imagination of the marketer. Pepsi and other such companies have been more interested in the term segment as a verb than as a noun. They have segmented markets, rather than merely responded to a market segment that already existed. There was no such thing as the Pepsi Generation until Pepsi created it.[51]

It is significant that the market element utilized in (or invented by) Pepsi's ur-segmentation was youth. Before the 1960s, young people had always been an established part of marketing and a staple image in advertising art, largely because of their still unformed tastes and their position as trend leaders. This was especially true in the 1920s. But during the 1960s, this standard approach changed. No longer was youth merely a

"natural" demographic group to which appeals could be pitched: suddenly youth became a consuming position to which all could aspire. "Pepsi not only recognized the existence of a demographic segment," observed marketing historians Stanley Hollander and Richard Germain, "but also in essence manufactured a segment of those who wanted to feel youthful."[52] The conceptual position of *youthfulness* became as great an element of the marketing picture as youth itself.

Writers who are critical of capitalism identify these changes in management theory and marketing practice as part of a larger ideological realignment spanning the postwar era. David Harvey, for example, attributes the shift from centralized "Fordism" of the 1950s and before to the mobile, segmented economy of "flexible accumulation" as the rise of a sort of hyperconsumerism in which the production of image, consumer and corporate identity, and publicity strategies have taken precedence over the actual production of goods. As culture increasingly became the battleground of business competition, the frenzied obsolescence of fashion was introduced into all manner of cultural endeavors, providing "a means to accelerate the pace of consumption not only in clothing, ornament, and decoration but also across a wide swathe of life-styles and recreational activities (leisure and sporting habits, pop music styles, video and children's games, and the like)."[53]

The 1960s were a time of revolution in American business, as they were in so many aspects of American life, an era that saw both the rise of market segmentation and a shift from a management culture that revered hierarchy and efficiency to one that emphasized individualism and creativity. Readers of the mass society texts and partisans of the counterculture, it seems, were not alone in their suspicions of the conformist powers of the great corporations. No one knew the horrors of the social ethic better than Organization Man himself. Not that too many of the vast corporations were persuaded by books like McGregor's to restructure themselves utterly, of course: the change was largely a matter of ideology and of marketing, of the symbols and referents by which business understood itself and by which it addressed the public. But what's important about these facts is that American business culture was not the flat gray monotone that most accounts of the sixties imagine it to have been. Changing the cultural background of the standard binary sixties story, though, has serious implications for the theory of co-optation, implications that become even more pronounced when corporate responses to the counterculture are examined closely. Far from opposing the larger cultural revolution of those years, the business revolution paralleled—

and in some cases actually anticipated—the impulses and new values associated with the counterculture. Art Kleiner, who worked as an editor of the *Whole Earth Catalog* before taking up business history, is explicit about the connection between management theory and the counterculture. He depicts the 1960s as a long struggle to recover what he calls "vernacular" human relationships amid the hyper-rationalism of the technocracy, an effort that "could only have existed against the backdrop of the counterculture." "As the influence of the counterculture spread," he writes, "a few managers began to question the prevailing assumptions of the corporations they worked for."[54]

The curious enthusiasm of American business for the symbols, music, and slang of the counterculture marked a fascination that was much more complex than the theory of co-optation would suggest. In fields like fashion and advertising that were most conspicuously involved with the new phase of image-centered capitalism, business leaders were not concerned merely with simulating countercultural signifiers in order to sell the young demographic (or stave off revolution, for that matter) but because they approved of the new values and anti-establishment sensibility being developed by the youthful revolutionaries. They were drawn to the counterculture because it made sense to them, because they saw a reflection of the new values of consuming and managing to which they had been ministering for several years.

Hip capitalism wasn't something on the fringes of enterprise, an occasional hippie entrepreneur selling posters or drug paraphernalia. Nor was it a purely demographic maneuver, just a different spin to sell products to a different group. What happened in the sixties is that hip became central to the way American capitalism understood itself and explained itself to the public.

hip consumerism

Advertising and menswear, the two industries with which this book are directly concerned, were deeply caught up in both the corporate and cultural changes that defined the sixties. The story in men's clothing is simple enough and is often cited as an indicator of changing times along with movies, novels, and popular music: the fifties are remembered, rather stereotypically, as a time of gray flannel dullness, while the sixties were an era of sartorial gaudiness. The change in the nation's advertising is less frequently remembered as one of the important turning points between the fifties and sixties, but the changes here were, if anything, even more remarkable, more significant, and took place slightly earlier than those in music and youth culture. Both industries were on the cutting edge of the shifts in corporate practice in the 1960s, and both were also conspicuous users of countercultural symbolism—they were, if you will, the leading lights of co-optation.

But both industries' reaction to youth culture during the sixties was more complex than that envisioned by the co-optation theory. Both menswear and advertising were paralyzed by similar problems in the 1950s: they suffered from a species of creative doldrums, an inability to move beyond the conventions they had invented for themselves and to tap into that wellspring of American economic dynamism that *Fortune* called "the permanent revolution." Both industries underwent "revolutions" in their own right during the 1960s, with vast changes in corporate practice, in productive flexibility, and especially in that intangible phenomenon known as "creativity"—and in both cases well before the counterculture appeared on the mass-media scene. In the decade that followed, both industries found a similar solution to their problems: a commercial version of the mass society theory that made of alienation a motor for fashion. Seeking a single metaphor by which to characterize the accelerated obsolescence and enhanced consumer friendliness to change which were their goals, leaders in both fields had already settled on "youth" and "youthfulness" several years before saturation TV and print coverage of the "Summer of Love" introduced middle America to the fabulous new lifestyles of the young generation.

Then, in 1967 and 1968, advertising and menswear executives seized upon the counterculture as the preeminent symbol of the revolution in which they were engaged, embellishing both their trade literature and their products with images of rebellious, individualistic youth. While leaders of both industries appreciated the demographic bonanza that the baby boom represented, their concentration on the symbols of first youth and then culture-rebel owed more to new understandings of consumption and business culture than to a desire to sell the kids. The counterculture served corporate revolutionaries as a projection of the new ideology of business, a living embodiment of attitudes that reflected their own. In its hostility to established tastes, the counterculture seemed to be preparing young people to rebel against whatever they had patronized before and to view the cycles of the new without the suspicion of earlier eras. Its simultaneous craving for authenticity and suspicion of tradition seemed to make the counterculture an ideal vehicle for a vast sea-change in Ameri-

can consuming habits. Through its symbols and myths, leaders of the menswear and advertising industries imagined a consumerism markedly different from its 1950s permutation, a hip consumerism driven by disgust with mass society itself.

Capitalism was entering the space age in the sixties, and Organization Man was a drag not only as a parent, but as an executive. The old values of caution, deference, and hierarchy drowned creativity and denied flexibility; they enervated not only the human spirit but the consuming spirit and the entrepreneurial spirit as well. And when business leaders cast their gaze onto the youth culture bubbling around them, they saw both a reflection of their own struggle against the stifling bureaucracy of the past and an affirmation of a dynamic new consuming order that would replace the old. For these business thinkers, the cultural revolution that has come to be symbolized by the counterculture seemed an affirmation of their own revolutionary faiths, a reflection of their own struggles to call their corporate colleagues into step with the chaotic and frenetically changing economic universe.

The revolutions in menswear and advertising—as well as the larger revolution in corporate thought—ran out of steam when the great postwar prosperity collapsed in the early 1970s. In a larger sense, though, the corporate revolution of the 1960s never ended. In the early 1990s, while the nation was awakening to the realities of the hyperaccelerated global information economy, the language of the business revolution of the sixties (and even some of the individuals who led it) made a triumphant return. Although on the surface menswear seemed to have settled back into placidity, the reputation of the designers and creative rebels who made their first appearance during the decade of revolt were at their zenith in the 1990s; men's clothes were again being presented to the public as emblems of nonconformity; and the magazines which most prominently equated style with rebellion (*Details* and GQ, the latter of which had been founded at the opening of the earlier revolution in 1957) were enjoying great success. The hottest advertising agencies of the late 1980s and early 1990s were, again, the small creative firms; a new company of creative rebels came to dominate the profession; and advertising that offered to help consumers overcome their alienation, to facilitate their nonconformity, and which celebrated rule-breaking and insurrection became virtually ubiquitous. Most important, the corporate theory of the 1990s makes explicit references to sixties management theory and the experiences of the counterculture.[55] Like the laid-back executives who

personify it, the ideology of information capitalism is a child of the 1960s; the intervening years of the 1970s and 1980s may have delayed the revolution, but they hardly defused its urgency.

Placing the culture of the 1960s in this corporate context does little to support any of the standard countercultural myths, nor does it affirm the consensual notion of the 1960s as a time of fundamental cultural confrontation. It suggests instead that the counterculture may be more accurately understood as a stage in the development of the values of the American middle class, a colorful installment in the twentieth century drama of consumer subjectivity. This is not, of course, a novel interpretation: in the 1960s and 1970s it was a frequent plaint among writers who insisted that the counterculture was apolitical and self-indulgent, or, when it did spill over into obviously political manifestations, confused and anarchistic.[56] This critique of cultural liberation even extends back to the late 1950s, when Delmore Schwartz reacted to the rise of the Beats by pointing out that the attack of the "San Francisco Howlers" on "the conformism of the organization man, the advertising executive, the man in the grey flannel suit, or the man in the Brooks Brothers suit" was

> a form of shadow boxing because the Man in the Brooks Brothers suit is himself, in his own home, very often what [Bertrand] Russell has called an upper Bohemian. His conformism is limited to the office day and business hours: in private life—and at heart—he is as Bohemian as anyone else.[57]

Michael Harrington described the counterculture in 1972 as a massification of the bohemia in which he had spent his youth, an assumption of the values of Greenwich Village by the decidedly nonrevolutionary middle class. "I wonder if the mass counterculture may not be a reflection of the very hyped and video-taped world it professes to despise," he wrote.

> Bohemia could not survive the passing of its polar opposite and precondition, middle-class morality. Free love and all-night drinking and art for art's sake were consequences of a single stern imperative: thou shalt not be bourgeois. But once the bourgeoisie itself became decadent—once businessmen started hanging nonobjective art in the boardroom—Bohemia was deprived of the stifling atmosphere without which it could not breathe.[58]

Others understood the counterculture explicitly in terms of accelerating consumer culture and the crisis in corporate thought. "Having pro-

fessed their disdain for middle-class values," wrote novelist and adman Earl Shorris in 1967, "the hippies indulge in them without guilt." Shorris envisioned the counterculture not as a movement promising fundamental transformation but as an expression of a solidly middle-class dream:

> The preponderance of hippies come from the middle class, because it is there even among adults that the illusion of the hippies' joy, free love, purity and drug excitement is strongest. A man grown weary of singing company songs at I.B.M. picnics, feeling guilty about the profits he has made on defense stocks, who hasn't really loved his wife for 10 years, must admire, envy and wish for a life of love and contemplation, a simple life leading to a beatific peace. He soothes his despair with the possibility that the hippies have found the answers to problems he does not dare to face.[59]

In a famously cynical essay that appeared in *Ramparts* in 1967, Warren Hinckle pointed out that, for all the rhetoric of alienation, the inhabitants of the Haight-Ashbury were "brand name conscious" and "frantic consumers."

> In this commercial sense, the hippies have not only accepted assimilation . . . , they have swallowed it whole. The hippie culture is in many ways a prototype of the most ephemeral aspects of the larger American society; if the people looking in from the suburbs want change, clothes, fun, and some lightheadedness from the new gypsies, the hippies are delivering—and some of them are becoming rich hippies because of it.

Looking back in 1974, Marshall Berman directly equated "cultural liberation" in the sixties sense with dynamic economic growth.[60] Andrew Ross pointed out in 1989 that this curiously ambivalent relationship with consumerism has always been the defining characteristic of hip: an "essentially agnostic cult of style worship," hip is concerned more with "advanced knowledge about the illegitimate," and staying one step ahead of the consuming crowd than with any "ideology of good community faith."[61] Nor did those who were the counterculture's putative enemies feel that it posed much of a threat to the core values of consumer capitalism. On the contrary, they found that it affirmed those values in certain crucial ways, providing American business with a system of easy symbols with which they could express their own needs and solve the intractable cultural problems they had encountered during the 1950s.

The counterculture has long since outlived the enthusiasm of its original participants and become a more or less permanent part of the American scene, a symbolic and musical language for the endless cycles of rebellion and transgression that make up so much of our mass culture. With leisure-time activities of consuming redefined as "rebellion," two of late capitalism's great problems could easily be met: obsolescence found a new and more convincing language, and citizens could symbolically resolve the contradiction between their role as consumers and their role as producers.[62] The countercultural style has become a permanent fixture on the American scene, impervious to the angriest assaults of cultural and political conservatives, because it so conveniently and efficiently transforms the myriad petty tyrannies of economic life—all the complaints about conformity, oppression, bureaucracy, meaninglessness, and the disappearance of individualism that became virtually a national obsession during the 1950s—into rationales for consuming. No longer would Americans buy to fit in or impress the Joneses, but to demonstrate that they were wise to the game, to express their revulsion with the artifice and conformity of consumerism. The enthusiastic discovery of the counterculture by the branches of American business studied here marked the consolidation of a new species of hip consumerism, a cultural perpetual motion machine in which disgust with the falseness, shoddiness, and everyday oppressions of consumer society could be enlisted to drive the ever-accelerating wheels of consumption.

Both of the industries studied here are often written about in quasi-conspiratorial terms. Many Americans apparently believe advertising works because it contains magic "subliminals"; others sneer at fashion as an insidious plot orchestrated by a Paris-New York cabal. Both ideas are interesting popular variations on the mass society/consumerism-as-conformity critique. But this book makes no attempt to resolve the perennial question of exactly how much the garment industries control fashion trends. Obviously the Fairchild company is unable to trick the public into buying whatever look it chooses to launch in one of the myriad magazines it owns, but it is hardly conspiracy-mongering to study the company's attempts to do so. Nor does this book seek to settle the debate over whether advertising causes cultural change or reflects it: obviously it does a great deal of both. Business leaders are not dictators scheming to defraud the nation, but neither are they the mystic diviners of the public will that they claim (and that free-market theory holds them) to be. Fur-

thermore, the thoughts and worries and ecstasies of business leaders are worth studying regardless of the exact quantity of power they exert over the public mind. Whether the cultural revolution of the 1960s was the product of conspiracy, popular will, or the movement of market or dialectic, the thinking of corporate America is essential in judging its historical meaning.

This study is not concerned with the counterculture as a historical phenomenon as much as it is concerned with the genesis of counterculture as an enduring commercial myth, the titanic symbolic clash of hip and square that recurs throughout post-sixties culture. On occasion, the myth is phrased in the overt language of the historical counterculture (Woodstock II, for example); but for the most part the subject here is the rise of a general corporate style, phrased in terms of whatever the youth culture of the day happens to be, that celebrates both a kind of less-structured, faster-moving corporation and that also promotes consumer resistance to the by-now well-known horrors of conformist consumerism. Today hip is ubiquitous as a commercial style, a staple of advertising that promises to deliver the consumer from the dreary nightmare of square consumerism. Hip is also the vernacular of the much-hyped economic revolution of the 1990s, an economic shift whose heroes are written up by none other than the *New York Times Magazine* as maximum revolutionaries: artists rather than commanders, wearers of ponytails and dreamers of cowboy fantasies who proudly proclaim their ignorance of "rep ties."[63]

The questions that surround the counterculture are enormous ones, and loaded as they are with such mythical importance to both countercultural participants and their foes, they are often difficult to consider dispassionately.[64] Furthermore, the critique of mass society embraced by the counterculture still holds a profound appeal: young people during the 1960s were confronting the same problems that each of us continues to confront every day, and they did so with a language and style that still rings true for many. This study is, in some ways, as much a product of countercultural suspicion of consumerism as are the ads and fashions it evaluates. The story of the counterculture—and of insurgent youth culture generally—now resides somewhere near the center of our national self-understanding, both as the focus of endless new generations of collective youth-liberation fantasies and as the sort of cultural treason imagined by various reactionaries. And even though countercultural sympathizers are willing to recognize that co-optation is an essential aspect of youth

culture, they remain reluctant to systematically evaluate business thinking on the subject, to ask how this most anticommercial youth movement of them all became the symbol for the accelerated capitalism of the sixties and the nineties, or to hold the beloved counterculture to the harsh light of historical and economic scrutiny. It is an intellectual task whose time has come.

chapter four

THREE REBELS: ADVERTISING NARRATIVES OF THE SIXTIES

There is a time in every man's education when he arrives at the conviction that envy is ignorance, that imitation is suicide, that he must take himself for better or worse as his portion. Insist on yourself. Never imitate. . . . Society everywhere is in a conspiracy against the manhood of every one of its members.

— VOICEOVER FROM "REEBOK LETS U.B.U." COMMERCIAL, LATE 1980S[1]

satirist

Just as Bill Bernbach inverted the standard advertising industry practices of the fifties, advertising memoirs and handbooks of the sixties flatly contradict those of the fifties on everything from the value of science to their depiction of daily life in the business. They usually begin, strangely enough, by acknowledging the mass society critique and agreeing with the criticism of the advertising industry leveled by outsiders like Vance Packard. The work of the nation's prominent Madison Avenue agencies, the authors of the sixties' three great advertising narratives were quite willing to admit, was degrading, insulting, and unconvincing stuff.

If the Creative Revolution can be said to have unleashed any genuine geniuses on American culture, the title would have to go to San Francisco adman Howard Gossage. The ads he made, for odd clients like the Irish Whiskey Distillers Association, Fina gas stations, Qantas airlines, and Eagle shirts, are gems of wit and friendly joking; published almost exclusively in Gossage's favorite medium, *The New Yorker*, they remain a pleasure to read forty years later. Although his ads never appeared on television, although he worked on the West rather than the East Coast, although his only book was published only in German (until 1987, when it finally appeared in English under the title *Is There Any Hope for Advertising?*), and although he died in 1969, Gossage inspired a following

among American admen and practitioners of commercial art that persists to this day. This is curious, since Gossage produced as harsh an attack on American commercial culture as any generated by the Frankfurt School. In addition to being an adman, he was on the board of the leftist magazine *Ramparts*. He spoke out vigorously against the invasiveness of billboards and made hugely successful conservation ads for the Sierra Club (ads which, incidentally, were credited by some with having launched environmentalism[2]). His ad agency partner was Jerry Mander, who later wrote the anticonsumerism tract *Four Arguments for the Elimination of Television*. And his critique of the industry in which he labored and the consumer society which he had worked to build was biting in the extreme.

Is There Any Hope for Advertising?, which appeared in Germany in 1967, is an extended attack on the American advertising industry, to whose products Gossage applies in the course of two early paragraphs the words "fatuity," "objectionable," "degraded," "trivial," "boring," "uneconomical," and "the world's dullest show." Not only did the Reevesian repetition of simple USPs bore and irritate audiences, Gossage asserted, but it was a terrifically inefficient way to sell products as well, having caused over the years an "immunity" to develop in readers. "As the immunity builds up it costs more and more to advertise each year," Gossage wrote. "It's like narcotics, it must be taken in ever-increasing doses to achieve the same effect." The social order of which advertising was the preeminent expression was similarly deranged. In an article he wrote for *Harper's* magazine in 1961, Gossage described the affluent society itself as a sort of colossal Ponzi scheme. In the previous year's elections,

> Both parties swore fealty to ever-expanding production; this presumably based on ever-expanding population and ever-expanding consumption. Not only are all of these terms plainly impossible, but unnerving as well. Put like that, our economy sounds like nothing so much as the granddaddy of all chain letters. All you can do is hope to get your name to the top of the list, or die, before something happens (like peace) and the whole thing collapses.

Just as academics were coming around to the forbidden joys of popular culture, leading admen were learning to shun them. And for ten years, at least, the makers of American advertising would rank among the country's most visible critics of the mass society.[3]

This skepticism would be the ideological point where the advertising of the sixties parted ways from its predecessors. In the gilded tableaux of

so much of 1950s advertising, the world of consumer goods was a place of divine detachment, a vision of perfection through products. For Gossage, though, such ads were "shielded from real life," making no effort to "engage their readers on a direct basis or attempt to involve them." As with Bernbach and William Whyte, Gossage's solution was to speak meaningfully to readers—"not in advertisingese, but in direct, well-formed English"—and until admen did so, "we will never develop the personal responsibility toward our audience, and ourselves, that even a ninth rate tap dancer has." Of course, most ad agencies were prevented from speaking to readers in such a way by their layers of bureaucracy and their adherence to Reevesian theory; so, like so many other advertising writers of the era, Gossage posited an ideal adman who could circumvent entrenched ways. This was the "extra-environmental man," a figure who regarded advertising as an outsider, whose "mind isn't cluttered up with a lot of rules, policy, and other accumulated impedimenta that often pass for experience," who was "unable to see things in a normal fashion," who, like Gossage, regarded the American way of consuming as surpassing strange.[4]

The ads that Howard Gossage made are the best illustration of his ideas about the advertising industry. Like DDB's ads for Volkswagen, his campaign for Irish Whiskey, which began appearing in the *New Yorker* in 1958, was a studied effort to deviate as forcefully as possible from the predominant advertising styles of the day. Appearing as a long series of installments, each one consisted of a full page of words, densely packed and forbidding, and written in a long-winded Irish-sounding vernacular as distant from "advertisingese" as the campaign's eighteenth-century illustrations were from the immaculate, full-color renderings that accompanied the standard liquor advertising of the era. Although its copy refers again and again to the "dear" cost of advertising and to the "hard sell" in which the author apparently believes he is engaged, its method is decidedly soft—confiding, friendly, personal, and even a little hapless. Its layout is spattered with quaint effects like bracketed headlines and mail-in coupons for bizarre premiums. "Progress is perhaps our least important product," one ad even announced.

Gossage's campaign of 1961 for Fina gas stations seems to have been consciously invented to irritate Rosser Reeves. It was advertising, yes, but it was also a gorgeous satire of the pounding slogans and frivolous do-dads of the culture of consumption. Having discovered that most Americans scoffed at the various gasoline additives and other devices service stations then used to distinguish themselves, Gossage invented and then trum-

peted to the skies a preposterous pseudo-USP: air for car tires that was dyed "premium pink." Succeeding ads in the series recounted how earnest Fina officials were struggling to get the pink air to their various outlets, they offered pink asphalt as a contest prize, and they each concluded with what must be, with all its exaggerated courtesy, the creative revolution's greatest anti-slogan: "If you're driving down the road and you see a Fina station and it's on your side so you don't have to make a U-turn through traffic and there aren't six cars waiting and you need gas or something, please stop in."[5]

scoffer

The quintessential managerial operation of the Creative Revolution is perhaps best summarized in the trait once attributed to adman Jerry Della Femina by journalist Charles Sopkin: he "managed to bring chaos out of order."[6] In place of Martin Mayer's objective and balanced prose style, Della Femina's 1969 memoirs, *From Those Wonderful Folks Who Gave You Pearl Harbor* (the title is taken from a joke about a Japanese client) address the reader directly, often veering into exclamations, hip slang, sarcasm, and obscenities. The story of his life on Madison Avenue is told as a series of winding anecdotes rather than as a precise exposition of advertising lessons. His purpose is not to demonstrate how well the big agencies do their business, but how badly. The book is a classic debunking: taking note of certain romantic portrayals of the advertising industry in the first chapter, he emphasizes with a cynical sense of humor the business's neuroses, the poor quality of most of its products, and the various ways admen's careers may be destroyed. The literature of advertising had come full circle: after years of industry denials of Wakeman's depiction, a successful advertising man was once again describing his profession in the terms made familiar by *The Hucksters*.

The corporate-style ad agencies that had been the heroes of Mayer's and Reeves's books are Della Femina's villains; the "large, bad agency" where decisions are made by account executives and businessmen rather than by people who actually make ads. Nor are the traditional agencies institutions of placid, calculated order, according to Della Femina, but madhouses of fear and constant danger. The book opens by describing such an agency on the day an important account is lost. Panic sets in quickly as the jobs associated with that client disappear and the various account men scurry to find another company to take the departed client's place. They boast of their friendships with people at comparably-sized

businesses, their certainty of landing new accounts. And meanwhile they simply fire the "little people."[7] Della Femina devotes a whole chapter to the firing practices of the various agencies, noting in particular the instances of good workers being fired at the whim of an egotistical or deranged boss. Creative people are fired and replaced for a fraction of their salary by younger people. Entire departments are fired and refuse to discuss it with each other. Agencies hire special employees to do nothing but fire other employees. Presidents of companies are fired by officers they appointed. Other presidents fire everyone who stays at their agency for a certain duration to prevent anyone from becoming powerful enough to fire *them*. And when any of these people are fired, they find it very difficult to land another job. Fear, constant and mortal, is still the defining characteristic of the advertising business.

Della Femina's cynicism also extends to the type of work he himself does. The creative departments, where the actual work of making ads is done, are populated not by reliable organization men, but by eccentrics. "Advertising," he writes simply, "is the only business in the world that takes on the lamed, the drunks, the potheads, and the weirdos." Admen that he knows skewer telephones with scissors and try to throw their desks out windows. One insists on working from four in the afternoon until midnight. Alcoholism is rampant. Bizarre costumes are commonplace, as are "dilated pupils."[8] Della Femina is even more cynical about the actual work of the industry. He speaks of the various package goods—the staple clients of Madison Avenue—and the campaigns that promote them (including his own for a vaginal deodorant) in terms of frivolous, needless exploitation:

> The American businessman has discovered the vagina and like it's the next thing going. What happened is that the businessman ran out of parts of the body. We had headaches for a while but we took care of them. The armpit had its moment of glory, and the toes, with their athlete's foot, they had the spotlight, too. We went through wrinkles, we went through diets. Taking skin off, putting skin on. We went through the stomach with acid indigestion and we conquered hemorrhoids. So the businessman sat back and said, "What's left?" And some smart guy said, "The vagina."[9]

Like Victor Norman, Della Femina is unable to internalize the seriousness with which admen like Rosser Reeves addressed the minutiae of product differences, the drama of brand competition. Of a Ted Bates commercial for Certs candy that declares, "It's two mints, two mints, two mints in one," he sarcastically comments, "Oh, it's a fantastic commer-

cial, it is some claim to fame in the history of man. Two mints in one." If Della Femina was the zeitgeist barometer he clearly believed himself to be, by the end of the 1960s, the American adman was not a touchy defender of consumer excess but a jaded scoffer contemptuous of the institutions of consumer society, scornful of the imbecile products by which it worked, and corrosively skeptical of the ways in which the establishment agencies foisted them on the public.[10]

provocateur

"If you're not a bad boy, if you're not a big pain in the ass, then what you are is some mush, in this business," says George Lois.[11] A fervent proselytizer for the Bernbachian way since he worked at DDB during the late 1950s, Lois was a leading practitioner, a conspicuous success story, and a living symbol of the advertising revolution that began in the early 1960s. Since then he has been a Madison Avenue Jacobin, pushing the business revolution to its antinomian end. While Reeves, Ogilvy, and others were denouncing the self-serving and unproductive expressions of art directors who were not properly controlled by rules and theories, Lois was indulging his considerable artistic skills without heed for industry conventions and making effective advertising by so doing. When advertising texts of the fifties advised executives to suppress the dangerous artistic impulses of their underlings, people like George Lois must have been who they had in mind.

If Bernbach was suspicious of statistics and critical of the priority of research at most agencies, Lois was positively aflame with anger at the institutional procedures that, he believes, make for the epidemic of bad advertising that has long prevailed on Madison Avenue. "Advertising, an art," he wrote in 1991, "is constantly besieged and compromised by logicians and technocrats, the scientists of our profession who wildly miss the main point about everything we do, that the product of advertising, after all, is *advertising*."[12] Until the Creative Revolution, Lois insisted, the production of American advertising was smothered by rigid, repressive codes of dullness-inducing rules. The language he uses in his recent book to describe the prerevolutionary situation echoes the language of the mass society critique:

> Advertising "instruction" available to artists could be loosely described as knee-jerk drills in constructing schematic advertising layouts. They were Prussian-style exercises, directed by hacks who preached the conventional wisdoms of advertising's early days: large illustration above a headline above a block of body copy with a logo in the lower-right-hand corner. Even today, most print advertising follows this vapid pattern. Small wonder that the least talented people in advertising, incapable of innovation, create advertising according to this gospel.

Lois countered this repressive tradition by writing, matter-of-factly, "Advertising has no rules—what it always needs more than 'rules' is unconstipated thinking." One chapter is titled, "To push for a new solution, start by saying no to conventional rules, traditions and trends."[13] For Lois, Bernbach's suspicion of rules was an archetypal conflict between repression and liberation, "Prussian" order and American-style heteroglossia, the anal-retentive and the "unconstipated." Bernbach celebrated difference; according to a 1970 profile Lois "can make the word normal sound like a social disease."[14]

According to sociologists Paul Leinberger and Bruce Tucker, the defining characteristic of post-Organization white-collar workers is a powerful artistic impulse.[15] For George Lois, advertising, as he practices it, is art. Lois is a graduate of Pratt; the dust jacket of his 1972 memoirs, *George, Be Careful*, depicts the hand and arm of Michelangelo's Sistine Chapel God reaching out to Adam; in 1977 he published a coffee-table art book called, simply, *The Art of Advertising*.[16] More important, Lois's professional practice seems to derive directly from Romantic ideas of the superhuman artist. He insists on the inviolability of his graphic productions, even though they are supposed to serve a commercial purpose. But artists were hardly comfortable in most places on prerevolutionary Madison Avenue, and Lois describes his life then as a constant war against the philistine managerial style of the fifties. According to his own 1972 recollections, he violently confronted superiors, whether other agency men or clients, whenever they edited or altered his work. Lois writes that when one ad he designed was changed without his approval, he felt "*Personally defiled*," and physically attacked the man responsible. While working for one large, bureaucratic agency in the mid-1950s, Lois discovered that his work, under evaluation by an important WASP account supervisor, had been spread out on an office floor and walked upon. Again he was enraged:

> I kneeled down and swiftly rolled up my ads, column by column, until I had them all in a tidy cylinder under my arm. The diagonally positioned desk of C. L. Smith sat like a fortress in the far corner, behind me. I had salvaged my ads, but I was still

in a blind rage, incensed at the way my work was defiled. I gripped the overhang of Smith's desk and with all the strength of my furious mood I flipped it toward Smith's corner. The fortress landed with a deadly thunk on its forward side as drawers slid open and were jammed back into the falling hulk. My cylinder of ads was safely tucked under my arm as all the debris from the top of Smith's desk crashed to the floor. My action was so sudden that a streak of ink actually surged from the desk's executive well and hit the wall like a Rorschach splotch. But I had my ads, my *work* —and without looking back I quietly walked out of the room.[17]

Even the symbols of traditional agency practice and authority aroused Lois's artistic ire. Like Jay Chiat snipping ties, Lois reveled in transforming the ink of fifties order into shapeless Pollock-like blotches.

Chafing under almost any sort of authority or hierarchy, Lois recalls how he broke again and again from the various agencies that employed him in the 1950s. In 1960, he left DDB to form his own agency with Fred Papert and Volkswagen copywriter Julian Koenig, the first shot in the long series of creative secessions that would define the decade. The sudden success of the trio's agency, dubbed Papert Koenig Lois (PKL) and specializing in creative outrage, signaled the changing dynamics of American admaking. The key to PKL's success, Lois insists, was its extreme organizational openness, its lack of constraints, bureaucracy, and established procedure, its allegiance to art rather than science. "The joint was unbefouled by mannerism," he wrote in 1972, "and nothing could stop us. . . . We worked late because it was painful to leave its carefree atmosphere."[18] Lois explains his agency's freedom in these simple terms:

"You start out by hiring people who are creative, then just give them room to do what they want," I said. "You just sit down and work with guys. Also we try to hire people who will disagree with us. . . ."[19]

Disagreement was just part of the climate at PKL, where, as at DDB, creative freedom encouraged every sort of activity other than "normal" business operations.

The title of Lois's 1972 memoirs is *George, Be Careful*, an admonition typical of the cautious advertising world of the 1950s. But George is never careful. He is an artist, and, as it has always been for artists in the twentieth century, outrage is the dynamic principle of his career. According to a 1967 issue of *Advertising News of New York*, Lois is "the archetype of the non-organization man," and the usefulness of defying convention in spectacular ways is the book's primary theme. Lois curses. He fights. He

performs bizarre gestures to persuade clients to approve his outrageous ideas. He defies his superiors, rebels against conventional corporate order, and believes passionately, even violently, in the sanctity of his work as art. Whether standing up to recalcitrant clients or rankling under repressive account men, Lois refuses to live and work in conventional Madison Avenue ways. Lois recounts how his partner Koenig was pestered by a nosy client demanding to know how an ad would appear in a smaller format. "Julian held up the full-page layout and said, 'Here's how it would look'—and he tore it in half." Lois insists that all of the people hired by PKL were similarly irreverent, and he goes out of his way to emphasize their eccentric habits. None of them was a WASP, and none came from the comfortable classes that dominated the industry in the 1950s. Their ethnicity and supposed penchant for fisticuffs earned them the nickname "Graphic Mafia" in the business. Lois reports that when Carl Ally, who would later go on to found another of the decade's most successful creative firms, was interviewed for a job, he grew irate at Koenig's questioning and said, "Fuck you, I don't need this horseshit." This prompted Lois to hire him. Admen at PKL curse and fight one another. One day they shred a man's objectionable shirt while he is wearing it. Such tales would have been wildly out of place in the 1950s Madison Avenue accounts of either Vance Packard or Martin Mayer, but Lois recounts them with a certain pride.[20]

PKL was a dramatic success at first, with billings that grew from zero to $14 million by its third year, and it became the first advertising agency to sell stock publicly.[21] But the growth of the business was uncomfortable for Lois, and in 1967 to "kick the curse of bigness"[22] he walked out of PKL and set up another new shop. Lois's explanation of his move was that while PKL's success may not exactly have made it into an "establishment" agency, it had nonetheless been sufficient to transform him from a person who made ads—an artist—into a supervisor. "You know how much time I spent on creative work at PKL?" Lois complained to *Madison Avenue* magazine in 1968:

Between seven and nine each evening at home, because that was the only time I had to do it. The rest of the time, at the office, I was supervising the other creative people. It was different when PKL was billing 18 million. At that stage I was doing every stitch of the work.

Lois described the firm's climate with a word of some considerable negative connotation: "The feeling turned from a truly creative to more of a

normal agency."[23] In the big establishment agencies of the fifties, management and client-relations had taken precedence over creative work. But Lois had no interest in administration. His new partner, James Callaway, summarized the sixties vision of agency operations when he asserted in 1968 that in other industries, upper management made critical decisions, but in advertising "the really important decisions . . . are made by the copywriter or art director who creates the ads, because the ads are what advertising is all about."

Lois's scheme for Lois Holland Callaway, the agency he founded in 1968, as he outlined it to *Madison Avenue* magazine, envisioned the Bernbachian managerial style taken to an anti-organizational extreme. The three principals of the new agency were to do all of the "important" work of admaking and hire others to do anything else that was needed.[24] The new agency was designed to be streamlined, to keep employees to an absolute minimum, and thus to maximize the creative freedom of the central trio. In a piece published five months after its founding, *Newsday* marveled at LHC's billings relative to the size of its staff. "The customary ratio of staffers to billing is 7 to 10 for every $1,000,000," the newspaper pointed out. "On this basis LHC should have something like 200 employees instead of 18."[25]

The free and wide-open workplace was not just a matter of Lois's personal preferences or his artistic disposition. He argues that openness is a necessary precondition to realizing the central element of his advertising style: outrage. His peculiar management beliefs and his shocking style are inextricably connected:

> In order to be breakthrough, it [advertising] has to be fresh and different, it has to be surprising. And in order to do that, you need a talented art director and writer working together, who have some leeway and liberty to try to create advertising.[26]

In order for an ad to work, Lois argued in 1991, one had to cause outrage. Good advertising, therefore, is synonymous with rebellion, with difference, with the avant-garde's search for the new:

> I'm always pushing for a creative idea that has more grit than one has a right to expect, that rubs against sensibilities, that drives me to the edge of the cliff. That's how you bring life to your work. The fact that something hasn't been done does not mean that it can't be done. Safe, conventional work is a ticket to oblivion. Talented work is, *ipso facto*, unconventional.[27]

Good advertising should "stun" the consumer, as modern art was supposed to shock, by presenting him or her with an idea that upends their conventions of understanding. When Lois presents his work to clients, he expects it to "cause my listener to rock back in semi-shock." Good advertising is like "poison gas": "It should unhinge your nervous system. It should knock you out!" Lois calls this the "seemingly outrageous," and when used properly it should drive the sales message home:

> Advertising should stun *momentarily* . . . it should *seem* to be outrageous. In that swift interval between the initial shock and the realization that what you are showing is not as outrageous as it seems, you capture the audience.[28]

Lois's techniques necessarily militate against whatever happens to be acceptable at present. "The fact that others are moving in a certain direction is always proof positive, at least to me," Lois writes, "that a *new* direction is the only direction. Defy trends and don't be constrained by precedents."[29] The adman must live in perpetual rebellion against whatever is established, accepted, received. He must internalize obsolescence, constantly anticipate the new. It is not an exaggeration to say that there are *no* Lois ads that simply go through the conventional motions, like the ones studied by William Whyte back in 1952: in *every single one* an effort is made to assault the consumer's complacency, the sense of the usual that he or she has developed over a lifetime of commercial bombardment. Of course, after a few such ads the conventions and routines are entirely reformulated, and the struggle goes on. The Emersonian adage could be updated to fit the creative revolution: He who would be an adman must be a nonconformist.

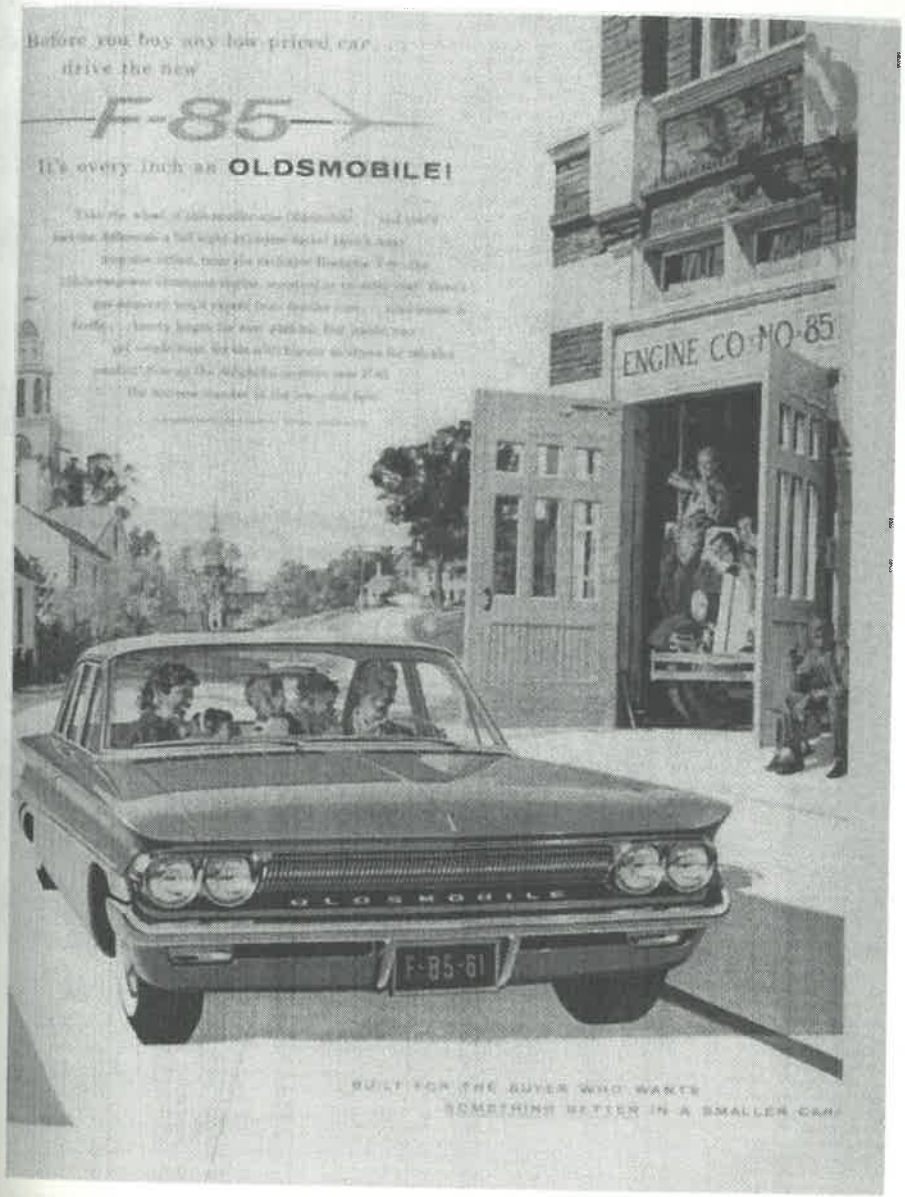
A good example of the Lois technique is the LHC television campaign for the New York brokerage firm of Edwards & Hanly (1968). Before this campaign, brokerage advertising was sedate stuff, grasping for respectability with long columns of solid-looking words.[30] Edwards & Hanly, though, was a small and struggling firm, willing to do almost anything; at the same time Lois's new agency, LHC, was looking for a way to advertise itself with a startling, controversial statement. The resulting television commercials which Lois, Holland, and Callaway wrote in one day and produced in three weeks used the testimony of athletes, children, and other unlikely authorities to address people's basic need for brokers: to make money.[31] In one spot, the boxer Joe Louis, who had famously lost millions, looked unhappy and asked, "Edwards & Hanly, where were you

when I needed you?" In another, Mickey Mantle said, "When I came up to the big leagues, I was a shuffling, grinning, head-ducking country boy. But I know a man down at Edwards & Hanly. I'm learnin', I'm learnin'."[32] Like other Lois campaigns, this one worked by pairing a serious subject with pop-cultural spokespeople. Lois described the episode in his usual manic style, exaggerating its offensiveness and celebrating yet another triumph of irreverence over stodginess:

> The minute [the clients] left, the three of us charged into the elevator, laughing insanely, mostly out of relief that we had come this far with our first wild campaign for the stuffiest industry of them all without getting stiffed by a frightened client. We ran through the Manhattan crowds like three stoned kids, laughing and whooping all the way to the bank on Fifth Avenue.

The New York Stock Exchange, which strictly regulates the advertising of its members, was not long in forcing Edwards & Hanly to withdraw a number of the spots. When Lois, Holland, and Callaway appeared to defend their work, the contrast between their free-swinging, ethnic ways and those of the guardians of the Exchange's honor was extreme. Lois quotes his partner Callaway's description of the showdown: "Two micks and a Greek were arguing about a TV spot starring a *schvaatza* in front of a bunch of WASP's."[33] The new capitalism was beginning to challenge the white pillars of order everywhere.

Perhaps Lois's boldest use of the "seemingly outrageous" came during a mid-sixties television campaign for the New York *Herald-Tribune*. The campaign's print ads used such volatile, mock-threatening lines as, "Who says a good newspaper has to be dull?" and "Shut up, whites, and listen." Its television side, Lois recalls, consisted of commercials that ran immediately before the eleven o'clock news on the New York CBS affiliate. During each one, an announcer would briefly discuss the next day's headlines, mention the newspaper's new appearance—and then attack the institution of television news! "There's more to the news than this headline," the voice-over would say, "*and there's more to it than you're going to hear on this program.*" "I couldn't believe that CBS was actually letting us get away with it night after night," Lois wrote. But again the ads' offensiveness caused the guardians of Organization to muzzle Lois's creativity: according to his 1972 memoirs, they were one day seen by CBS president William Paley who, duly outraged, put a quick stop to them.[34]



the utopian imagination of the Detroit automakers,

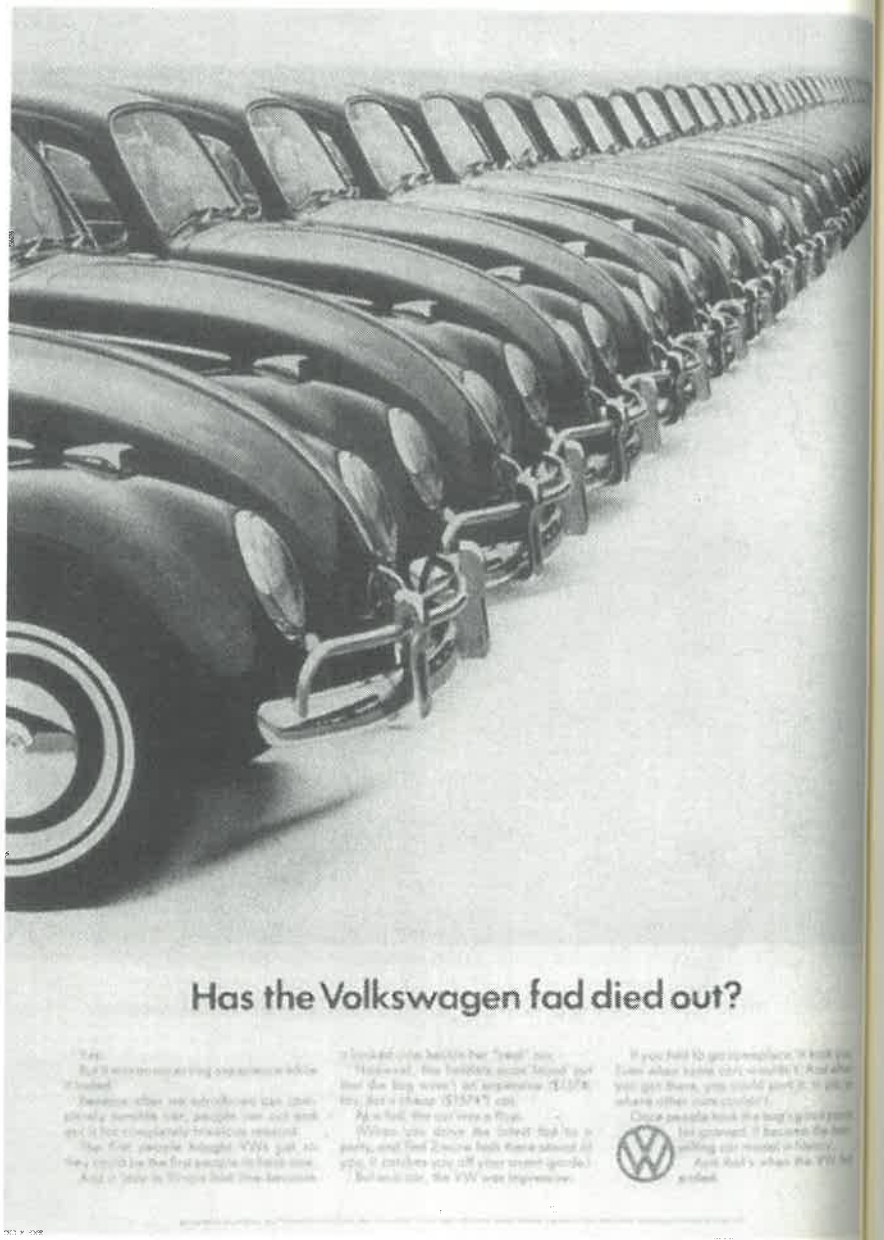
Oldsmobile, 1961. This is as neat a vision of consensus order as one will find anywhere in American culture: Norman Rockwell landscape, patriotic colonial architecture, confident man, fawning wife, mirthful children, jolly firemen, and reassuring reminders of the jet-age military. Five years later an ad like this would appear to be from a different country.

so banal it's surreal.

Calvert Whiskey, 1958. The headline suggests that most fanciful of product advantages: a whiskey that causes no hangover. But the art seems to be from a different ad–he's partial to football and boxing, not sports known for producing clear-headedness. The copy, which is a study in emptiness ("Something wonderfully satisfying about the flavor, isn't there?") seems to have been written for yet a third. And what's up with that giant glove?

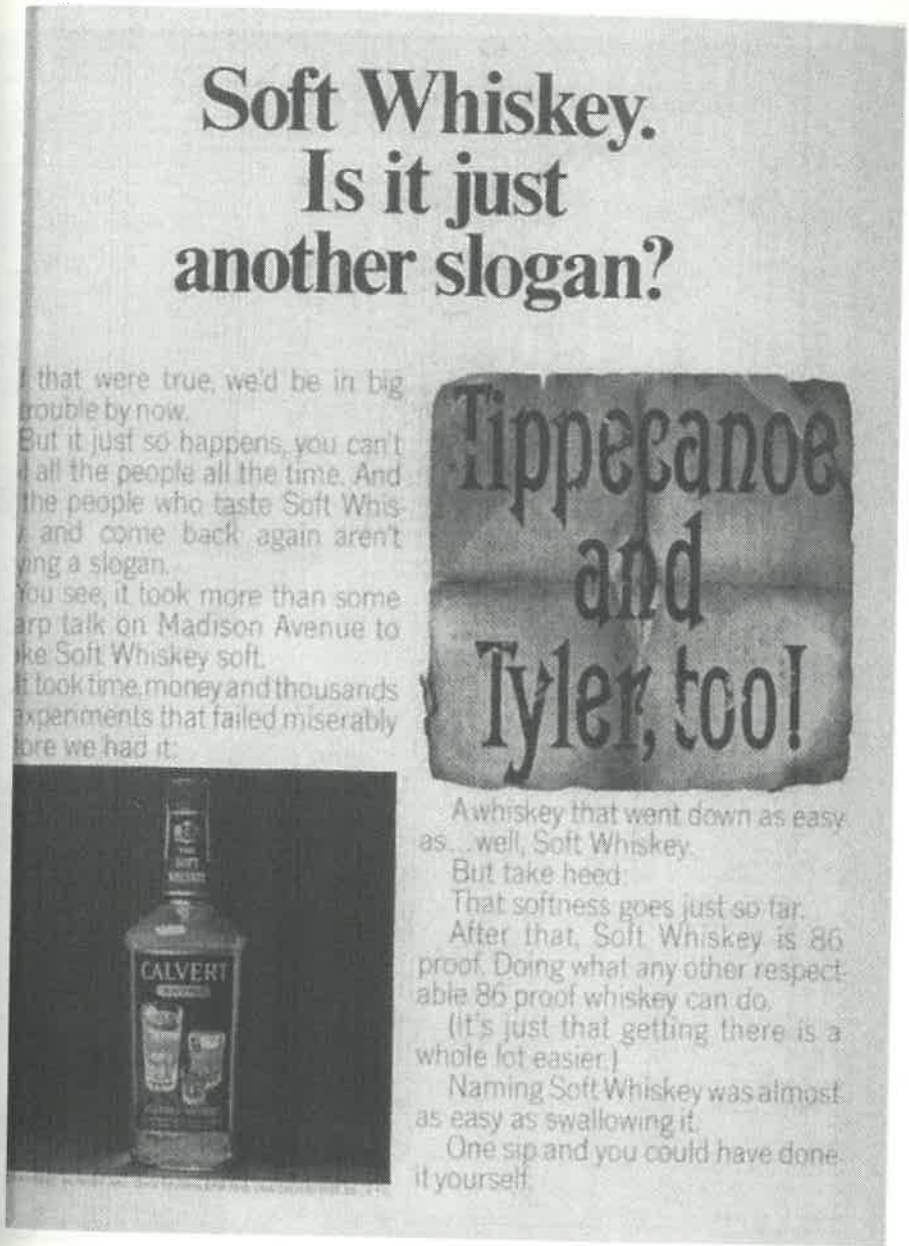
enter doyle dane bernbach.

Volkswagen, 1961. Simple, elegant layout; simple, devastating sales pitch. The Volkswagen is never obsoleted, unlike those new American models that appear in the spotlights at the auto show. The light, humorous copy puts the ad's explosive message across easily: Detroit is a fraud.



volkswagen versus mass society,

1966. It's so practical, it inherently militates against faddishness and conformity. Notice the identification of the "avant-garde" with trendiness.



the anticommercial whiskey,

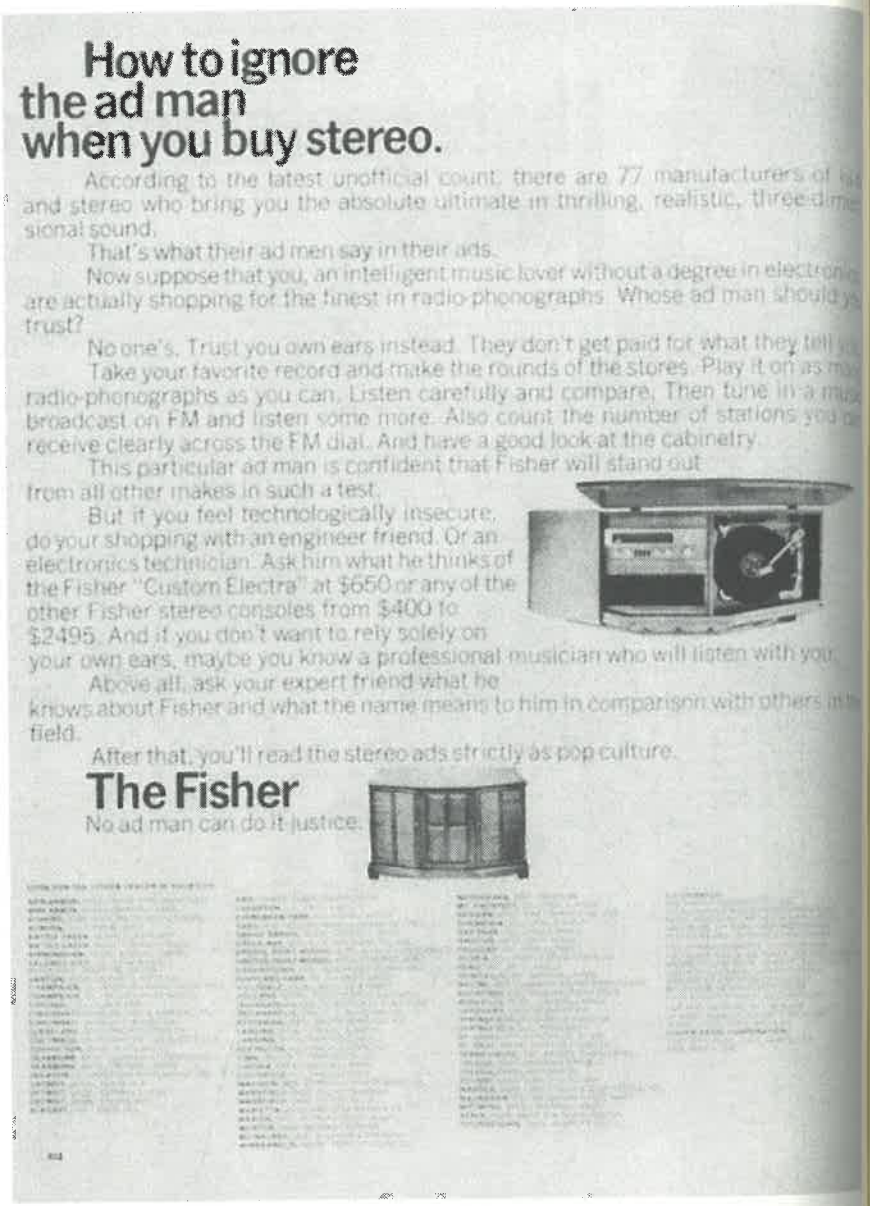
Calvert Whiskey, 1966. Eight years later, with the giant glove nowhere to be found, DDB is selling Calvert whiskey as the antithesis of empty, "Madison Avenue" promises. After having come up with what may well have been the most slickly meaningless product claim for liquor of all time ("soft whiskey"), DDB proceeded to denounce liquor advertising in general for its slick meaninglessness.

the airline of authenticity.

El Al, 1967. Airlines, too, could benefit from the DDB makeover. There are no Stepford stewardesses on El Al. Like Volkswagens and Calvert Whiskey, their planes are affectation-free.

nonconformist gin,

Booth's, 1965. By the mid-sixties, the zany creative style could be found even even in ads for gin, the main ingredient of martinis. This ad for Booth's Gin, which ran in an advertising trade journal, mocks as many aspects of the Madison Avenue lifestyle (ties, mail-in offers, "competitive pressure," fads, martini glasses, the use of the suffix "-wise," and, of course, conformity) as one can in such a constricted space. (General Research Division, The New York Public Library, Astor, Lenox, and Tilden Foundations)



How to ignore the ad man when you buy stereo.

According to the latest unofficial count, there are 77 manufacturers of hi and stereo who bring you the absolute ultimate in thrilling, realistic, three-dime sional sound.

That's what their ad men say in their ads.

Now suppose that you, an intelligent music lover without a degree in electronic are actually shopping for the finest in radio-phonographs. Whose ad man should yo trust?

No one's. Trust you own ears instead. They don't get paid for what they tell yo

Take your favorite record and make the rounds of the stores. Play it on as mo radio-phonographs as you can. Listen carefully and compare. Then tune in a mus broadcast on FM and listen some more. Also count the number of stations you ca receive clearly across the FM dial. And have a good look at the cabinetry.

This particular ad man is confident that Fisher will stand out from all other makes in such a test.

But if you feel technologically insecure, do your shopping with an engineer friend. Or an electronics technician. Ask him what he thinks of the Fisher "Custom Electra" at $650 or any of the other Fisher stereo consoles from $400 to $2495. And if you don't want to rely solely on your own ears, maybe you know a professional musician who will listen with you.

Above all, ask your expert friend what he knows about Fisher and what the name means to him in comparison with others in the field.

After that, you'll read the stereo ads strictly as pop culture.

The Fisher

No ad man can do it justice.

Admen are liars,

but you are a discerning critic of pop culture, Fisher stereo, 1967. You can see through their puffery and falsehoods (if you can't, ask an unaffected, down-to-earth guy like an "engineer" to help you), and you can even see through this one, too!

The Paper Car!

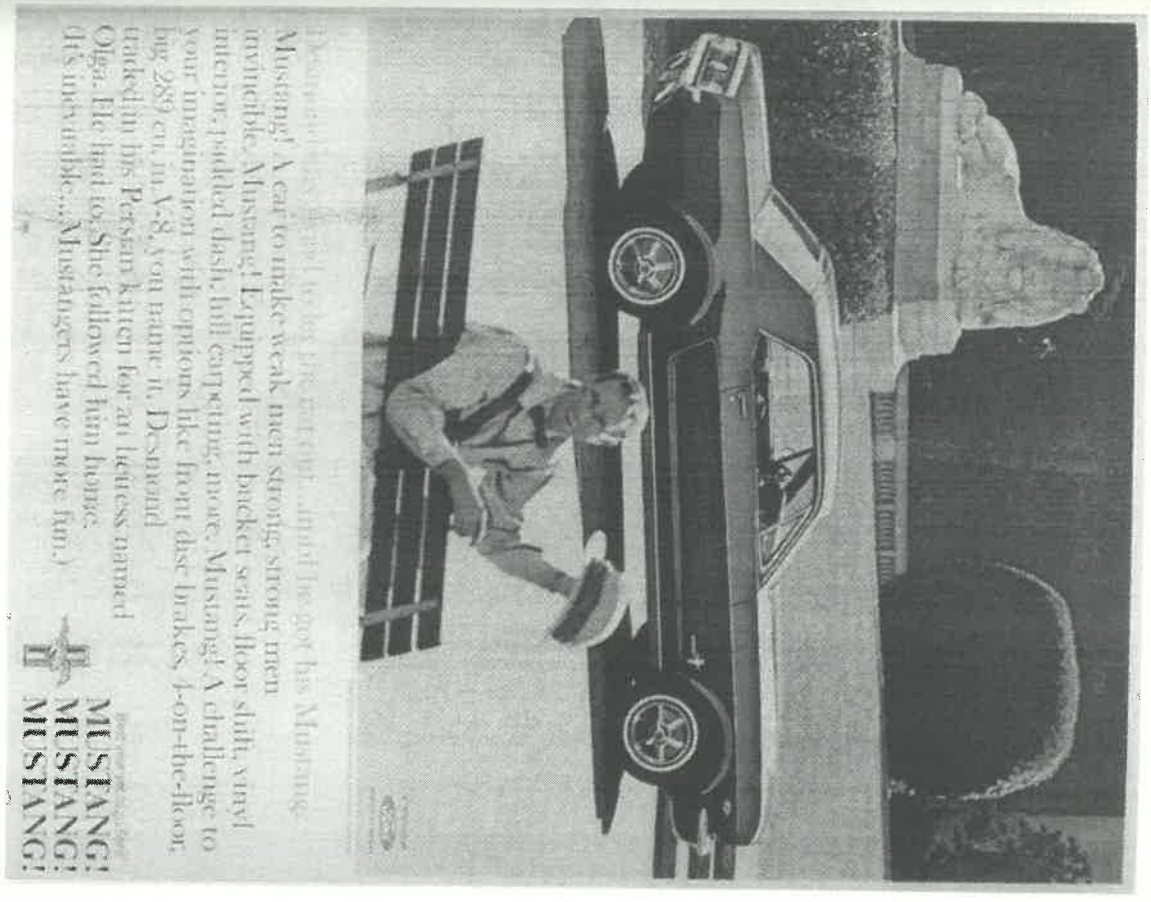
A logical next step in a continuing program of planned obsolescence.

savage parody

of the utopian style and frivolous auto design of just a few years before. Volvo, 1967. The "throw-away" culture for which the Detroit automakers are responsible is worse than Volkswagen has been telling you: it's actually "crazy." Even though tailfins had been dropped by GM and Chrysler in the early sixties, they continued to appear for years in critiques like this one as a standard symbol of everything that was wrong with consumer society.

detroit strikes back.

Dodge, 1965. You say you've had it with Detroit-style consumerism? Then so has Detroit. Salvation is as easy as buying a new car: "Rise up. Break away from the everyday." Dodge is leading "the charge on Dullsville."



the mustang transformation, 1965.

Like the Dodge Rebellion, Mustang's promises to deliver consumers from ordinary life were sexist, lighthearted and self-mocking. Later years would demand a more rigorous critique of consumer culture.

youngmobiles.

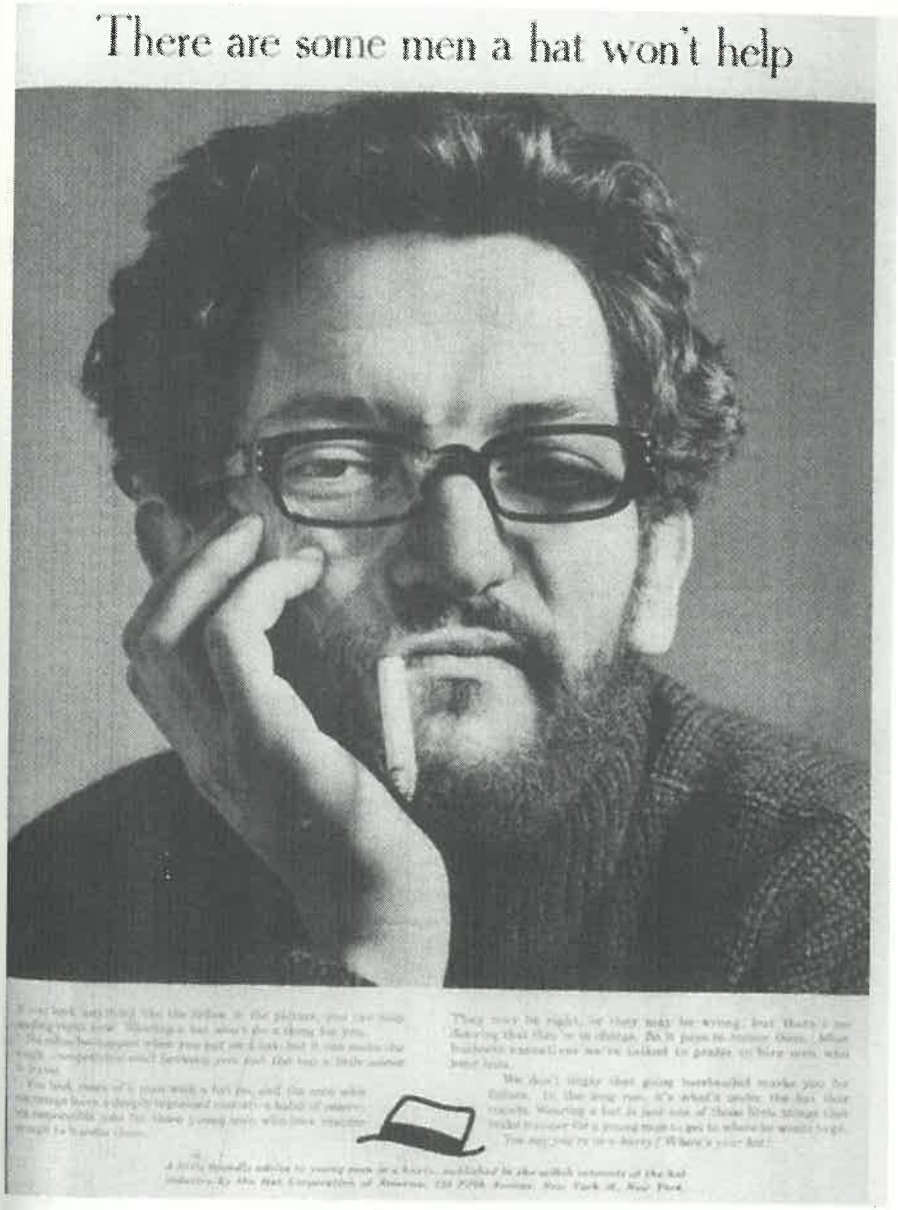
By 1967 the obvious symbol under which all of these different strains of revulsion with mass society could be brought together was youth. Remember, it's the ideas that are young here, not the Oldsmobile owner.

buick populism,

1967. The documentary impulse in advertising. This corporation is an understanding friend, from their openness to your language to their gracious consideration of your needs to their realistic-looking models to their unadorned, sans-serif typeface.

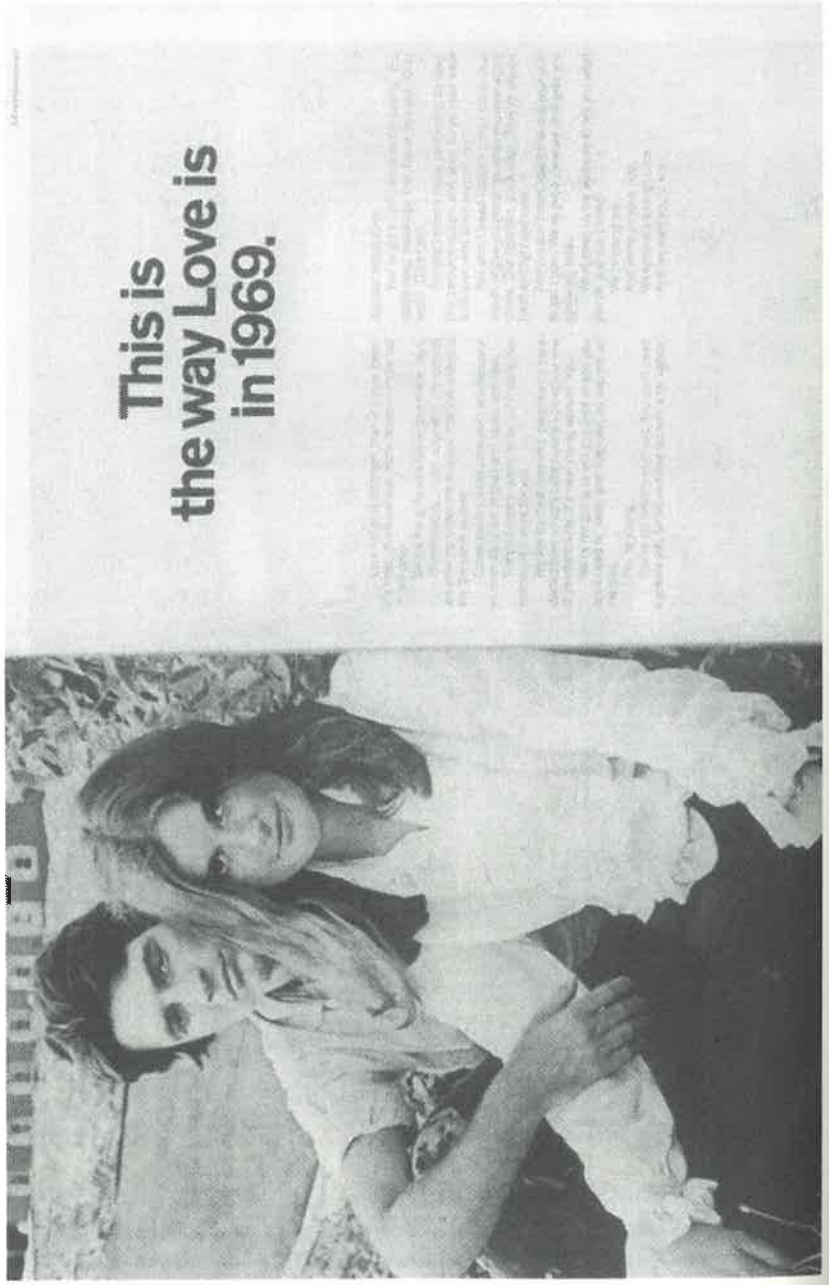
"organization man" mutiny,

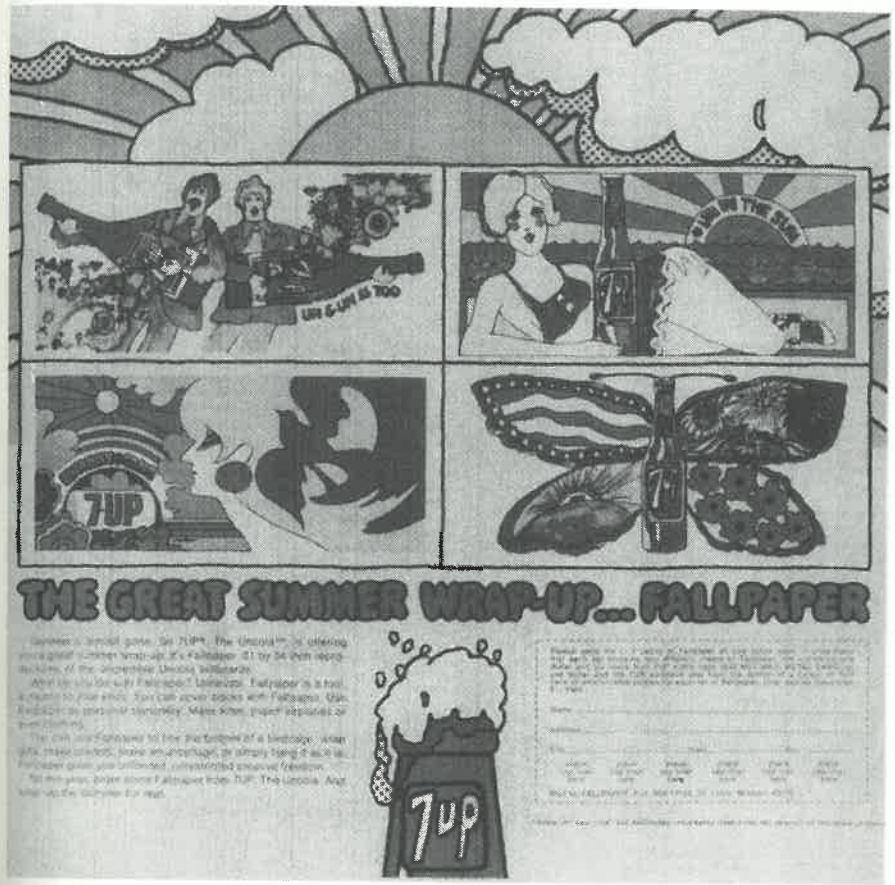
Oldsmobile, 1969. The promise is as simple as Volkswagen's, if the execution is poor (Oldsmobile just couldn't seem to get away from baffling terms like "Positive Valve Rotators"): this car rescues you from anonymity and bureaucratic malaise. Women, too.



creativity yes, youth culture no.

Hat Corporation of America, 1961. A flippant, self-conscious ad in the DDB style, but distinctly craven toward the masters of mass society ("They may be right, or they may be wrong, but there's no denying that they're in charge") and hostile to rebel youth culture. The Beatnik pictured here is so dressed for failure that he even has a black eye. The hat industry started the decade striking all the wrong notes; by the end of the sixties it had been badly damaged.





the uncola,

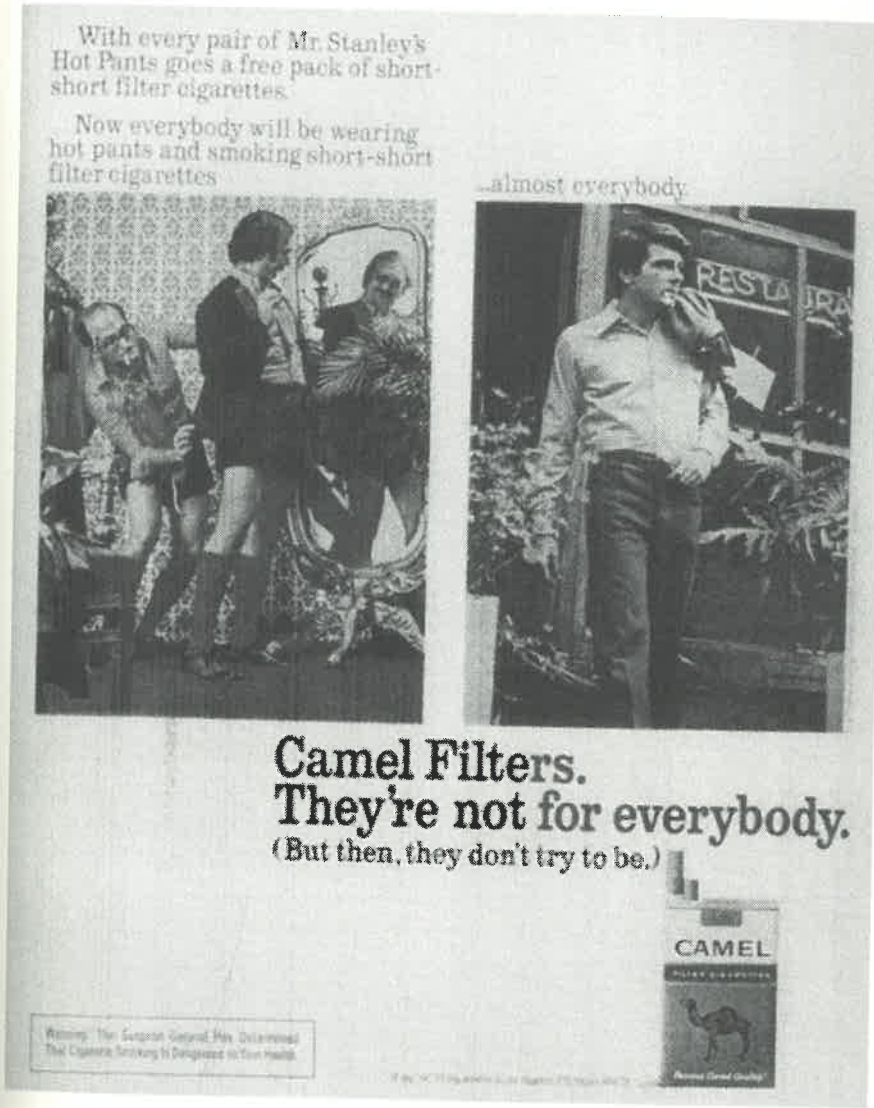
7-Up, 1969. Coke may have been the "real thing," Pepsi may have identified itself with the young generation, but 7-Up went just a little farther.

Note here the blurring of management theory and product pitch: by offering reproductions of its billboards, 7-Up is permitting "unrestricted creative freedom."

(© 7-Up and UNCOLA are marks identifying products of Dr Pepper/Seven Up, Inc. 1997. Courtesy of the John W. Hartman Center for Sales, Advertising, and Marketing History, Duke University Special Collections Library.)

backlash, 1966.

Volvo. Now Detroit's promising youth, rebellion, and "Pizzaz," but they're still up to the same old tricks, and you're the loser by it. An unusual ad in that it actually pictures the relationship of reader and advertisement, proposes that advertising manipulates and victimizes consumers, and offers itself as a ready-made subversion.



backlash, 1972.

Camel cigarettes. The sixties are over and now it's the pseudo-liberating, youth-screaming styles of the Peacock Revolution that are the true markers of conformity—and of a particularly effeminate conformity as well. The real rugged individualists are . . . average guys.