

THE MAKING OF A COUNTER CULTURE

*Reflections on the Technocratic Society and
Its Youthful Opposition*

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From Chapter 2: PP 67-75

It is precisely because New Left politics is related to an entire culture of disaffiliation that the possibility of any enduring alliance with even the most outcast elements of the adult generation is severely diminished. As long as the young in their politics emphasize the further integration of the poor and disadvantaged into technocratic affluence, they can expect to enjoy ad hoc liaisons with workers and their unions, or with the exploited minorities. But such alliances are not apt to outlast successful integration. When the lid blows off the black ghettos of our cities, the ensuing rebellion may look like the prologue to revolution. The dissenting young then give their sympathy and support to the insurrection—insofar as Black Power will permit the participation of white allies.¹⁵ But soon enough, whatever the black guerrillas may intend, the main activity of the day becomes wholesale looting—which is the poor man's way of cutting himself in on the consumer society. And at that point, the angry agitation that fills the ghetto begins to sound like a clamor at the gates of the technocracy—*demanding in*.

If Allen Ginsberg's *Howl* stands as a founding document of the counter culture, we must remember what the poet had to tell the world: "I have burned all my money in a wastebasket." Will it be a victory, then, or a defeat for the counter culture when the black man has at last fought his way clear of desperate expedients and wrings from the Great Society the white man's legal equivalent of looting: a steady job, a secure income, easy credit, free access to all the local emporiums, and his own home to pile the merchandise in? The issue is critical because it reveals the bind in which the

¹⁵ Here, for example, is a flyer which was distributed in Harlem in 1967 by the "Committee of Concerned Honkies": "We'll talk about screwing up the Tactical Police Force (or National Guard or Army) during any black rebellion in the New York area. We'll also talk about jamming National Guard 'riot control' training sessions this autumn and other things."

counter culture finds itself when confronted by undeniably urgent questions of social justice. What, after all, does social justice mean to the outcast and dispossessed? Most obviously, it means gaining admission to everything from which middle-class selfishness excludes them. But how does one achieve such admission without simultaneously becoming an integral and supportive element of the technocracy? How do Black Power, black culture, black consciousness stop short of becoming steppingstones to black consumption, black conformity, black affluence: finally, to a middle-class America of another color? The dilemma requires the most painstaking tact and sensitivity—qualities that are apt to be in short supply among the deprived in the heat and turmoil of political struggle.

Consider, for example, the situation which the French students faced in the May 1968 General Strike. The great ideal of the moment was "workers' control" of French industry. Very well; but is workers' control immune to the dangers of technocratic integration? Unhappily not. For it is hardly difficult to imagine the technocracy reconstituting itself atop an echelon of shop stewards and industrial soviets—and perhaps using these new, more friction-free shop-floor arrangements to its own great advantage! Surely the touchstone of the matter would be: how ready are the workers to disband whole sectors of the industrial apparatus where this proves necessary to achieve ends other than efficient productivity and high consumption? How willing are they to set aside technocratic priorities in favor of a new simplicity of life, a decelerating social pace, a vital leisure? These are questions which enthusiasts for workers' control might do well to ponder. Suppose the French workers *had* taken over the economy, an objective which seems to have lost its general appeal in the wake of the new wage agreements the de Gaulle

government has granted. Would the Renault workers have been willing to consider closing the industry down on the grounds that cars and traffic are now more the blight than the convenience of our lives? Would French aircraft workers have been willing to scrap the Concorde SST on the grounds that this marvel of aeronautical engineering will surely become a social monstrosity? Would French munitions workers have been willing to end production of the *force de frappe*, recognizing that the balance of terror is among the vilest offenses of the technocracy? I suspect that the answer to all these questions would be "no." The social composition of the technocracy would alter, but the change would amount to nothing more than broadening the base on which the technocratic imperative rests.

Once the relations of the counter cultural young and the wretched of the earth get beyond the problem of integration, a grave uneasiness is bound to set in. The long-range cultural values of the discontented young must surely seem bizarre to those whose attention is understandably riveted on sharing the glamorous good things of middle-class life.¹⁶ How baffling it must seem to the long-suffering and long-deprived to discover the children of our new affluence dressing themselves

¹⁶ Cf. Daniel and Gabriel Cohn-Bendit: "The differences between the revolutionary students and the workers spring directly from their distinct social positions. Thus few students have had real experience of grinding poverty—their struggle is about the hierarchical structure of society, about oppression in comfort. They do not so much have to contend with a lack of material goods as with unfulfilled desires and aspirations. The workers, on the other hand, suffer from direct economic oppression and misery—earning wages of less than 500 francs per month, in poorly ventilated, dirty and noisy factories, where the foreman, the chief engineer and the manager all throw their weight about and conspire to keep those under them in their place." *Obsolete Communism: The Left-Wing Alternative*, p. 107. Yet despite these radically different political horizons, Cohn-Bendit argues that there can be a common cause between the two groups, based on his tactic of "spontaneous resistance" in the streets.

in rags and tatters, turning their "pads" into something barely distinguishable from slum housing, and taking to the streets as panhandlers. Similarly, what can the Beatles' latest surrealist LP mean to an unemployed miner or a migrant farm laborer? What are the downs-and-outs of Nanterre to make of the latest production of Arrabal on the Left Bank? Surely they do not see these strange phenomena as a part of *their* culture, but as curious, somewhat crazy things the spoiled middle-class young amuse themselves with. Perhaps, like the Marxist guardians of social justice, they even see them as intolerable displays of "decadence"—meaning the neurotic discontent of those who cannot settle down gratefully to the responsibilities of life in an advanced industrial order.

But the bind in which the counter culture finds itself in dealing with disadvantaged social elements is doubled at another level with a painful irony. As has been mentioned, it is the cultural experimentation of the young that often runs the worst risk of commercial verminization—and so of having the force of its dissent dissipated. It is the cultural experiments that draw the giddy interest of just those middle-class swingers who are the bastion of the technocratic order. And *their* interest is all of the wrong kind. Visiting bohemia to peer at the "flower children," dropping by the rock clubs, laying out the \$5.00 minimum it costs to play voyeur at *Le Cimetière des Voitures*, has become the contemporary version of "slumming" for our big spenders: a breezy flirtation with the off-beat that inevitably distorts the genuineness of the phenomenon.

There is no diminishing the tendency of counter cultural dissent to fall prey to the neutralization that can come of such false attention. Those who dissent have to be supremely resourceful to avoid getting exhibited in somebody's commercial showcase—rather like bizarre fauna brought back alive from the jungle wilds . . . by *Time*, by *Esquire*, by David

Susskind. On such treacherous terrain, the chances of miscalculation are immense. Bob Dylan, who laments the nightmarish corruptions of the age, nevertheless wears his material thin grinding out a million-dollar album a year for Columbia—which is more apt to find its way to the shelf beside a polished mahogany stereophonic radio-phono console in suburbia than to any bohemian garret. Vanessa Redgrave, a veteran of Committee of 100 sit-downs in Whitehall who will don *fidelista* fatigues to sing Cuban revolutionary ballads in Trafalgar Square, also lends her talents to the glossy *Playboy* pornography of films like *Blow-Up*. Even Herbert Marcuse, much to his chagrin, has of late become hot feature material throughout Europe and America in the wake of the 1968 student rebellions in Germany and France. "I'm very much worried about this," Marcuse has commented on the situation. "At the same time it is a beautiful verification of my philosophy, which is that in this society everything can be co-opted, everything can be digested."¹⁷

From such obfuscation of genuine dissenting talent, it isn't far to go before the counter culture finds itself swamped with cynical or self-deceived opportunists who become, or conveniently let themselves be turned into, spokesmen for youthful disaffiliation. Accordingly, we now have clothing designers, hairdressers, fashion magazine editors, and a veritable phalanx of pop stars who, without a thought in their heads their PR man did not put there, are suddenly expounding "the philosophy of today's rebellious youth" for the benefit

¹⁷ Marcuse, "Varieties of Humanism," in *Center Magazine* (Center for the Study of Democratic Institutions, Santa Barbara), June 1968, p. 14. On the other hand, at another social level, Marcuse has acquired more urgent worries. A threat of assassination from the local Ku Klux Klan drove him from his San Diego home in July 1968. The incident reminds us that there are dark corners of the technocracy (like southern California) where the troglodytes still hold out.

of the Sunday supplements . . . the feature to be sandwiched between a report on luxury underwear and a full-color spread on the latest undiscovered skin-diving paradise at which to spend that summer of a lifetime. And then, for good reason, the counter culture begins to look like nothing so much as a world-wide publicity stunt. One can easily despair of the possibility that it will survive these twin perils: on the one hand, the weakness of its cultural rapport with the disadvantaged; on the other, its vulnerability to exploitation as an amusing side show of the swinging society.

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Picking its way through this socio-political obstacle course is an undeniably demanding task for the counter culture, one which may take the better part of another generation. To overcome the commercializing and trivializing tactics of the technocratic society will require outlasting the atmosphere of novelty that now surrounds our youth culture and which easily assigns it the character of a transient fad. In the process, there will have to be a maturation of what are often for the young no more than shrewd insights and bright instincts, so that these can become the thoughtful stuff of an adult life. If the counter culture should bog down in a colorful morass of unexamined symbols, gestures, fashions of dress, and slogans, then it will provide little that can be turned into a lifelong commitment—except, and then pathetically, for those who can reconcile themselves to becoming superannuated hangers-on of the campus, the love-in, the rock club. It will finish as a temporary style, continually sloughed off and left behind for the next wave of adolescents: a hopeful beginning that never becomes more than a beginning. As for the task of introducing the oppressed minorities into the counter culture: I suspect that this may have to wait until the black

revolution has run its course in America. At which point the new black middle class will produce its own ungrateful young, who, as the heirs of everything their parents thought worth struggling for, will begin, like their white counterparts, to fight their way free of technocratic entrapment.

But beyond the problems raised by such social maneuvering, there lies an even more critical project: that of defining the ethical dignity of a cultural movement which takes radical issue with the scientific world view. The project is vitally important because there must be a reply to the challenge raised by the many uneasy intellectuals who fear that the counter culture arrives, not trailing clouds of glory, but bearing the mark of the beast. No sooner does one speak of liberating the non-intellective powers of the personality than, for many, a prospect of the starkest character arises: a vision of rampant, antinomian mania, which in the name of permissiveness threatens to plunge us into a dark and savage age. It is not without justification that concerned men should then hasten to mount the barricades in the defense of reason. Here, for example, is Philip Toynbee reminding us of "the old nihilistic yearning for madness, despair, and total denial" which was a mainstay of fascist ideology:

. . . it is important to remember that Himmler was the truest nihilist of them all. It is important to remember that the most effective guardians against a resurgence of fascism in Europe are hope, decency, and rationality. This should be brought home, if it can be, to all those young people who consider that they belong to the Left but who love to play with nihilistic toys in art and argument. The ultimate fascist cry is Millan Astray's "Viva, viva la Muerte!"¹⁸

¹⁸ Toynbee reviewing some recent studies of fascism in *The Observer* (London), July 28, 1968. In a similar vein, the British playwright Arnold Wesker has referred to the hippies as "pretty little fascists" and the social critic Henry Anderson has renamed the Sex-

To a disconcerting extent, such criticism is outrageously unfair. "Make Love Not War" is still the banner most of the dissenting young are rallying to, and those who cannot see the difference between that sentiment and any motto the Hitler *Jugend* voiced are being almost perversely blind. So, too, one of the most remarkable aspects of the counter culture is its cultivation of a feminine softness among its males. It is the occasion of endless satire on the part of critics, but the style is clearly a deliberate effort on the part of the young to undercut the crude and compulsive he-manliness of American political life. While this generous and gentle eroticism is available to us, we would do well to respect it, instead of ridiculing it.

And yet . . . there are manifestations around the fringe of the counter culture that one cannot but regard as worrisomely unhealthy. Elements of pornographic grotesquery and blood-curdling sadomasochism emerge again and again in the art and theater of our youth culture and intrude themselves constantly into the underground press. Many of the underground newspapers seem to work on the assumption that talking about anything frankly means talking about it as crudely and as savagely as possible. The supposedly libertarian eroticism of this style betrays a total failure to realize that professional pornography does not challenge, but rather battens off the essential prurience of middle-class sexuality and has a vested

ual Freedom League the Sexual Fascism League. For a heavier presentation of such fears, see David Holbrook's essay "R. D. Laing and the Death Circuit" in *Encounter*, August 1968. Peter Viereck's *Metapolitics: The Roots of the Nazi Mind* (New York: A. A. Knopf, 1941), is a thorough attempt to spell out the connections between Nazism and Romanticism—a line of argument that is relevant to such criticisms, since the relationship of the counter culture to the Romantic tradition in our society is readily apparent. Finally, for an absolutely vicious denunciation of "the Nazi hoodlums of the new freedom," see G. Legman's intemperate little tract *The Fake Revolt* (New York: Breaking-Point Press, 1967).

interest in maintaining the notion that sex is a dirty thing. What prohibition was to the bootlegger, the puritanical ethos is to the pornographer: both are the entrepreneurs of an oppressive prudishness.¹⁹ Even where such crudity is meant to satirize or reply in kind to the corruptions of the dominant culture, there is bound to come a point where sardonic imitation destroys the sensibilities and produces simple callousness. I find it little short of disheartening to come across items like the following: a rave review of an acid-rock group called The Doors (after Huxley, after Blake, apparently) taken from the underground Seattle newspaper *Helix* (July 1967):

The Doors. Their style is early cunnilingual with overtones of the Massacre of the Innocents. An electrified sex slaughter. A musical blood-bath. . . . The Doors are carnivores in a land of musical vegetarians. . . . their talons, fangs, and folded wings are seldom out of view, but if they leave us crotch-raw and exhausted, at least they leave us aware of our aliveness. And of our destiny. The Doors scream into the darkened auditorium what all of us in the underground are whispering more softly in our hearts: we want the world and we want it . . . NOW!

~~In the face of such mock-Dionysian frenzy, it is no wonder that a fretful cry for "rationality" should be raised. How is one to make certain that the exploration of the non-intellective powers will not degenerate into a maniacal nihilism? The matter needs sorting out, and I am uncertain~~

¹⁹ *The Berkeley Barb* has become a particularly grim example of what happens when one ignores such seemingly obvious facts. The *Barb* now regularly carries about three pages of advertising for blue movies, along with a vast amount of "velvet underground" classified ads. Such obscenity merchandisers make about as much of a contribution to sexual freedom as the Strategic Air Command—whose motto is "peace is our profession"—makes to healthy international relations.

with drug merchandisers, who are only the criminal caricature of the American business ethos, and who will scarcely be reformed by being given docile new populations to exploit.

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It is no easy matter to establish responsibility for the psychedelic fascination of the young. The high-touting of narcotics has been going on since the days of the San Francisco Renaissance, and by now the number of those who have added to their lore and glamor is legion. Still, one figure—that of Timothy Leary—stands out as that of promoter, apologist, and high priest of psychedelia nonpareil. Surely if we look for the figures who have done the most to push psychedelic experience along the way toward becoming a total and autonomous culture, it is Leary who emerges as the Ultra of the campaign. Indeed, he would probably be insulted if we denied him the distinction.

It is remarkable, and more than a little suspicious, how Leary came to exert his brief but significant influence on the youth culture of the sixties. For while Leary had been a much-publicized pioneer in the field of psychedelic research since the early sixties,⁵ it was not until his academic career had been washed up (he was dismissed from Harvard in 1963) and he had twice run a-foul of the narcotics laws, that he blossomed forth—and then almost overnight—as a self-proclaimed cultic swami. This rather makes it difficult to avoid seeing more than a fortuitous connection between Leary's legal entanglements (one of which saddled him with the absurdly severe sentence of thirty years imprisonment and a \$30,000 fine) and his subsequent claims to visionary

⁵ See, as an example of Leary's more academic style, the letter he coauthored to the *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists* for May 1962.

From Chapter V
The Counter Culture
and Abuse of
Psychedelic
Experience

prophecy. Such an interpretation of Leary's career may be too cynical, but the fact remains that the first, splashy "psychedelic celebration" of his League for Spiritual Discovery was held in September 1966, within six months of the time his lawyer had appealed that one of Leary's narcotics convictions be reversed as a violation of religious freedom.⁶

But even if Leary's psychedelic cult began as a legal gambit, it need not be lightly dismissed. There exists in psychiatry a condition of mind called the Ganser syndrome—or the syndrome of approximate answers. The syndrome describes the behavior of people who seem to be faking insanity, but faking it so well that they eventually take on their insane role permanently. In a sense, they calculatedly drive themselves mad. In Leary's case, the "madness" has assumed the mantle of the divine, but it seems to involve the same process of systematically losing oneself in an eccentric identity. Whatever the explanation for the turn Leary's career has taken, the change has been of great significance for the development of our youth culture. For it is Leary who has managed to embed the younger generation's psychedelic fascination solidly in a religious context. The connection which far more gifted minds had discovered between psychedelic experience and visionary religion is finally being retailed by Leary to masses of teen-agers and college students.

⁶ See the report on the league's founding and its first public service in the *New York Times*, September 20, 1966, p. 33, and September 21, 1966, p. 94. For the "biblical account" of the league's history, see Leary's *High Priest* (New York: World, 1968). This projected four-volume work is designed to provide "the Old Testament background of the new witness of those born after 1946." Clearly, Leary sees himself as the Moses of these scriptures, since this first volume deals almost exclusively with his own adventures and martyrdoms. The book is, incidentally, a striking example of the new religiosity. From the very first sentence—"In the beginning was the Turn-On"—we are in the midst of a religious eclecticism so heavily laid on that it is almost suffocating.

There is no way to tell whether Leary has or has not turned on more of the younger generation than novelist Ken Kesey, creator of the "acid test" during the early sixties. Both can claim a notorious success at the specialty act of organizing mass public "trips." But Kesey's sessions were mainly fun and games: LSD served up in a heady brew of amplified rock bands, strobe lights, and free-form dance. The intention was, at best, aesthetic and entertaining. Leary, on the other hand, preferred to come on during his LSD camp meetings with all the solemnity of the risen Christ, replete with white cotton pajamas, incense, and the stigmata of his legal persecutions—though the light and sound effects were still part of the act. (So were the high admission prices: up to \$4.00 per seat.) Doubtless the psychedelic fascination would have spread among the young, though more slowly, without the proselytizing of Kesey and Leary. But Leary, appearing at just the ripe moment and gaining ready access to thousands of college students and adolescents, has been the figure primarily responsible for inculcating upon vast numbers of young and needy minds (many of which do not easily hold more than one idea at a time) the primer-simple notion that LSD has "something" to do with religion. And it is that notion—even if imperfectly grasped—which makes psychedelic experimentation much more than a naughty hijinx.

When the flaming youth of the twenties took heavily to bootleg liquor, they were in no position to reach for metaphysics to justify their bad habits. For our contemporary young, however, dope wears the charisma of an esoteric wisdom, and they defend its uses with a religious fervor. What Leary has taught them is that getting turned on is not a kind of childish mischief; it is the sacred rite of a new age. They know, if only vaguely, that somewhere behind the forbidden experience lie rich and exotic religious traditions, occult

powers, salvation—which, of course, the adult society fails to understand, and indeed fears. “They’re like the Romans,” a young psychedelic promoter is quoted as saying. “They don’t realize this is a religious movement. Until they make it [the use of psychedelics] legal and do it up front, we’ll find our sacraments where we can. And no sooner is one made illegal, we’ll come up with another.”⁷

By way of a mystic religiosity, Leary has succeeded in convincing vast numbers of the young that his “neurological politics” must function as an integral, if not a central, factor in their dissenting culture. “The LSD kick is a spiritual ecstasy. The LSD trip is a religious pilgrimage.” Psychedelic experience is *the* way “to groove to the music of God’s great song.”

But the promise of nirvana is not all. Leary has begun of late to assimilate the psychedelics to a bizarre form of psychic Darwinism which admits the tripper to a “new race” still in the process of evolution. LSD, he claims, is “the sacrament that will put you in touch with the ancient two million year old wisdom inside you”; it frees one “to go on to the next stage, which is the evolutionary timelessness, the ancient reincarnation thing that we always carry inside.”⁸ After this fashion, the “politics of ecstasy” become the wave of the future, moving in mysterious ways to achieve the social revolution. When Leary is criticized, as he often is, for preaching a form of a-political quietism, his critics overlook the fact that his pitch to the young actually makes ambitious political claims.

⁷ *The Berkeley Barb*, June 30, 1967, p. 6.

⁸ The quotations are from a 1967 British Broadcasting Company TV program called “The Mind Alchemists.” The evolutionary doctrines are also scattered through Leary’s recent book *The Politics of Ecstasy*. They also appear in an interview carried in the *New York Post Magazine*, September 14, 1967, p. 45.

The last few years [Leary tells us] I've been advising everyone to become an ecstatic saint. If you become an ecstatic saint, you then become a social force. . . . The key to the psychedelic movement, the key to what's going on with the young people today, is individual freedom. . . . Liberals and left-wing people, Marxists, are opposed to this individual pursuit. . . . They're attempting to wash out these seed-nific energies. We do go into action on the political or social chessboard to defend our individual internal freedom. . . . We're trying to tell the youngsters that the psychedelic movement is nothing new. . . . the hippies and the acid heads and the new flower tribes are performing a classic function. . . . The empire becomes affluent, urbanized, completely hung-up in material things, and then the new underground movements spring up. . . . They're all subversive. They all preach a message of turn-on, tune-in, drop-out.⁹

So, we are to believe, dosing on LSD and going underground is enough to transform society and re-route the course of history. Leary at his psychedelic arcadia in Millbrook, New York, is, despite all appearances to the contrary, in the vanguard of *the* revolution. "It will be an LSD country within fifteen years," Leary predicted in a 1967 BBC interview. "Our Supreme Court will be smoking marijuana within fifteen years. It's inevitable, because the students in our best universities are doing it now. There'll be less interest in warfare, in power politics. You know, politics today is a disease—it's a real addiction."

The "psychedelic revolution" then, comes down to the simple syllogism: change the prevailing mode of consciousness and you change the world; the use of dope *ex opere operato* changes the prevailing mode of consciousness; therefore, universalize the use of dope and you change the world.

⁹ From an interview in the *Southern California Oracle*, October 1967. Leary now feels that the "dropout" stage for the young need not last longer than two years. See his *The Politics of Ecstasy*, p. 355.

When the promise of so much gets tied into the opportunity for unlimited free sexuality—which is a basic aspect of Leary's cult—is it any wonder the alienated young go for it headlong? "CAN the World Do Without LSD?" a feature in *The East Village Other* asks. "Here's where those who have and those who have not had LSD part company—at least as far as knowing what the subject under discussion is. . . . Can a person be human without LSD? Or, let us say, without THE PSYCHEDELIC experience? The answer, as far as the writer of this article can see, is a highly qualified, cautiously rendered, but emphatic, definitely NOT. BUT, . . ." (One breathes a sigh of relief for the qualifying "BUT." Perhaps, after all, there is some special dispensation through which Socrates, Shakespeare, Montaigne, Tolstoy, and the like may be granted their humanity.) "BUT, the psychedelic experience is not tied exclusively to LSD. There are at least five other effective psychedelic drugs." (No such luck.)

When the claims of psychedelia take on such proportions, one is surely justified in digging in one's heels and registering heated protest. But the trouble is: dope is not simply an excrescence that can be surgically removed from our youth culture by indignant rejection. Leary and his followers have succeeded in endowing it with such a mystique that it now seems the very essence of that politics of the nervous system in which the young are so deeply involved. And this is ironic in the extreme, because one could make an excellent case that the revolution which Leary purports to be leading is the most lugubrious of illusions.

Within a wider context, the quest of the young for psychedelic adventures begins to look like the symptom of a much larger social development, in which their rejected elders participate. The fact is: our society is well on its way toward becoming distressingly drug-dependent. The reliance on chemical agents to control the various functions of the or-

ganism is now a standard feature of what we regard as "health." During 1967, Americans consumed some 800,000 pounds of barbiturates—and then some ten billion amphetamine tablets to counteract the barbiturates. We are also given to understand that one out of four of our population uses tranquilizers regularly.¹⁰ At a recent congress of the World Psychiatric Association held in London during November 1967, it was revealed that in Great Britain (with a population of about fifty million) a "staggering total" of over forty-three million prescriptions for psychotropic drugs was issued within a recent three-year period. And this total did *not* include the tranquilizers, anti-depressants, and sedatives used in general and mental hospitals or in private practice, but only those dispensed under the National Health Service.¹¹

Speaking at the congress on the subject, Dr. William Sargent concluded that drugs were fast becoming the standard technique for dealing with anxiety and emotional disorder, largely replacing psychotherapy, psychoanalysis, or, needless to say, any attempt to alter the environmental factors that generate the suffering. The largest single group in this growingly drug-dependent population was identified, not as rebellious adolescents, but as older women who needed help falling asleep and settling their nerves.

Thus adjustments and functions that used to be left to the unaided human organism—sleeping, waking, relaxing, sexual potency, digestion, bowel movements—are being unloaded on an expanding repertory of chemical concoctions. Clearly, old-fashioned organic processes are not measuring up to the demands of contemporary civilization. This is, in plain point of fact, a damning indictment of contemporary civiliza-

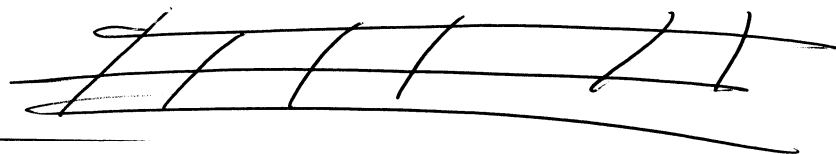
¹⁰ New York *Herald-Tribune* (International Edition), May 28, 1968.

¹¹ *The Guardian* (London), November 14, 1967.

tion, since whatever it is we are designing our environment for, it isn't the human being. But the most convenient way to meet such an unlivable state of affairs without thwarting technocratic values is, obviously, to patch up the organism with a congeries of pharmacological bandages. How many of us are there now—who for lack of time, for lack of tranquility—must look to a pill or an injection to bring off the most ordinary natural functions?

Within this framework, discussion of the psychedelics assumes a rather different significance. If our society is already committed to solving its psychic and organic problems with chemical agencies, then for how long can the line be drawn at the so-called "consciousness expanders"? Why *not* a pill or a needle to provide temporary emotional liberation and perceptual diversion? The public attitude on the issue already betrays a strange mixture of permissiveness and resistance. Amphetamine is familiar enough to the general public as the Benzedrine which many a harried student and fatigued executive uses without qualms to change his state of consciousness from drowsy to wakeful. LSD has met with no serious resistance in any quarter with respect to its professional use by therapists and researchers. If the public still withholds its tolerance for the unrestricted use of these drugs, its ambivalence must, to a considerable extent, be set down to an honest concern for the health hazard involved when the agents are used without some degree of knowledgeable discipline. The drugs are undeniably potent and the concern is legitimate. Even the underground press has begun to circulate the word that "speed (amphetamine) kills." As for marijuana, the objection against its use has become, as many impeccably straight individuals and groups have already admitted, increasingly inconsistent in a society which allows free use of alcohol.¹²

¹² See, for example, the remarks of Food and Drug Administra-



THE
SIXTIES

YEARS OF HOPE
DAYS OF RAGE

TODD GITLIN



BANTAM BOOKS • NEW YORK • TORONTO • LONDON • SYDNEY • AUCKLAND

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"Everybody Get Together"

ALL-PURPOSE APOCALYPSE

Nothing put the category *youth* on my own political map more resoundingly than a song called "Eve of Destruction."

In August 1965, within five weeks after its release, "Eve of Destruction" surged to the top of the sales charts. It was, disk jockeys said, the fastest-rising song in rock history. Even in an age when commercial fads materialize overnight, a success like this was amazing. For "Eve of Destruction" took off while a good many stations were banning it—including all of the ABC network's—and a good many others were playing it only infrequently. This was a song which a vociferous group of campus barnstormers called the Christian Anti-Communist Crusade said was "obviously aimed at instilling fear in our teenagers as well as a sense of hopelessness," helping "induce the American public to surrender to atheistic international Communism."

Written "as a prayer, for my own pleasure" by a nineteen-year-old named P. F. Sloan, "Eve of Destruction" began with two funereal thumps of the kettledrum, leading into a pounding drumbeat. Then the surly voice of Barry McGuire ground out a thunder-and-brimstone sermon:

The Eastern world, it is explodin'
Violence flarin', bullets loadin'
You're old enough to kill but not for votin'
You don't believe in war but what's that gun you're totin'
And even the Jordan River has bodies floatin'

Then the refrain:

And you tell me over and over and over again, my friend,
You don't believe we're on the eve of destruction.

There had been no song remotely like this one in the decade-long history of rock music, although the objections of the Christian Anti-Communist Crusade suggest that here, at long last, was the song fundamentalists had been anticipating through all their years of panic, the one that would confirm their dire prophecies about the dark, inexorable logic of "nigger music." Nothing could have been in starker contrast to the previous year, 1964, when the Number 1 hits had included the Shangri Las' "Leader of the Pack," the Beach Boys' "Deuce Coupe" and "California Girls," the Supremes' "Baby Love," and the Beatles' "A Hard Day's Night"—all bouncy. "Eve" was strident and bitter, its references bluntly topical—no precedent for that, not even in Bob Dylan's allegorical "Blowin' in the Wind." Its structure came from folk: simple guitar strum, repeated refrain, forced rhymes. With an off-balance rhythm, it wasn't much to dance to; it brooded. McGuire's voice started with a whimper but got surlier as it went along, punctuated by the occasional ripping whine of a Dylanesque harmonica. The all-purpose apocalypse took in the Bomb—"When the button is pushed there's no runnin' away/There'll be no one to save with the world in a grave"—and even civil rights, which by now with the passage of the Voting Rights Act that spring, had become an apple-pie issue:

. . . Handful of Senators don't pass legislation
And marches alone can't bring integration
When human respect is disintegratin'
This whole crazy world is just too frustratin' . . .
Look at all the hate there is in Red China
Then take a look around to Selma, Alabama. . . .

Protest even engendered protest. An ad hoc group called the Spokesme recorded an answer song, "Dawn of Correction"—which flopped.

The Christian Anti-Communist Crusade was on the right track about what the song implied, though wrong that its *aim* was to demoralize. Growing numbers of the young had to have been demoralized in the first place or they couldn't have relished McGuire's growls. Students of popular culture later tried to downplay the significance of the lyrics,* but tl

*A study of a sample of undergraduates at the time showed that only 14 percent understood the song "total" theme; 44 percent understood it "partially." A junior college survey showed 36 percent interpreting the song correctly.

lyrics conveyed only part of the song's meaning. Pop music devotees react to the mood of a song whether or not they grasp the lyrics. The sound carried the point: "Eve of Destruction" didn't well up with all-American high spirits; its drumbeat wasn't martial but ominous.

If any doubt was left about what the song meant, the superintendents and interpreters of popular culture (including right-wing alarmists) went to work to clear things up. Shortly after "Eve of Destruction," a hearty ditty called "Ballad of the Green Berets," sung by Staff Sergeant Barry Sadler, rose to the top of the charts in march tempo with a display of rat-a-tat-tat. That fall of 1965, Chicago's leading rock station sponsored a "battle of the Barrys," McGuire versus Sadler. On the decisive day, listeners were invited to call in and cast a ballot for their favorite: "Eve of Destruction" or "Green Berets." "Berets" won—by a single vote out of thousands cast. For promotion's sake, at least, the programmers of WCFL knew there was circulation to be gained by hyping their contest as if an entire culture were at stake. Plainly a new constellation of moods was in the air. "Eve of Destruction" seemed to certify that a mass movement of the American young was upon us.

"I CAN'T GET NO"

Not out of the blue, of course. Bob Dylan had groaned out his triptych of wasteland passions and rebellions for two years now, in the albums *The Freewheelin' Bob Dylan* and *The Times They Are A-Changin'*. The Zimmerman boy from up-country Minnesota had adopted a name that was both literary (the besotted and lyrical Dylan Thomas) and true-gritty American (*Gunsmoke's* Marshal Matt Dillon), had gone to Greenwich Village and picked up a following with his folk anthems and antiestablishment gags. The tiny New Left delighted in one of our own generation and mind singing earnest ballads about racist murderers ("The Lonesome Death of Hartie Carroll"), the compensatory racism of poor whites ("Only a Pawn in Their Game"), Cold War ideology ("Masters of War" and "With God on Our Side"). Insiders knew Dylan had written the chilling "A Hard Rain's Gonna Fall" during the Cuban missile crisis, evoking the end of the world; the anthem "The Times They Are A-Changin'" sounded like a musical version of the "new insurgency" rhetoric of *America and the New Era*. To make it all more marvelous, Dylan did all this not on the marginal, faintly do-it-yourself Vanguard or Folkways label, redolent of Pete Seeger and the fight against the blacklist, but on big-league commercial Columbia Records. Teased by the idea of a popular movement, we admired Dylan's ability to smuggle the subversive into mass-circulated trappings. Whether he liked it or not, Dylan *sang for us*: we didn't have to know he had hung out in Minneapolis's dropout-

nonstudent radical scene in order to intuit that he had been doing some hard traveling through a familiar landscape. We followed his career as if he were singing our song; we got in the habit of asking where he was taking us next.

It was a delight but not altogether a surprise, then, when Dylan dropped in on SDS's December 1963 National Council meeting. We were beginning to feel that we—all fifty of us in the room—were the vibrating center of the new cyclonic Left. Alger Hiss came to visit the same meeting, and drew an ovation; Allard Lowenstein also dropped in, and sat in the corner, anonymous. Dylan arrived unceremoniously with a Mississippi civil rights lawyer, sat shyly in the back, listened to a discussion about our plans for community organizing, and said nothing. (We'd been alerted he was coming, and decided not to put him on the spot with a public introduction.) A recess came, and Dylan told a group of us he'd be interested in working in one of our incipient ERAP projects. (Too exciting to believe! This proved we were the center!) But Dylan warned us to be careful—of him. A few weeks earlier, just days after the Kennedy assassination, he told us, he had appeared at the banquet of the Old Leftish Emergency Civil Liberties Committee. He thought he'd been invited to sing; he didn't know he was about to be given their Tom Paine Award. "Then I see these bald-headed, pot-bellied people sitting out there in suits," he told us. He ranked up at the backstage bar, contemplated the assemblage, then "went crazy," ranted that old people in furs and jewels should retire, announced that he could see some of himself in Lee Harvey Oswald, and stalked off the platform. He was half warning us, half apologizing for his bad-boy behavior.* In the meantime, Dylan said he would sing some benefit concerts for SDS. (But afterward he didn't answer our letters or phone calls.)

Dylan wasn't just putting on; or if his political commitment was a put-on phase designed to catapult him to stardom, as he said in a later and cynical incarnation, he was probably putting himself on as well. The woman he lived with on and off for years worked for CORE. He sang to Negroes in the Mississippi cotton fields (there is a touching sequence from this trip in the Pennebaker-Leacock documentary *Don't Look Back*). He visited movement organizers in the mining country of eastern Kentucky, where he wrote "The Chimes of Freedom Flashing." And so his next album, *Another Side of Bob Dylan*, struck the politicians as something of a personal betrayal, especially the line directed at the onetime lover: "I've heard you say many a time that you're better than no one and no one is better than you/If you really believe that, you know you have nothing to win and nothing to lose."

*In another version of the Tom Paine Award episode, Dylan reworked the experience to sound purely and simply dismissive of the spectacle of ridiculous old-fart left-wingers: "All they can see is a cause, and using people for their cause."

Through all this, Dylan's albums were never big successes by American pop standards (they sold better in England). When two of his songs made the top ten—"Blowin' in the Wind" and "Don't Think Twice, It's All Right"—it was in sweetened versions by Peter, Paul and Mary. By contrast, the astonishing trajectory of "Eve of Destruction" signaled a new mentality on a grand scale, stretching far beyond Berkeley and Ann Arbor and Swarthmore and other havens of the educated. For popular music was suddenly brooding and snarling all over the place. That same month, folk's princess, Joan Baez, broke into the hit parade for the first time in five years of recording, with an elegiacal Phil Ochs ballad called "There But for Fortune," which oozed universal compassion, included sympathy for winos, and referred to "the city where the bombs had to fall," which I took to mean Hiroshima. Dylan had just converted to electrified folk-rock—a few hundred purists (out of twenty thousand fans) had booed him when he unveiled the new style at the Newport Folk Festival in July—and his commercial instinct was rewarded: the folksinger who wanted to be a rock 'n' roll star finally burst through to Number 1 with the private, electric, rocked-up hostilities of "Like a Rolling Stone." His stylistic breakthrough made "Eve of Destruction" and all its folk-rock successors possible, in fact, by "dragging [folk] screaming," as Charlie Gillett writes, into the pop world, breaking the back of orthodox folk music in the process.

And if these sullen bursts weren't enough, what they followed to the Number 1 spot were the grinding riffs of the Rolling Stones' "Satisfaction," which announced its intent with a guitar lick that sounded like a sour buzz saw, and never stopped snarling. The verses were hard to understand—in fact they were digs at the banality of radio, TV, and advertising, if you could decipher them—but it was hard to miss the sexual insinuation of the repeated "I can't get no satisfaction"; the *interruptus* of "And I try, and I try, and I try"; the dare and taunt in the stop-starting "I can't get no—"; the strut of all kinds of pleasure-hungry, thwarted, ravaged and—what the hell—ravaging selves proclaiming once and for all that no one was going to stop them when they cruised into the world to get whatever it was they hadn't gotten. Angrier than the Stones' earlier blues, and far more popular in the States, "Satisfaction" was a cross-class yelp of resentment that could appeal to waitresses and mechanics and students, all stomping in unison. The Stones' rough-tough bad-boy personae were as much a contrivance as the Beatles' famous sweetness; with the help of clever counselors, the Stones discovered to their own satisfaction just how vast was the market for *badness*.

"FAR FROM THE TWISTED REACH OF CRAZY SORROW"

Eve of destruction; no satisfaction . . . and a third motif went rippling through the baby-boom culture: adhesive love, that luminous remedy

without which the popular imagination of the young would have dissolved into nothing more than paranoia and rampant aggression. If the apocalypse was impending, your every hope for pleasure thwarted; if you found yourself "on your own, no direction home, like a complete unknown" (Bob Dylan's version of alienation in "Like a Rolling Stone"); if this was a dog-eat-dog world, as Dylan seemed to be sneering, it was still possible to imagine transcendence.

Popular culture conjured up both private and public compensations, actually. One theme was implicit in the double entendre of Dylan's next hit single, "Rainy Day Women #12 and 35": "Everybody must get stoned," meaning both that the great man incurs the wrath of the uncomprehending mob (as at Newport), and that the way out is through the magic of wonder drugs, especially marijuana, just then seeping out of its black and Hispanic, jazz-minded enclaves to the outlying zones of the white middle-class young. Dylan's taunt had its hard edge; there was a more persuasive, utopian version in his dreamy spring 1965 "Mr. Tambourine Man," a myth of pure sensuality which was also widely and laughingly interpreted, at least in Ann Arbor's hermeneutic circles, as an ode to a dope dealer, but was really a traditional Romantic vision:

Yes to dance beneath the diamond sky with one hand waving free
Silhouetted by the sea
Circled by the circus sands
With all memory and fate
Driven deep beneath the waves
Let me forget about today until tomorrow

Hey, Mr. Tambourine Man, play a song for me
I'm not sleepy and there is no place I'm going to
Hey, Mr. Tambourine Man, play a song for me
In the jingle-jangle morning I'll come following you.

Thus did Dylan lilt of absolute liberty in an infinite present time severed from the past: this was the transcendentalist fantasy of the wholly, abstractly free individual, finally released from the pains and distortions of

society's traps, liberated to the embrace of nature and the wonder of essential things, in an America capable of starting the world again.

Although Dylan sang "Mr. Tambourine Man" as sweetly as he was able, the lyric was still scarred by the rough edges of his voice; as with "primitive" painting and sculpture, the roughness, coupled with innocence, was part of the attraction: Dylan had earned his fantasy. For side 1 of his last pre-electric album, *Bringing It All Back Home*, was full of nightmare visions, not least the sadistic torments of "Maggie's Farm." Once you had paid your dues—Dylan seemed to be saying—and made your escape from Maggie's Farm, then you could cavort down to the beach with Mr. Tambourine Man. "Mr. Tambourine Man" was all the more luminous and poignant because on the Hieronymous Boschian side 2 of *Bringing It All Back Home* it led directly to "Gates of Eden," "It's Alright Ma (I'm Only Bleeding)," and "It's All Over Now, Baby Blue."

Stoned, my friends and I and many another movement circle would fish Dylan's torrent of images, confirming our own revolts and hungers. As Dylan lurched through the doggerel stations of his personal cross, his bêtes noires were a gallery of our own grotesques. Even his irony about his own failed flight from the straight world spoke for an anguish we shared about the ambiguities of privilege: "Disillusioned words like bullets bark/As human gods aim for their mark/Make everything from toy guns that spark/To flesh-colored Christs that glow in the dark/It's easy to see without looking too far/That not much is really sacred. . . . But though the masters make the rules/For the wise men and the fools/I've got nothing, Ma, to live up to. . . . For them that must obey authority/That they do not respect in any degree/Who despite their jobs, their destinies/Speak jealously of them who are free/Do what they do just to be/Nothing more than something they invest in. . . . Money doesn't talk, it swears/Obscenity, who really cares/Propaganda, all is phony." ("It's Alright Ma [I'm Only Bleeding]" alone donated dozens of headlines to the just-invented underground press.) And this "Baby Blue" with whom it was "all over," was it possibly America itself? Dylan's celebration of the solitary singer burst upon educated circles like ours in Ann Arbor just as high school seeker-intellectuals were discovering Hermann Hesse's *Steppenwolf*, equally a celebration of magic among the illuminati for the benefit of the lone wolf (once himself, like Dylan, an antiwar partisan).

"Mr. Tambourine Man" went down especially well with marijuana, just then making its way into dissident campus circles. The word got around that in order to "get" the song, and others like it, you had to smoke this apparently angelic drug. It wasn't just peer pressure; more and more, to get access to youth culture, you had to get high. Lyrics became more elaborate, compressed, and obscure, images more gnarled, the total effect nonlinear, translinear. Without grass, you were an outsider looking in.

"Circles" was the right word for the developing counterculture, in

fact, because marijuana and music made up a collective ritual. It didn't matter that Dylan's lyrics, for example, were celebrations of strictly private experience; by playing the music together we transformed it into a celebration of our own collective intimacy, love, hilarity. In groups—rarely anything so formal as a preannounced “party”—we would sit around, listening, awed, all sensation, to Dylan's or somebody else's images bursting one out of the other like Roman candles, while we jabbered and giggled at anything at all (“Can you dig it?”), the afternoons and evenings seeming to stretch, the present liquidly filling all time past and time future, not just the words but the spaces between notes saturated by significance, the instruments sounding in the ear more distinctly than could have been imagined before. The songs drifted on, and on, leisurely, taking their sweet time; no longer were they being written for efficient two-minute jabs on AM radio.

The point was to open up a new space, an *inner* space, so that we could *space out*, live for the sheer exultant point of living. Go to class stoned; shop for food stoned; go to the movies stoned—see, all is transformed, the world just started again! On these luminous occasions, the tension of a political life dissolved; you could take refuge from the Vietnam war, from your own hope, terror, anguish. Even if you weren't “political,” you had something in common with those who were: the ideal of an aesthetic existence, existence for its own sake, seemed within reach. Drugs planted utopia in your own mind. Call it a spiritual search? Fine, if you please. Or the ultimate giggle. Or both. In any event, grass seemed to have outfitted us with a more acute set of senses. Taste buds multiplied a thousandfold: pass the peanut butter, M & Ms, whipped cream, pepperoni. Light took on properties of its own: take a look through this prism, this kaleidoscope, check out the color TV. And sex . . . sex was ethereal. Did anybody ever do this before? The straights talk about martinis, but they're so upright, they don't know how to wonder, they don't know what they're missing. *They don't get the joke.* Love is already here. “I'd love to turn you on. . . .”

New popular experience breeds new clichés. “Oh wow,” “out of sight,” “far out,” or the more intense “far fucking out” (or “far fucking Rockaway,” in the cynical-affectionate words of a journalist friend rejuvenated by grass)—these were easily parodied attempts to express the fact that delight was possible, the world was not entirely signed, sealed, and delivered over to the powers of instrumental reason. “Weird” was an easy label for the mysteries that opened up while you were stoned; then, banal and overused, it enshrined the strangeness of real unfolded-unspindled-unmutilated life, the sort of strangeness you could domesticate, like a house pet. Domesticated strangeness also showed up in “flashes” of free association. Stoned consciousness darted, flowed, went where it wanted to go, freed of rectilinear purpose and instruction. Routine talk seemed laughable; weird juxtapositions made perfect sense;

sense made no sense at all. Rarely did dope flashes look as good the morning after, but who cared? Meanwhile, virtually nothing was *really* weird, because anything might prove significant, or hilarious, or both—"Do . . . you . . . believe . . . this?"—just as anything you looked at, *really* looked at, might be transfigured in the seeing. The universe was drenched by meaning. Stoned people called up WBAI in New York to argue earnestly about what Dylan meant by "The pump don't work 'cause the vandals took the handles," or some other line. "He's rewriting the Bible," a Berkeleyite told me once in all seriousness. So Dylan's cascading lyrics matched the marijuana experience of snapping the normal links, breaking the usual associations, quilting together patterns from rags. The combination of a joint, the right company, and the right long-playing record seemed to have redeemed the traditional Romantic promise, Blake's "eternity in an hour": to see and feel truly the grain of the world, the steady miracle ordinarily muffled by busyness but still lurking in the interstices, a revelation of your astonishing existence in an electric universe. The everyday had been converted into the extraordinary.

As one cut on a less-than-best-selling album, Dylan's 1965 fantasy remained the property of small circles of the disaffected *initiati*. But "Mr. Tambourine Man" soon achieved a national audience in the crisper, smoothed-down, mechanical L.A. single version recorded by the Byrds. This was folk-rock's first commercial hit, danceable with or without a diamond sky or indeed any deep comprehension of Dylan's words at all. Plainly there was a national teen market for the spacy lyric, the invitation to drop out into a kingdom of druggy satisfaction—even the Byrds' metronomic version (created by professional backup sessionmen brought in by the producer to give the Byrds a steadiness they ordinarily lacked!) retained some of Dylan's original meaning. "Take me on a trip/Upon your magic swirling ship"; "Take me disappearing/Through the smoke rings of my mind"—the message, however imperfectly translated, got across.

"SMILE ON YOUR BROTHER" "Mr. Tambourine Man" was the individualist's fantasy

writ large: the hippie as lone ranger. The other utopia that swooped into popular music at the same time was that of the hippie as communitarian: the ideal of a social bond that could bring all hurt, yearning souls into sweet collectivity, beyond the realm of scarcity and the resulting pettiness and aggression. With the benefit of hind-hearing one can even hear the tribal love-sound foreshadowed in the exuberant innocence and joie de vivre of the Beatles' early harmonies: "Love Me Do," "From Me to You," "She Loves You," "I Want to Hold Your Hand," "All My Loving." Like the Stones, the Beatles had discarded their earlier, raunchier, black-based

blues in order to rise as stars for the teenage audience. But as they brought new jubilation to the traditional "I'll-do-anything-for-you" puppy-love theme, they also succeeded in tapping a deeper sensibility. Their own love-quartet—at least the version retailed to the adoring hordes live and in Richard Lester's mock documentary *A Hard Day's Night*—could be taken to embody the ethic of brotherly love: harmony through diversity.

But the idea of a loving society only took full shape with what publicists called the San Francisco Sound, especially the Jefferson Airplane's languid invocation: "Hey people now/Smile on your brother/Let me see you get together/Love one another right now." Already a staple at Bay Area concerts in 1965, released nationally on their first album in August 1966, and eventually popularized in a version by the Youngbloods, "Let's Get Together" brought religious yearning into Sixties pop. Unlike religiosities such as 1953's smash "I Believe" and the 1958 gospel hit "He's Got the Whole World in His Hands," the Airplane's sermon implored the beloved community to take the whole world in *their own* hands and remake it under the sign of love: "You can make the mountains ring/Hear the angels cry. . . . You hold the key to love and fear/All in your trembling hand/One key unlocks them both/It's at your command."

Yet there was something curious here. One second the Airplane told their audience that everything was up to them; the next, they veered toward a kind of Taoist fatalism: "Some will come and some will go/We shall surely pass/When the wind that left us here/Returns for us at last/We are but a moment's sunlight/Fading on the grass." Their wistfulness fought against the frantic all-for-the-future self-sacrifice of the Protestant ethic, but equally against the profound existentialist will which the counterculture itself tried to coax forth. The counterculture made immense demands on young multitudes unplugging from the normal social circuits—and hedged its bets with mysticism. If "logic and proportion have fallen soggy dead," as the Airplane sang later, there was still a transcendent logic to fall back on.

Thus the looming popularity of astrology, the I Ching, and other founts of mystical wisdom and explanation. The stars (or the Book of Changes, or the chakras, or the more esoteric systems of yoga, Sufism, etc. to which the real cognoscenti graduated) were all at once a relief, a link to a mysterious past, a connection to the ultimate, a guarantee of personal meaning, a grid of "rationality," and an alibi. The burden of existentialism could be backbreaking; no wonder the Airplane's hand was "trembling." Who, on the other hand, could get all worked up trying to push the stars around? They simply *were*. If you believed, you gained access to ancient stockpiles of lore, once left pulverized and scattered by the bulldozer age of science and industrialism, the shards miraculously preserved to provide proof of the continuing life of the spirit. Moreover, the fact that the constellations sent forth their cosmic emanations to shape

your life was the very proof—otherwise lacking—of your significance down here in San Francisco on Planet Earth.

Normally, schools, corporations, armies, and other institutions provide people with enough everyday rationality to get by. If the question arises, "Why do things this way?" the workaday answer springs up: "Those are the rules. That's the way we do things around here." Or, "That's the way we've always done it." Or, "It makes sense because the authorities say so." The multitudes of young dropouts lost the cushion of those rules, even if it was a cushion they were happy to have chucked. Their new cushions, embroidered with hip lingo, were at once ancient and avant-garde; the personally tailored star-charts were distinguished from the banalities of the supermarket checkout stand and the syndicated newspaper columns with which the hoi polloi had to content themselves. The question of the hour was, "What's your sign?" ("Flashing yellow," I used to like to answer.) Astrology, the I Ching, etc., were perfectly suited for transcendental alibis because their instructions were so vague. If you didn't like what was written in your heavens, the skilled chart-maker could always remind you that "the stars impel, they don't compel," and get off the hook. If the I Ching coins turned up an abstract lesson you couldn't grasp or didn't like, you could stretch for another interpretation, or toss the coins again. These were systems you could relax into.

Coupled-up love had long been a staple of pop music. Now, for the first time, the normal culture of teenagers was becoming infiltrated by grander ideals: freedom, license, religiosity, loving community. Blurry as the pop images were, they added up to intimations of a different way of life. Thanks to modern mass media, and to drugs—perhaps *the* most potent form of mass communication—notions which had been the currency of tiny groups were percolating through the vast demographics of the baby boom. *Life*, *Time*, and the trendspotters of the evening news outdid themselves trumpeting the new youth culture. As with the beats, the cultural panic spread the news and image of hippiehood. Alarmists and proselytizers alike collaborated in the belief that American youth en masse were abandoning the stable routes of American society and striking out onto unprecedented trails (or into unprecedented thickets). Even as the editors deplored the current excesses (although the Luces themselves had taken LSD, and it was a *Life* article that stimulated a psychologist named Timothy Leary to try his first psychedelic mushrooms), they were usually less than scrupulous in reminding their audience that most of the young were not, after all, dropping acid and fleeing to the Haight-Ashbury. There was enormous anxiety about whether the prevailing culture could hold the young; and on the liberal side, anxiety about whether it deserved to. It became easy to imagine that the whole of youth was regressing, or evolving, into—what? Barbarism? A new society unto itself, a Woodstock Nation? A children's crusade? A subversive army? A revolutionary class?

Astonishingly soon, Governor George Wallace and Dr. Timothy Leary agreed that what was at stake was nothing less than Western Civilization, the only question being whether its demise was auspicious.

BEING-IN The tension between the individualist ethos of "Mr. Tambourine Man" and the communality of "Let's Get Together" was, for the time being, submerged in a great surge of animal joy. The emerging counterculture longed for both, for the fusion of the two. Why not have it all? Contradictions were a drag. The old world was coming to an end, and square logic with it. So let the good times roll! It was time for Better Living through Chemistry.

Human culture is ingenious. When people believe incompatible things at the same time, the contradictions become lived out, institutionalized, in rituals and habits. The counterculture thus devised institutions in which hip collectivity and the cultivation of individual experience could cohabit. Among them:

■ **The Acid Tests.** What could be more private than a drug trip? But both the defrocked Harvard professor Timothy Leary in the East and the let-it-all-hang-out novelist Ken Kesey in the West agreed that the miracle drugs should be ingested in company; moreover, that they were truth serums, agents of change that would tear apart the flimsy stupidities of life and get down to universals. Thrown out of Harvard in 1963 for tampering with unwary undergraduates, Leary and his colleague Richard Alpert took their drug experiments to a millionaire heir's mansion in upstate New York, a quasi-religious ashram for what Leary called the International Federation for Internal Freedom, where psilocybin was superseded by the even more mind-blowing chemical LSD. At first Leary and Alpert specialized in ancient wisdoms, cosmic imagery, Eastern meditations, and *The Tibetan Book of the Dead*, but Leary, eager to save the world in a flash, was also adept at arousing the media with slogans like "Tune in, turn on, drop out" and "Get out of your mind and into your senses." In the San Francisco Bay Area, Kesey, who had been turned on to LSD by a Veterans Administration hospital experiment in 1960, wrote *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest*, with its romance of crazy-like-a-fox heroes up against the Combine (a.k.a. System), and founded a countercombine of Merry Pranksters.

How to summon up the enormous innocence, not to say heedlessness, of the Pranksters? In their reckless abandon, their sheer ingenuity and bravado, they were strangely of a piece with the nodules of the civil rights movement and the New Left—not in ideology, obviously, but in the absolute audacity it took for a small squad to seize the moment and believe they could actually change the world with exemplary acts. (The

real achievement of Tom Wolfe's prose in *The Electric Kool-Aid Acid Test*, still unsurpassed as a chronicle of the counterculture, is not simply its breathless sense of fun but its capacity to evoke the animal magnitude, and nuttiness, of what the Pranksters were about.) In the summer of 1964 a dozen Pranksters careened around the country in a beat-up Day-Glo-painted super-stereo'd bus named FURTHER, gobbling and smoking vast quantities of drugs, freaking out local citizens (thus carrying the good tidings to the democratic multitude), having a high old time punctuated with bursts of stark raving madness. With mythic appropriateness, FURTHER's cannonball driver was none other than the beat hero, pill-popping, nonstop talker and wild man Neal Cassady. The Pranksters were indeed a wilder, western, electronic, vastly more raucous version of the beats—in large part because LSD, destroyer of tidy psychic worlds, was their thing. "Freak freely" was the idea: drop acid, smoke grass, eat speed, whatever drug was around, paint your faces, paint your scene, change everything, go after cosmic unity, "tool up for some incredible breakthrough," as Tom Wolfe summed it up, but whatever happened, *go with it* in hot pursuit of the old bohemian vision, enlightenment by any means necessary. "Either you're on the bus or off the bus."

By the fall of 1965, Kesey and friends, back in the Bay Area, were passing the word and the acid, come one, come all, first to friends, then to all comers, in public happenings they called Acid Tests. The dozens, then hundreds who caught wind of these occasions were given the purest LSD (still legal in California), treated to costumes, paint, pulsating colored lights, Prankster movies, barrages of sound and music, weirdly looped tape-recorders, assorted instruments, a flood of amplified talk. For Kesey, like Leary, was a proselytizer at a moment when millions were seeking a way to live beyond limits; he had a "vision of turning on the world," electrifying it courtesy of the most advanced products of American technology. The Pranksters had fantasies of slipping LSD into the public skin with solvents; and eventually, in Watts, while Kesey himself was on the lam in Mexico from marijuana charges, other Pranksters dispensed Kool-Aid spiked with LSD, didn't notify the novices, and treated one woman's bad trip by having her rant over the PA system to the dazzled, dazed assemblage. But the Watts test made *Life* magazine. Maybe there were no limits to the numbers of people who could be turned on; then all the inmates could take over the asylum.

■ The Pranksters were irregulars, with irregular schedules; they organized events as they pleased, on a moment's notice. In the hands of a hip household quaintly called the Family Dog, and the entrepreneur Bill Graham, who got the idea while he was business manager of the New Leftish San Francisco Mime Troupe, the Acid Tests evolved into Trips Festivals and scheduled concerts, with a new sound—spacy, unbounded whorls, not discrete songs: acid rock. By the fall of 1965, young people were flocking to San Francisco ballrooms every weekend to dance, to

listen, just to be there, usually stoned, in the all-over sensual massage. By projecting light through glass slides smeared with swirling paints, artists created light shows—an evolution from the Pranksters' colored lights. Strobe lights turned the dancers into unearthly mobiles themselves. Just so, the acid-inspired swirls of the new-style psychedelic posters were barely comprehensible, but that was precisely their point: they turned letters into art-objects themselves, liberated them from the burden of literal signification. In the new dances, individuals didn't touch; they communed, dug each other by occupying the same space. The bands got their names from the sort of inspired and often inexplicable juxtapositions that came in dope flashes: Iron Butterfly, Quicksilver Messenger Service, Jefferson Airplane (a major theme: transport and flight), Big Brother and the Holding Company, the Grateful Dead, Electric Flag. Or they shined up the banalities of everyday life by stuffing them with double entendres: Loading Zone, Cleveland Wrecking Company. For special occasions (and word traveled fast), the concerts moved outdoors, and what could be more appropriate, for wasn't music part of nature, and was there any purpose higher than the celebration of being young in the fullness of time, with no reason to be anywhere else in the world?

■ In January 1967, the San Francisco Bay Area effusion was summoned to a "Human Be-In," also known as "A Gathering of the Tribes." The attempt was to bring together political radicals and acid devotees, in Golden Gate Park, to celebrate what the editor of a new freak paper, the San Francisco *Oracle*, called "a union of love and activism previously separated by categorical dogma and label mongering."

Not a union too easily consummated. All such collaborations were suspect from the start, for beneath the giddy New Age rhetoric a fierce competition was shaping up between the radicals and the hippie-gurus, jealous-eyed world-savers, each eyeing the young unplugging from school and job and flag, jamming into the Haight-Ashbury, up for grabs. The *Oracle* itself normally leaned away from politics and toward psychedelic-looking headlines, Eastern arcana, dope news, and personal testimonials to New Age drugs; it was designed, its editor said, "to aid people on their trips." It didn't look like the staid, linear Left: it was printed in many colors, with some pieces set in pictorial shapes, as if to say that words had to take second place to images. A few old beat-turned-countercultural hands, especially Allen Ginsberg and Gary Snyder, believed devoutly in a confluence of politics (on behalf of the outside and the future) and psychedelia (on behalf of the inside and the present), but the Haight-Ashbury merchants, rock impresarios, and dope dealers who financed the *Oracle*, and the hip influentials who starred in the media, were antipolitical purists. For Leary and Alpert, all political systems were equal oppressors and power-trippers. Political news was game-playing, a bad trip, a bringdown, a *bummer*. Indeed, all social institutions were games;

the LSD game was simply the best game in town. The antidote to destructive games was—more playful games. Hadn't Bob Dylan sung, "It's only people's games that you've got to dodge"?

For their part, hearing the siren songs of the counterculture, political radicals polarized. Some, mostly PL types, lashed themselves to the mast of Puritanism. Drugs, they thought, were bourgeois self-indulgences, distractions from discipline. But many more radicals—especially in Berkeley—were stunned by the wonders of marijuana and LSD. Even if they feared that the Haight-Ashbury stood for an unsupportable "flower-child innocence," that drugs "divorced the will from political action," the force of acid itself could not be denied, or forgotten, or assimilated. It hung there, apart from the rest of experience, *terra incognita*, a gaping hole in their mental maps. Just as graduate students had dipped into North Beach coffeehouses ten years earlier, so now did Berkeley antiwar activists join the crowds grooving over to the concerts at the Fillmore and Avalon ballrooms on the other side of the Bay, and screw colored bulbs into their lamps for hometown dance parties. Perhaps it was no longer necessary for politicians to defend themselves against the media charge of being beatniks; perhaps looking shaggy and sandaled was something to be proud of. And as with everything that had happened in Berkeley since the Free Speech Movement, the instigators (like the reporters) quivered to the feeling that as Berkeley went today, so would the rest of America go tomorrow.

If you watched with an optimistic eye—was not All One?—perhaps all revolutions would converge. There were sporadic experiments in synthesis, and some grand failures. In October 1965, the organizers of Vietnam Day, the round-the-clock antiwar teach-in on the Berkeley campus, invited no less a guru than Ken Kesey, who showed up in Day-Glo regalia, sized up the crowd and the bombastic speakers as some kind of ego-clamoring fascist rally, and announced that "you're not gonna stop this war with this rally, by marching. . . . That's what *they* do," marching was *their* game, whereupon he honked a chorus of "Home on the Range" with his harmonica, a back-woods American boy to the end, and told the fifteen thousand antiwarriors the only thing that would do any good was to "look at the war, and turn your backs and say . . . Fuck it." This was not what the organizers wanted to hear on the verge of a march into fearsome Oakland to confront the army base.

But a year later, quicksilver Berkeley seemed to be building sturdier bridges between freaks and politicians. In December 1966, Berkeley antiwar protestors tried to evict a Navy recruiting table from the student union. The police intervened. Afterward, at a mass meeting to discuss a campus strike, someone started singing the old union standby, "Solidarity Forever." Voices stumbled, few knew the words. Then someone started "Yellow Submarine," and the entire roomful rollicked into it, chorus after chorus. With a bit of effort, the Beatles' song could be taken as the communion of hippies and activists, students and nonstudents, all who at long last felt they could

express their beloved single-hearted community. (It did not cross the collective mind that "Yellow Submarine" might also be taken as a smug anthem of the happy few snug in their little utopia.) One who felt vindicated in that musical moment was the Free Speech Movement veteran, ex-mathematician, poet, leafleteer and romantic, Michael Rossman. Rossman, though a red-diaper baby, was the most original and least formulaic spokesman for the movement's transcendent side—a man who respected the God-force of acid too much to issue programmatic statements about it. Rossman promptly ran off a leaflet which showed a little submarine adorned by the semi-psychedelic words "NO CONFIDENCE" (in the university administration, that is) with this explanation:

The Yellow Submarine was first proposed by the Beatles, who taught us a new style of song. It was launched by hip pacifists in a New York harbor, and then led a peace parade of 10,000 down a New York street. Last night we celebrated the growing fusion of head, heart and hands; of hippies and activists; and our joy and confidence in our ability to care for and take care of ourselves and what is ours. And so we made a resolution which broke into song; and we adopt for today this unexpected symbol of our trust in our future, and of our longing for a place fit for us all to live in. Please post, especially where prohibited. We love you.

So it seemed no mean symbolic rapprochement when on January 14, 1967, there gathered on the same platform in Golden Gate Park Allen Ginsberg chanting Hindu phrases to the young hordes; Gary Snyder, converted to Buddhism, blowing on a conch shell; Timothy Leary chanting, "Turn on, tune in, drop out"; Jerry Rubin, who had risen to celebrity as leader of the militant Vietnam Day Committee in Berkeley, appealing for bail money, to no apparent effect; and the usual bands playing. Off the platform, where most of the action characteristically was, twenty thousand young people, more or less, reveled, dropped acid, burned incense, tootled flutes, jingled tambourines, passed out flowers, admired on another, felt the immensity of their collective spectacle. Berkeleyites and Haight-Ashbury weirdos gawked at one another. A group of anarchists called the Diggers, of whom more later, passed out thousands of tablets of highest-quality (and now-illegal) LSD, manufactured for the occasion by the renowned acid chemist Augustus Owsley Stanley III, known universally as Owsley; and handed out thousands of free sandwiches made from turkeys that Owsley donated too. The police treated the spectacle with benign neglect.

While the micrograms flowed freely, the Hell's Angels guarded the microphone. The Angels, malevolent shaggy toughs, were the counterculture's resident bad guys, stark embodiments of California's stark media-pumped nightmare, striking fear into even the hippest middle-class heart, making Marlon Brando's wild ones look like Mickey Mouse.

And therefore to make peace with the undisputed barbarians was a challenge no countercultural vanguard could refuse, for to succeed would mean making peace with the bogeymen of the freaks' collective psyche, proving that they had snipped the last umbilical cord binding them to the suburbs. To federate with the Angels, even better, would be to prove that lambs and lions could make a home together on the outskirts of town (while reminding the worried mother in yourselves that you weren't the *real* barbarians). The Angels, for their part, garnered LSD from the Pranksters and respect from Haight Street hipsters. They were not easily tamed, of course. The bad boys wanted to be ultragood patriots. When the Vietnam Day peace march from Berkeley was stopped at the Oakland line on the way to the army terminal, the day after Kesey's performance, the Angels roared in to bash the marchers, apparently with the collusion of Oakland police. By the time of the Human Be-In, though, they had become fixtures of the Haight-Ashbury, celebrated by Allen Ginsberg as the current version of the "saintly motorcyclists" of whom, a decade before, he had howled.

The media delighted in the infinitely photogenic Be-In; whatever this strangeness was, it was certainly A Story. "Hippie," the beats' once-derogatory term for the half-hip, caught on, circulated by the mass media, which alternated scare stories with travelogues of local color. Using affordable offset presses, the counterculture conjured its own channels, weekly or occasional papers sold on the street by the reserve armies of the runaway young: the *Oracle* for the hippies; Berkeley's ejaculatory left-wing *Barb* for the politicians. A failing San Francisco FM station, KMPX, began to play lengthy album cuts for the growing hip population, all night long, and found its listenership turning up (and, probably, on). The be-in was apparently becoming a way of life.

Hard-core counterculturalists were not persuaded to abandon the ways of the spirit for the ways of power. The guru Alan Watts told the *Oracle*: "whenever the insights one derives from mystical vision become politically active, they always create their own opposite . . . a parody." But politicians did not abandon their efforts to fuse the technologies of personal transcendence with the passions of politics. That spring, Jerry Rubin ran for mayor of Berkeley, calling for an end to the war, support of Black Power—and the legalization of marijuana—all with psychedelic posters. His campaign manager was Stew Albert, a bohemian ex-PLer with curly blond locks and a guileless manner who had turned Rubin on to marijuana and for years enjoyed flirting with the idea of a hip-radical fusion. Even in PL's palmy days, Albert hadn't seen much contradiction between bohemianism and radical politics: his attitude was, "After the revolution, we'll be beats again." As the campaign wound on, Rubin wanted to play less and win more; he put on a jacket and tie and started to talk straighter, though not straight enough to win more than 22 percent of the vote.

Rituals on the be-in model even started filtering into the American interior. Prairie-power SDSers were among the carriers. In the fall of 1965 SDSers at the University of Oklahoma were smoking marijuana, and in 1966 a few of them were arrested for it. (When the arrest drew comment in the press, the national organization debated whether to defend them or, rather, proclaim that their personal habits were their own business and leave them to their own devices. No position could be agreed upon.) At the University of Texas, SDS and a new underground paper called the *Rag* organized "Gentle Thursday," a day for smiling on your brother and festooning the old jet parked in front of the ROTC building with signs saying "MAKE LOVE, NOT WAR" (a favorite slogan that year, this clever attempt to deploy pleasure for political purposes) and "FLY GENTLY, SWEET PLANE." On Mother's Day, the be-in even arrived on the shores of Lake Michigan, in benighted Chicago, courtesy of a newly organized underground paper called the *Seed*. One young woman who painted her legs in great psychedelic swirls for the occasion was a University of Chicago law student, civil rights activist, and acid-lover named Bernardine Dohrn.

Other politicians, including myself, were edgy. We'd been smoking grass regularly since an organizer brought the habit from Berkeley at Christmas of 1965; but we feared that utter frivolity would short-circuit American youth's still tenuous sense of moral obligation to the world's oppressed. Love should feel ashamed, I thought, when it was founded on privilege. The hip-youth-drug thing, whatever it was, was beyond our control, and we must have sensed that the disciplines of politics (including our own) were in danger of being overwhelmed. Paradigm case: There was talk in those days that the scraped interiors of banana skins, dried and smoked, would get you high: "Mellow Yellow," in the vernacular and the Donovan song immortalizing it. Just before the Chicago Be-In, I joked about organizing a group to pass out leaflets saying that "The Bananas You Smoke Were Picked by Men Earning So-Many Cents a Day and Whose Land Was Taken Away by United Fruit." I wasn't quite grouchy enough to write the leaflet, but I did spot a young woman wearing a Chiquita sticker on her forehead, and sourly raised the issue of United Fruit's exploitation of Central American labor. "Oh, don't be so hung up on United Fruit," she said. (Soon thereafter I wrote an "Open Letter to the Hippies" making my case, circulated that fall to underground papers via the new Liberation News Service.) Political forebodings notwithstanding, the *Seed* trumpeted afterward that this modest event was "the Midwest's confirmation that She, too, belonged within the folds of Love that have gathered the tribes together everywhere across the continent. . . . The crowds relaxed, forgot the cold, the police, the hate, war, and all the petty flaws that keep men's scattered souls from uniting in love."

The utopian meanings might be disputed, but it was hard to miss the fact that the young everywhere seemed to be deserting their scripts. Even

in the Midwest, for example, casual hitchhiking became a premium mode of transport for the young; people flashed the antiwar V-for-victory sign at strangers. Friends of mine driving through Michigan in a car with California plates were honked at by the car in the next lane; barreling down the expressway, the driver rolled down his window, grinned, and passed the strangers a joint. Robb Burlage wrote me from Washington with a new lyric, "Which Drug Are You On, Boys?" to the tune of the classic Thirties class-struggle song, "Which Side Are You On?" ("My father owns a drugstore/He's in the bourgeoisie/And when he comes home at night/He brings a drug to me/Which drug are you on, boys?/Which drug are you on?") What did it all mean?

Interpreters and organizers went to work interpreting and organizing. At the risk of oversimplifying the currents of 1967: There were tensions galore between the radical idea of political strategy—with discipline, organization, commitment to results *out there* at a distance—and the countercultural idea of living life to the fullest, *right here*, for oneself, or for the part of the universe embodied in oneself, or for the community of the enlightened who were capable of loving one another—and the rest of the world be damned (which it was already). Radicalism's tradition had one of its greatest voices in Marx, whose oeuvre is a series of glosses on the theme: change the world! The main battalions of the counterculture—Leary, the Pranksters, the *Oracle*—were descended from Emerson, Thoreau, Rimbaud: change consciousness, change life! (In a 1966 speech at a Boston church, for example, Allen Ginsberg claimed the mantle of Thoreau, Emerson, and Whitman for his own millennial yawp: that every American over age fourteen and in good health should take LSD at least once. "If there be necessary revolution in America," he said, "it will come that way.") There were hybrids: change the world *by* changing your life! Perhaps each style of revolt would soften the edges of the other. Perhaps logical knots were only illusions of the overly rational mind.

Despite these tensions, there was a direct line from the expressive politics of the New Left to the counterculture's let-it-all-hang-out way of life. Some of the SNCC "floaters" followed it, in fact, when they shifted to LSD; SDS's prairie-power generation of 1965 saw no barrier between radical politics and drug culture. The New Left's founding impulse said from the start: Create the future in the present; sit in right now at the lunch counter, as if race didn't count. Historically the traditions were tangled, intertwined. The synthesizers took up a grand American tradition of trying to fuse public service and private joy: *The Masses*, for example, the pre-World War I magazine that brought the cultivation of self and youth cheek to jowl with socialism, feminism, and the antiwar crusade (and published my old inspiration Charles Erskine Scott Wood). Now there was a populace on which to dream: the unleashed young. On the verge of the 1967 "Summer of Love," many were the radicals and

cultural revolutionaries in search of convergence, trying to nudge the New Left and the counterculture together, to imagine them as yin and yang of the same epochal transformation.

"WHAT IT IS AIN'T EXACTLY CLEAR"

Youth culture seemed a counterculture. There were many more weekend dope-smokers than hard-core "heads"; many more readers of the *Oracle* than writers

for it; many more cohabitators than orgiasts; many more turners-on than droppers-out. Thanks to the sheer numbers and concentration of youth, the torrent of drugs, the sexual revolution, the traumatic war, the general stampede away from authority, and the trend-spotting media, it was easy to assume that all the styles of revolt and disaffection were spilling together, tributaries into a common torrent of youth and euphoria, life against death, joy over sacrifice, now over later, remaking the whole bleeding world.

Of preconditions in society there were many, but the core of what came to be called the counterculture was *organized*—by intellectual entrepreneurs, streetcorner theorists of postscarcity, campus dropouts with advanced degrees, visionary seekers quickened by drugs. For every Timothy Leary, Richard Alpert, or Ken Kesey there were a dozen of the unfamous. Cloistered at first like monks preserving ancient rites in the midst of the Dark Ages, they later took their shows on the road to bring enlightenment to the young: today the Haight-Ashbury, tomorrow the world. Expert chemists like the Bay Area's Owsley, who set up underground laboratories and fabricated potent and pure LSD tablets in the hundreds of thousands, were not in it just for the money; they kept their prices down, gave out plenty of free samples, and fancied themselves dispensers of miracles at the service of a new age—"architects of social change" with a "mission . . . to change the world," in the words of one of Owsley's apprentices, toward which end Owsley helped, for example, to finance the Grateful Dead. A goodly number of small-scale entrepreneurs first dipped into the marijuana or acid trade as true believers helping their friends; only later did some of their businesses grow into the impersonal operations of big-time dealership. "Counterinstitutions" mushroomed, offering excitement, collectivity, and employment: underground newspapers; pamphleteering publishers; rock bands and promoters; hip FM radio; all manner of cooperatives; drug distribution networks; crash pads for runaways; free medical clinics; antiauthoritarian free schools.

The ideologues of the counterculture found ready listeners, of course. Above all means of communication were the electric ones: drugs, rock, mass media, pumping the cultural entrepreneurs' news into a receptive baby-boom generation, captivated audiences gathered in colleges and

high schools—even in the armed services. (In 1967, more American troops in Vietnam were arrested for smoking marijuana than for any other major crime.) Millions, cushioned by affluence, desirous of fun or relief, out of joint, were in an experimental mood. In the Thirties, Woody Guthrie had sung of "pastures of plenty"; in 1967 his son Arlo sang, "You can get anything you want in Alice's Restaurant." (In thirty years the image of plenitude had shifted from agriculture to consumption.) Only fifty or seventy-five thousand young pilgrims poured into the Haight-Ashbury for the Summer of Love, but they were at the center of the nation's fantasy life. Music, dress, language, sex, and intoxicant habits changed with breathtaking speed. Countercultural entrepreneurs couldn't help thinking that enlightened youth were going to bring down Pharaoh and found the New Jerusalem.

In fact, they had gotten hold of some sociological truth. Dope, hair, beads, easy sex, all that might have started as symbols of teenage *difference* or *deviance*, were fast transformed into signs of cultural *dissidence* (or what both protagonists and critics considered dissidence, which amounted to the same thing). As the styles spread, their secondhand versions seemed to swell into a whole cultural climate. Consider the outward looks, the wild and various antiuniforms that took on especial meaning as the nation sent its armed forces off to war. Boys with long and unkempt hair, pony tails, beards, old-timey mustaches and sideburns; girls unpermed, without rollers, without curlers, stringy-haired, underarms and legs unshaven, free of makeup and bras. To orthodox eyes, this meant slovenliness and sexual ambiguity (like many of the androgynous-sounding rock voices); to the freaks themselves, a turn from straight to curved, from upright to loose, from cramped to free—above all, from contrived to natural. A beard could be understood as an attempt to leap into manhood, even to age into one's own grandfather—thus to become spiritual father to one's own failed, draggy Dad. Clothes were a riot of costumes, with preferences for the old and marginal, which meant the unspoiled: India's beads, Indians' headbands, cowboy-style boots and hides, granny glasses, long dresses, working-class jeans and flannels; most tantalizingly, army jackets. Colors were pulled toward both plain and fancy—toward psychedelic disorder, homemade to suit via tie-dying, and toward the unadorned, basic, earthy: blues, grays, greens, browns. Food tended toward the "organic," simple ingredients, unrefined. Beads and amulets, for both sexes, represented the primitive. The antiuniforms became uniform.

Feeling "out there," giddily launched into uncharted territory, abandoned in history ("lost in a Roman wilderness of pain/all the children are insane," as the Doors put it), disordered by a fragmented culture, trying to invent roots, the freak entrepreneurs turned to bypassed worlds. Freak culture was a pastiche, stirring together intoxicating brews from extracts of bygone tradition. Thus the fascination with Eastern religions, especially in the Westernized versions of Hermann Hesse. Thus identifica-

tion with the American Indians, who were, as Bennett Berger has pointed out, triply attractive: oppressed, "nobly savage" (wise enough to regard drugs as sacraments, too), and more deeply American than anyone else. What were the natural, the primitive, the unrefined, the holy unspoiled child, the pagan body, if not *the repressed*, the culture from the black lagoon, the animal spirit now reviving from beneath the fraudulent surface of American life, for which the most damning word possible was *plastic*? Get back, as the Beatles would sing, to where you once belonged.

Even more than in the Fifties, mass-circulation youth music seemed impenetrably, exclusively coded now. Self-respecting hits now had to be written by the singers themselves; what self-respecting shaman would hire a ghost-writer? Concerts ran from the Grateful Dead's acid-spacy interminables to the raunchy chants ("Gimme an F . . . U . . . C . . . K") and antiwar bluntness ("One, two, three, what are we fighting for?") of Country Joe and the Fish. Even the Beach Boys surged into the top forty of the annus mirabilis 1967 with the druggy "Good Vibrations," along with the Doors' Dionysian "Light My Fire" (their name was inspired by a line of William Blake's borrowed by Aldous Huxley for his prose poem to mescaline, *The Doors of Perception*); the Jefferson Airplane's "White Rabbit" ("one pill makes you taller/and one pill makes you small/ and the ones that mother gives you/don't do anything at all"); Scott McKenzie's plastic-hippie "San Francisco" ("if you're going to San Francisco/be sure to wear a flower in your hair"); Procol Harum's spooky, arcane "A Whiter Shade of Pale," which seemed to require either a Ph.D., or drugs, or both, for clarification; the Beatles' "Strawberry Fields." . . . And then, stunningly, came their brilliant, intricate *Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band*, with its touching, backhanded tribute to the English music-hall tradition. If *the Beatles* were getting high with a little help from their friends, loving to turn you on, flying with Lucy in the sky with diamonds, then just what was marginal anymore, where was the mainstream anyway?

Yet authorities proceeded to define these ways of youth as illicit, immoral, dangerous. The Fifties panic over juvenile delinquency, having slid into a horror at "beatnik" demonstrators, now took the form of a drug-crazed-hippie scare. As in the Fifties, the labels stuck and the victims converted them into badges of identity. If you were bashed over the head and labeled a freak, well then, you were reminded why you had felt like a freak and gravitated toward drugs and weirdness in the first place. If you had started out smoking dope, growing your hair, discarding your bra partly to join the crowd and partly to shock adults, if you had gone along for the ride because it seemed the most interesting ride in town, only to end up getting harassed and busted, it was natural to ask questions about the society that was treating you like a freak. Police busted dope-smokers, dealers, the keepers and occupants of crash pads, troublemakers and innocents at rock concerts, and a lot of other young people whose looks they didn't like. Restaurateurs threw young longhairs

off their premises. City officials deployed housing-code violations, zoning and vagrancy laws, and all manner of obscure regulations against them. With some justification, headlines screamed against what *Life* called "LSD: The Exploding Threat of the Mind Drug That Got Out of Control"; they also sensationalized scientific claims that acid destroyed chromosomes. The Senate Subcommittee on Juvenile Delinquency held hearings on the dangers of LSD; liberals denounced Timothy Leary for urging everyone to turn on and then washing his hands of all the bad trips. As old authorities lost their hold, politicians got mileage out of denouncing student radicals and hippies and black militants, all clumped together as battalions undermining the rule of the father-state and the family's own father. The personable Ronald Reagan, singled out as a plausible California gubernatorial candidate by a group of right-wing businessmen, won the 1966 Republican nomination and then parlayed antiblack, antiobscenity, and antistudent backlash, along with time-for-a-change sentiment, into a million-vote victory against the two-time incumbent, Pat Brown. (The freak population, meanwhile, affected indifference. From the spring of 1966 through the November election, the *Berkeley Barb* mentioned Reagan exactly once, and then only in passing.) Newly elected, the governor said a hippie was someone who "dresses like Tarzan, has hair like Jane, and smells like Cheetah." Parents complained about their children's looks, threatened to cut their hair, worried they would run away, placed ads in the underground papers to find them. Newspapers and television vacillated between shrieking about the hairy menace and cooing over how cute the kids were; proclaiming that hordes of fledgling hippies were about to wander to the Haight-Ashbury for the Summer of Love, they guaranteed it would happen.

Drugs, rock 'n' roll . . . sex: they were amalgamated, whether as liberation or scandal. There probably was more youthful sex, although reliable information is hard to pinpoint; what is certain is that the sense of a sexual revolution was fueled by vastly more public *talk* about sex, accelerating with *Playboy* and the end of the Hollywood Production Code in the Fifties, the overthrow of book censorship in the early Sixties. The birth control pill, spreading year by year from 1960 on, made sex virtually procreation-free, helped undermine parental (and in loco parentis) control over teenage sexual bodies. Starting then, and accelerating through the mid-Sixties, thousands of students moved off campus, popularizing that old bohemian custom of housekeeping without matrimony—and most assuredly without parental approval. Parents were shocked, and so were other parental authorities: the conspicuous cohabitation of a Barnard student and her boyfriend, and the university's crackdown, was a newsworthy item as late as 1968. (But within a few years, according to a study at the decidedly middle-American Penn State, about half of the seniors reported they had "lived with" someone of the opposite sex.) Meanwhile, interracial couples, rarities not so long before,

became common sights around northern campuses and hippie ghettos. Sex was not simply a pleasure but a statement.

But freer pleasures brought more retribution and more fear: of the knock at the door, the "narc" at the party, the sweep down Haight Street, the summons to the dean—not to mention Mom and Dad, who might find your pills or diaphragm, smell your grass, find the wrong undergarments in the hamper. If you were politically active, there was yet more reason to worry—about being watched, bugged, tapped. The sheer knowledge that smoking pot was illegal, and that the police were on the lookout for it, injected routine apprehension into the marrow of everyday life. Teenagers who casually indulged these tastes, even as hedonists and crowd-followers, found themselves labeled outsiders, even criminals. Why were the authorities cracking down on harmless indulgences, they wanted to know? What was it about *these* authorities that marijuana—an acceptable sacrament in Morocco and India and elsewhere—should so disturb them? The crackdown may have contained the counterculture, but it also weakened the *authority* of authorities.

As drug trips became commonplace, less care was taken with their settings. Especially given a bad mind-set and an uncongenial setting, drugs were capable of driving anxiety to a high pitch. Drug tourism (and perhaps expectations of trouble) led to bad trips—very rare with marijuana, more common with hashish, most common of all with LSD, especially the amphetamine-laced or otherwise polluted stuff increasingly sold on the street in the later Sixties. A sizable number of the experimenters lived through episodes of acute terror, the memory of which could be hard to shake. Newspapers played up the catastrophe stories, of course, but people under the influence *did* jump out windows under the misapprehension that they could fly—even Richard Alpert did it once—and many young people, their egos fragile from the start, could not assimilate the ego loss that the gurus touted. Groups of "chemical freaks" formed, with indiscriminate tastes for barbiturates and amphetamines—speed—as well as LSD, mescaline, and whatever else was around. "Speed Kills," said street graffiti, but amphetamines spread. In the presence of bad trips and overarching fear, the youth culture had need of a term to describe the vague sensation of surrounding menace: "paranoia." The feeling became so commonplace, it worked its way into one of the key lyrics of 1967, the Buffalo Springfield's edgy, ambiguous, portentous "For What It's Worth": "Paranoia strikes deep/Into your life it will creep/It starts when you're always afraid/Step out of line and the man will come and take you away"—written by Stephen Stills after he watched a TV news piece about police smashing longhairs who were demonstrating against storekeepers who refused to serve them on Sunset Strip.

As sex lost the sheen of taboo, it was violence that took on the frisson. The sepulchral voice of the Doors' Jim Morrison, like an echo in a marble mausoleum, fused the two in his eleven-minute "The End." ("Father, I'm

going to kill you/Mother I'm going to . . ." he screamed on the record; ". . . fuck you," it came out the first time he performed it live, smashed on a huge dose of LSD.) Hip ideologues might pin all the violence on the cops, but most of the young on the streets knew better. With the demographic youth bulge came more young criminals, and crimes; with illegal drugs came "burns," gang muscle, street wars. For the children of the suburbs, this was an unexpected shock. Drug-crazed murderers and LSD-inspired suicides did sell papers, but that didn't mean they weren't happening. Three months after the Haight-Ashbury Be-In, a group of savvy leafleteers who called themselves the Communication Company wrote about "Uncle Tim's Children":

Pretty little sixteen-year-old middle-class chick comes to the Haight to see what it's all about & gets picked up by a seventeen-year-old street dealer who spends all day shooting her full of speed again & again, then feeds her 3000 mikes [micrograms of LSD, twelve times the standard dose] & raffles off her temporarily unemployed body for the biggest Haight Street gang bang since the night before last. . . .

Rape is as common as bullshit on Haight Street. Kids are starving on The Street. Minds & bodies are being maimed as we watch, a scale model of Vietnam. . . .

Are you aware that Haight Street is as bad as the squares say it is?

The white kids' less-than-delighted neighbors in the low-rent youth enclaves, moreover, were usually blacks (as in the Haight-Ashbury) and Hispanics (as on the Lower East Side). To them, the freaks were the invaders. The hippies proclaimed their culture was universal; they didn't see why they should concede much to people who had other ideas. Maybe straight society was right, the blacks were getting too pushy and riotous. . . . Inevitably there were turf fights, culture wars, and neither protagonists nor police were always subtle in handling them. Parks and festivals, scarce resources, were especially contested areas. Typically, on Memorial Day 1967 in Tompkins Square Park on the Lower East Side, Puerto Ricans were fuming because, as Don McNeill wrote in *The Village Voice*, "they had heard the 'LSD music' and they thought that the hippies were taking over the park. . . . [A] group of Puerto Ricans came to the bandshell and demanded Latin music. Some words were exchanged, and a scuffle started. . . . The kids then . . . knocked over a couple of sanitation barrels, and began to work on a Latin beat. A tall blonde, Wendy Allen, went up to protest. The kids attacked her and tore her clothes. A mob formed around her and hurtled toward the park entrance at East 7th Street and Avenue B. There, a police sergeant rescued her and summoned reinforcements." The crowds confronted each other until heavily armored police arrived to disperse them, sealing off the park for the night. There were summit meetings to cool out these frictions. Savvy

organizers and underground papers—many of whose writers came from the New Left—tried to analyze the situation into peace and placate all sides, with some success. But the points of division remained: scarce goods; hippie racism; the resentment of white slummers by people of color.

And to nudge the sense of paranoia and apocalypse onward there was also, not least, the Vietnam war. Youth culture stared and trembled at the enormity of what was happening on the other side of the world. By June 30, 1967, there were 448,800 American troops stationed on Vietnamese soil. With draft calls up, and student deferments pared down in 1966, the war moved a lot closer to the hitherto exempt, and the student antiwar movement boomed as a direct result. But even beyond the students and the militantly opposed, the war was a steady, hovering curse. Many of the freaks knew soldiers, had been soldiers themselves, or feared becoming soldiers. With the test ban, the Bomb had receded to the status of an abstract threat, but the Vietnam war was actual, nothing potential or abstract about it; napalm was scorching actual flesh, bombs were tearing apart actual bodies, and there, right there, were the traces, smeared across the tube and the daily paper—every day you had to go out of your way to duck them. The New Age was streaked with nightmares.

Thus the bewilderment about where the world was tending. "There's something happening here/What it is ain't exactly clear": so began the Buffalo Springfield's "For What It's Worth," relaying youth culture's confusion. Developments broke so fast, who could absorb them, let alone insert them into the mind's polarities of left/right, politics/culture, rational/irrational (or, for that matter, strategic/expressive)? Extravagance was common currency. Whatever was happening, it was far out, too much, out of sight.

So youth culture became the hope, and therefore the target, of countercultural entrepreneurs and New Left organizers alike. But major differences were masked.

According to youth culture proper, the enemy was adults, their institutions and culture.

According to countercultural entrepreneurs, the enemy was the established culture, or civilization itself, neither of which was necessarily organized by age.

According to the New Left, the enemy was the political and social system, and/or the dominant institutions, and/or the inhabitants of the commanding heights.

According to liberal reformers, the enemy was particular policies.

In all the excitement, the rush of events, the multiple paranoia and hysteria, the mad overlap of millenarian hopes, profound tensions were obscured. But the stakes were high, and therefore so was the pressure to imagine the situation starkly. There are moments in history when the sense of extremity takes on a life of its own. The media said the stakes

were high, the police said so (and the FBI, in terms the New Left barely began to grasp), politicians said so, Vietnamese and Cuban revolutionaries said so, black rioters laying waste to Watts and then the Newark and Detroit ghettos seemed to say so, SNCC chairman Stokely Carmichael and then the Black Panthers said so. Was not the old order, however one understood it, passing? That all these uprisings should have materialized in the first place from anesthetized America was altogether astounding. From various angles, insurgents mused: What if, whether they knew it or not, young whites smoking grass and students burning draft cards and blacks burning storefronts were detachments in common battle against a single occupying army?

The moment carried many names, aliases: "the new age," "the age of Aquarius," according to hip gurus; "from protest to resistance," according to the war-attuned politicians of SDS. If necessary, said Allen Ginsberg, there should be "a mass emotional nervous breakdown in these states once and for all." But all these voices of, or for, the young agreed we were on a knife edge in national if not global (or cosmic) consciousness. It was not a moment for thinking small.