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MC5 - Kick out the jams...

WHAT IS YOUTH CULTURE ?

The problem of determining the character and meaning of the youth culture is a central one for the movement in terms of any political program that will be developed. This issue is wholly devoted to the theoretical elaboration of this problem in the hope that it will supply a starting point for a genuine radical interpretation of what is presently happening throughout the country and specifically in the Universities. What follows is the result of the work of the Buffalo collective on this issue: in fact, the individual essays ought to be seen more as a collective effort, rather than the product of individual writers.

The first essay, by Alex Delfini, deals specifically with the socio-economic context within which the youth culture emerges. The main argument is that the old class-structure is crumbling as a result of the changes in the productive forces due to automation, cybernation, etc. Within the new social context, the proletariat-bourgeoisie dichotomy loses its revolutionary meaning and any ideology that retains it as the basis for any future radical social change becomes an abstract negation whose latent function is precisely to retain the social system that it allegedly attacks. Yet, within the new class structure, the old criterion (i.e., exploitation) remains the ultimate foundation. Thus the old contradictions are transposed into new, and previously unthought-of battle-fields. The main thesis of the paper is that the weakest link of the system is no longer to be found in the factory, but in the University where the new class-foundations are presently being laid: there the sub-proletariat (the unemployed and unemployable sectors of the population) is being allegedly transformed into the new class (the technostructure). What is, in fact, happening, however, is something quite different. The development of the youth culture is one of these epiphenomena that have come about in this transitional phase of monopoly capital.

The second essay, by Paul Piccone, seeks to analyze the youth culture in terms of its own professed ideology, the orthodox bourgeois interpretation, and its actual praxis. Hitherto, the old left has summarily discarded the importance of the youth culture because of the political passivity of the "freaks." This, however, has been more the result

of the uncritical application of dogmatic categories, than the result of a concrete analysis of what is in fact happening. As such, the old left interpretation turns out to be both abstract and politically irrelevant. The new left, on the other hand, has taken the opposite route, and it has tended to romanticize the revolutionary potentials of the "drop-outs." That the youth culture can become very easily another subtle avenue of social integration, has not been seriously considered. The main point is that, at this stage, the role of the youth culture is very ambiguous and the direction that it will take in the near future will be partially a result of the strategy that the movement will adapt in regard to it. In other words, whether the youth culture will degenerate into nothing more than "sensitivity training" and similar other mystifications of a bourgeois character, or whether it will turn out to be a determinate moment in the attainment of class-consciousness is something that cannot be mechanistically predicted at this point, but which will have to be *determined* dialectically by means of a concrete political praxis.

In the third essay on a specific sector of the youth culture, Joseph Ferrandino traces the developments of rock music in the past 20 years and concretely shows how the new trends have arisen out of orthodox culture, by means of a detailed analysis of the contents of rock music. The point is that, along with the latest socio-economic developments, there has been a concomitant development in the music that was produced during this period. Thus, rock music has been both a product, and a producer of the youth culture. The stress here is, once again, on the way that the system has conditioned the production of rock music, how social conflicts reappear in the cultural context, and how the youth culture develops as a reaction to the broader social contradictions. Two additional articles on the youth culture have been included, which are not the product of the Buffalo collective. Their tone is very much in accord with the first three articles and further illustrates the main theoretical points developed in the whole issue.

To reiterate, this issue would not have been possible without the efforts — both theoretical and practical — of the entire collective. Particular mention ought to be made of Bob and Susan Cohen, Marilyn Ferrandino, and Susan Wood.



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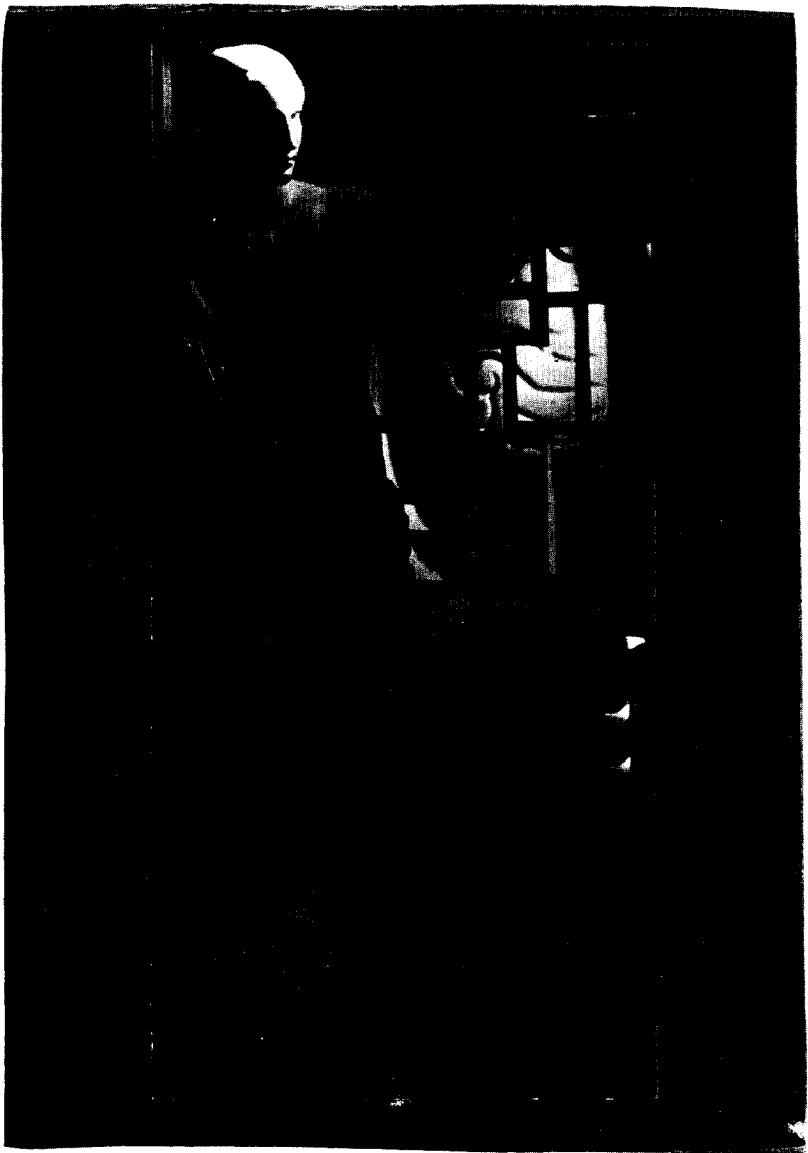
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Technology, Class-Structure, and the Radicalization of Youth

Alexander Delfini

I

The 'fetishization of commodities' described by Marx in Volume I of *Capital* has its superstructural counterpart, the 'fetishization of categories.' Concepts and conceptual structures originally designed to articulate the real activity of men and movement of things turn into ideological blinders insofar as the previously intended reality has been superceded. When the categories are not reconstituted on the basis of the new reality, the original purpose of theory, to clarify and direct one's activity, turns into its opposite, for the real context remains hidden and activity becomes blind – without rational direction.¹

While the systematic veiling of reality is to be expected from bourgeois ideologists and apologists – indeed it is precisely this mystification which defines their function – it is regrettable to find it so prevalent among those who claim to strip away the veil and expose the true state of affairs through sound Marxist analysis.² This tendency appears at two levels: both among many 'old left' intellectuals, as well as among 'new left' activists. Indeed, the former spokesmen for Marxism through their ritualistic invocation of the sacred words such as 'base and superstructure'; 'relations of production' and 'forces of production'; 'science and ideology'; 'theory and practice'; and who in their own practice have become either reformists, quietists, and in general mere academicians, have often proved very useful to the bourgeoisie (at least the more sophisticated ones) and it is becoming quite prevalent today to find these intellectual Marxists clucking out in harmony their invectives against the mindless activism of college students.³ The activists, on the other hand, and with sound understanding, point out that endless intellectual debates on the subtleties of Marxist theory embedded amidst the sterile pages of bourgeois academic journals is hardly the practice that is going to change the world. In fact the new left has at least understood that in the name of science, ideology rears its ugly head, and in the name of unity of theory and practice, theory is reduced to textual exegesis, and practice becomes another theory whose practical consequences are the perpetration of precisely the state of affairs that is to be transcended.

Beyond this moment of understanding, however, the new left has demonstrated its own enslavement, not to the practice of the academic left, but to its theoretical standpoint. And that this theoretical standpoint has become, at this moment in history, an ideological obfuscation becomes evident by the recent split in S.D.S. between PL, RYM II, and Weatherman. This is indeed unfortunate for this split occurs on the basis of a false theoretical viewpoint that is actually held in common by all three groups, and it occurs precisely at the time when certain crucial theoretical breakthroughs are beginning to emerge. PL's call for a student-worker alliance was based upon the following dogmatic presuppositions:

- 1) a revolutionary base in capitalist society can only be found in the productive

classes of that society, i.e., those who perform productive labor;

2) productive labor is performed by what is known as the 'industrial proletariat';

3) one finds the industrial proletariat in the factories, i.e., the place where finished, tangible material goods are produced; and

4) all other social formations that do not engage in such productive labor are either bourgeois, petty bourgeois, or lumpen proletariat.

Beginning with this closed system of constructs, lifted out of their historical context, - 19th century industrial society, - the conclusions follow with all the beauty (and vaguity) of a formal deductive system. Black people are primarily lumpen, students are bourgeois and petty bourgeois. Ergo, the phenomena of student radicalization is treated in terms of some rather mysterious break with one's class origins, but this of course is merely a subjective break since the objective conditions of students remain as that of a privileged stratum. On this basis a call is then put forth for students to ally themselves with workers - not really ally themselves, but rather, in good liberal fashion, to go help the workers. The absence of any concrete objective basis for such an alliance is all too obvious, but this is explained by the invocation of another 'magical formula' which turns out to be nothing more than a mere assurance. The industrial working class we are told is not revolutionary at this point because of objective conditions. But the objective conditions will change - apparently this is written in the stars.

The total abstractness of the PL position generates its dialectical otherness in the Weatherman faction. Holding to the very obvious fact that the industrial proletariat does not appear to be for-itself revolutionary, they argue that it is precisely because of the objective conditions (white skinned privilege, high level of consumption, etc.) that such revolutionary consciousness will not develop. Thus they declare the virtual absence of a revolutionary base in advanced capitalist society, and propose a program which is based upon the taking of appearances as the basis for determining who is revolutionary and who is not. A perfect unity of opposites obtain in the relationship of the Weatherman to PL. PL holds that only the industrial proletariat constitutes a revolutionary base even though at this historical juncture they do not 'appear' to be revolutionary. Weatherman, accepting the view that *only* an industrial proletariat *could* constitute a revolutionary base in advanced capitalist society, point at the 'appearance' of their retrograde tendencies which is then taken as evidence that no revolutionary base exists in advanced industrial society whatsoever; i.e., they agree with PL insofar as they believe that only an industrial proletariat could make revolution, but they argue that because of objective conditions they never will. The practical consequence of this metaphysical dispute is seen in the juxtaposition of the two groups' direct political relationship to the industrial proletariat - PL handing out leaflets at plant gates telling the workers that their bosses are exploiting and robbing them; Weatherman running through their neighborhoods breaking their windows and cars, apparent tokens of their privileged social status. (Cf. note on RYM II).⁴

A way out of this metaphysical quagmire will be suggested in the following sections. The remaining body of this paper, it should be noted, is not new. Rather, what I will attempt to do is summarize and synthesize certain fruitful lines of analysis that have been partially developed in recent left literature. The discussion will proceed by way of a consideration of: (a) the historical development of the base of capitalist society indicating how the changing character of the material means of production has produced and is continuing to produce changes in the structure of the work force; and (b), how these changes effect institutions previously regarded as superstructural whose present function is becoming progressively integrated with the base. I will caution in advance that it is not a matter of an old superstructural institution being integrated with a traditional base - rather the change in the base and superstructure is such that new class formations are in the process of development.⁵ I believe that the conclusion of this discussion will serve to explain the phenomena of student radicalization in such a way that the abstract views of PL and Weatherman will have been concretely demonstrated.

II

The bourgeoisie, in their need to maximize surplus value, are constantly impelled to revolutionize the forces of production (material means and organization of production and character of productive labor). Marx provided us with a detailed account of the transformation of the productive forces in Volume I of *Capital* in which the movement from simple cooperation, to manufacturing, to modern industry is understood as a process determined by the need of the capitalist to diminish necessary labor time by increasing the productivity of labor.⁶ The failure to bring this historical process up to date has been one of the major causes for the theoretical impasse discussed in the previous section. To a great degree we have remained fixed at the historical level described by Marx, i.e., we have tended to treat modern society in terms of the level of productive forces that obtained in the late 19th, and early 20th centuries. It would do us well to note that over 100 years have elapsed since the publication of *Capital* and in that time span the changes in the productive forces have effected all other structural relations in capitalist society.

It is, of course, precisely this structural change that Baran and Sweezy sought to investigate.⁷ In spite of the shortcomings of their analysis, Baran and Sweezy have succeeded in bringing our knowledge of capitalist society up to date by indicating the general effects that the completion of the industrialization process has had on the system as a whole. Baran and Sweezy argue that through the completion of industrialization and the control and coordination of the productive apparatus by the corporate bourgeoisie, the consequent expansion of the productivity of labor poses as a basic problem for the stability of the entire social system, the utilization of an ever increasing surplus. Whereas in the early phases of competitive capitalism, (throughout the period of manufacturing and early industrialization) the surplus could generally be disposed of through investment in the expansion of the productive forces, by the turn of the century, and at an increasing pace for the last several decades, the market for this form of investment has not grown relative to the growth of the surplus.

The exhaustion of markets has been compensated for only through the employment of the state in dual role as the procurer of foreign markets through imperialist expansion, and stimulus to production, e.g., as purchaser of military hardware. Both functions obviously complement each other very well. In addition to the above outlets for surplus disposal, we encounter waste spending on a mass scale in the domestic market – advertising, planned obsolescence, etc.

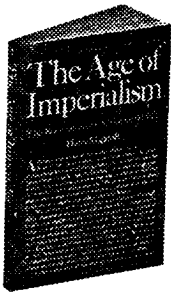
Baran and Sweezy point out that certain crucial developments, such as the automobile, have proved to be fundamental to the stability of the capitalist system since the automobile is one of those rare forms of commodities developed for civilian consumption that effectively bring to bear all other crucial productive facilities of the society – steel, electronics, oil, and construction (i.e., highways, service stations, parking lots, etc.).

The culmination of this industrial process and the capitalists' solution to the problem of surplus utilization has resulted in a significant change in the present character of the work force. It has, of course, been often noted that the numerical size of the industrial proletariat has been declining relative to what is usually called the white collar work force. But the specification of the various functions of this white collar work force has not been made very clear. It is often seen in more or less homogeneous terms such as 'professional groups.' This has, in effect, resulted in a serious oversight as to the actual processes developing within the work force. In fact, because of further advancements in the forces of production, large sectors of both the industrial proletariat and the white collar force are being thrown into the ranks of the unemployed and unemployable.⁸ In other words, what is seen as the culmination of the industrialization process, is now to be regarded as a new beginning. It is, of course, the prospect of automation and cybernetics that creates this new beginning.

It is the chief weakness of Baran and Sweezy's work not to have paid sufficient attention to this possibility. The capitalist system apparently finds a new solution to the gnawing problem of surplus utilization, since the investment possibilities in the radical

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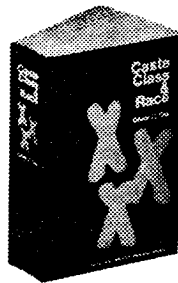
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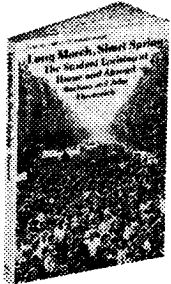
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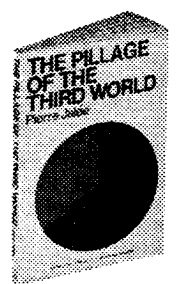
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transformation of the entire productive base seem sufficiently great for the next several decades.

This prospect is not to be seen, within the context of a capitalist system, as an alternative to imperialism and militarism. It is not a question of retreating from one sphere and developing an alternative one. Rather, it is a question of the inherent limitation of the imperialist market, relative to the size of the surplus. In other words, even imperialist expansion cannot keep pace with the expanded productivity of the system. On the other hand, it is becoming quite evident that the third world is no longer as stable and docile as it once was. And still, there are other factors. The extreme impoverishment of third world nations make it an unlikely source for the absorption of heavy capital goods since the utilization of such products presuppose a rather significant and continuous growth rate. It is precisely the underdeveloped character of the third world that makes it an unsuitable market for industrial products and investment in industrial production. Putting it another way, the U.S. economy cannot function on the basis of the sale of toothpaste to the small sectors of the population in Latin America that use it. In addition, the issue of cheap labor in the imperialist economy no longer holds with respect to industrial production since the utilization of complex technical means of production no longer requires cheap physical labor but rather highly skilled labor.

The third world will continue to remain vital to the capitalist system in terms of raw materials and as a limited market for consumer goods, and thus it is not suggested here that the transition from the present forces of production to those based on the new technology will lead to a significant shift in the exploitive nature of western capitalism with respect to the third world. And for similar reasons, there will be no significant change in the militaristic character of our economy, though the structure of that sector will also be affected by the new technology – indeed most of the theoretical breakthroughs as well as the direct application of this new technology have taken place in the military sector.

Finally, we should not expect a change in the character of domestic consumption. On the contrary, capitalism will require the expansion of waste spending, (e.g., the utilization of vast amounts of vital resources in throw-away cans). It might indeed be expected that the situation will become noticeably worse. The ability of this system to produce new and fundamentally useless (irrational!) products for consumption is seemingly inexhaustible – witness the 'skidoo' phenomena: these adult toys cost anywhere from seven-hundred to one-thousand dollars. It is of course this type of production in light of the pressing need of millions of Americans for shelter, clothing, food and medicine, and the necessity for tractors and advanced agricultural machinery in the third world that leads Marcuse to describe this system as obscene. Of course, we can expect more of this kind of institutionalized pornography – if the bourgeoisie continue to rule!!

In effect, the process of automated production will not result in change in the overall quality of Western life if capitalist social relations are still maintained. What is changing and will continue to change along side the material means of production will be the nature of productive labor. And this in turn will change the structural characteristics of the population as a whole with respect to the mode of production and distribution. The following are general consequences of this:

- 1) the disappearance of traditional industrial labor;
- 2) its replacement by various strata (the structure will be pyramidal) of technical operators whose function will be to tend to the operations of the machine, and to the operations of technical workers below them in relationship to the machine. This technical work force will be smaller in size relative to the work force of traditional industrial production (19th-20th century).⁹
- 3) alongside growth of technical workers will be the growth of the knowledge industry whose production will consist of: (a) production and training of the technicians, (b) continual research and development of scientific and technical knowledge, (c) accumulation of information to be programmed into the productive

apparatus, and (d) production of social knowledge and social technicians whose function will be to coordinate the activities of the population with the requirements of the productive apparatus;

4) the general shrinkage of the work force will mean that the population as a whole will be divided up into technical workers and managers on the one side, and passive consumers on the other.

A new class system of capitalism will develop, but its function will become even more irrational. (It should be remembered that it is because of the very need to maintain the exploitive character of capitalist society that the drastic change in the productive apparatus will be introduced by the bourgeoisie.) But within the framework of this class system, new forms of social hierarchy will appear. The system will have new forms of vertical mobility in some way analogous to the Chinese Mandarin system. At the lowest stratum will be a broad mass of unproductive consumers – literally a greatly extended class of welfare recipients. From this pool of potential human labor, those who show the most 'skills' and 'talents' will be elevated up the social scale into various positions ranging from simple IBM operator to manager of various productive institutions for social control (e.g., university administrators).¹⁰

Finally, it should be stressed that the key institution in this developing social system will be the university. The crucial and multiple role played by the university in this process has remained underestimated by the left, in spite of the fact that the contradictions inherent in the transitional process have been manifesting themselves intensively in this institution.

III

The sudden development of radicalism among the college students at the major American (and European) universities has thus far not been adequately explained. While the Rowntrees have offered us some significant insights into the channeling functions of the military and the university, their thesis, that youth constitute an exploited class, is thoroughly misleading because the criteria of exploitation appears to be both (a) income level, and (b) type of labor performed. When the Rowntrees tell us that youth are exploited as a class, for at least the reason that their labor is useless and thus alienating, the traditional meaning of exploitation loses its rigorous character – the realization of surplus value through the unpaid labor time of productive workers – and serves as a pseudo explanation (via its moralistic connotations) rather than providing a factual one.

Neither can we remain content with the various cultural explanations that have often been provided. The 'youth culture' is a result of changes in the productive base which have produced, in the period of transition, contradictions affecting the life activities of previously constituted class formations. The cultural response is significant; but it is inadequate to explain the cultural response in terms of its self-definition, e.g., 'the recognition of the spiritual emptiness of capitalist society.'

Finally, the phenomenon of student radicalization should not be treated solely in terms of the growth of political consciousness due to the war and the black liberation struggle. The latter has served to illustrate the contradiction in capitalist society, but they do not constitute a basis for the explanation of the mass radicalization of what has traditionally been regarded as a privileged stratum.

Actually, this phenomena must be seen as a response to the decomposition of the traditional work force in capitalist society as a consequence of the changing needs of the productive base. Because of the multiple functions of the university, the contradiction in the capitalist system converge at this institution in multiple forms. The traditional function as part of the capitalist superstructure designed to produce the ideological needs of the system has remained side by side with its progressive integration into the base – as the training institution for technical workers, as well as the production center of the knowledge essential to the growth of the entire productive apparatus. The university institution in its present form spans past, present, and future. Not only does it pay a modicum lip service to the cultural heritage of the western world (still

maintained to a degree in the humanities faculties), it also provides training programs for the professional groups – doctors, lawyers, teachers, etc. – and it proceeds at an ever increasing pace to provide for the needs of the technical base – the production of knowledge, of technical workers, and social technicians. The first function is traditional and has usually been reserved for the elite of bourgeois society. The second function is consistent with the development of the industrial base and the expansion of the surplus that was not absorbable in further expansion of the productive forces prior to the development of the new technology. The third function is, of course, the result of the emerging technical base.

Significantly, the emergence of the new technical base and its needs in terms of certain skills, begins to override the first and second functions – functions that were relevant to a superceded historical formation. Thus, at the same time when mass higher education has been progressively developed for the last two decades, promising for sons and daughters of the industrial proletariat the possibility of vertical mobility, the so-called middle classes – professional and white collar workers – are to a great degree on the verge of being relegated to the historical scrapheap as a result of the new technical base. Since college educated people no longer constitute a scarce form of labor (as commodity) their social status is *de facto* declining. It is becoming increasingly evident to each graduating class of college seniors that the proverbial pot of gold waiting at the end of the road is as thin and illusive as the rainbow that points the way.

At the same time that the white collar labor market for college graduates shrinks, the incoming freshman classes are growing. And to what end? The growth of interest in the humanities (not of course, just the classics, since interest has generated in art, *avant garde* literature, eastern thought, etc.) occurs at the time when the traditional function of the humanities program is becoming obsolete. This phenomenon is explainable only on the grounds that young people, faced with the contradictions of capitalist society, and discovering their own common conditions as a nascent class, are desperately seeking an answer to the problems that they collectively face. This sense of a collective or common situation puts the 'cultural response' of young people in direct opposition to the cultural rejection in the 50's, e.g., beat literature and life style based on isolation, individualism, esotericism, etc.; the beat phenomena itself was isolated – made by the few who voluntarily 'dropped out' of the system. The present day cultural response is clearly taking an opposite direction. These are not voluntary dropouts – the system itself is dropping them out. It is not the response of the alienated petty bourgeoisie, but the cultural assault of the nascent class who at present are in the midst of the transitional period.

If students are in a privileged position, it is the privilege of seeing all the contradictions of capitalist society, all its secrets and operations, its power structure, its needs, its cultural vacuity, unfold before their eyes within the institutional framework of the university. At the same time that we study history, literature, philosophy, we are also exposed to the practical application of the social sciences (the control of subject populations both at home and abroad), and the financing and utilization of 'public institutions' by 'private interests' and the defense department. And co-extensive with this 'privilege' is the direct experience of our class decomposition (this living experience has yet to be mediated by the theoretical structures that can raise the level of consciousness of students to that of a class – this is partly the function of this paper).

It is in the transitional period from the old to the new technical base, and during the reconstitution of the class structure, that capitalism is most unstable. It is in this period that the opportunities for revolution are at the greatest. If the technical project is totalized, it may occur co-extensively with the end of history. The prospect for 'Brave New World' are rather great, but at the same time the opportunities for reconstituting human society on a new basis are equally great, for the consciousness of the danger, the irrationality, and the emptiness of bourgeois society have perhaps never grown so rapidly.

The transformation of the technical base produces structural repercussions throughout the entire capitalist system, but no other institution is more vulnerable to

the ensuing contradictions unfolding in this period than the university. Whereas in 19th century capitalism the focus of the class struggle was the factory in which bourgeoisie and proletariat met face to face as exploiter and exploited, within the new capitalist totality, the conflict shifts to the university, precisely because this institution becomes the focus of the transformation of the old to the new classes. The university whose function in the previous era was to produce and reproduce the ideology of the system reserved for an elite stratum in the class structure, today produces this ideology for mass consumption by a growing university population, i.e., culture itself becomes another commodity within the new capitalist totality and the university institution acts as both productive and distributive unit in this process. But the university also serves as the institution which trains the new technicians, as well as produces the technical knowledge required by the new base, and as these latter functions serve to transform the old class structure to the new. Youth within this class decomposition, find themselves as a social sector whose new social function is either that of an apprentice for the technical work force or passive population for the consumption of bourgeois culture. In other words, the university becomes a social institution whose overall function is to extract from its youth population the various strata required by the new technical base, channel the elect up the pyramidal structure, and separate out those who will serve within the totality as mere passive consumers.¹²

The 'youth culture' emerges as the negation of bourgeois mass culture. But remaining at the cultural level the response is, of course, abstract. The possibilities of commercializing youth culture and channeling the response of youth into socially harmless (and very profitable) activities is enticing for the bourgeois and their trained social technicians. (Witness the Woodstock phenomena as well as the rapid growth of 'sensitivity training centers' run by 'hip' psychologists who act as 'sympathetic' and even 'participatory' members in drug parties, music festivals, and indeed, anti-war protests). As Piccone indicates in the following article; the 'youth culture' is "both a promise and a threat for the movement." The previously discussed split in S.D.S. results precisely from the failure to understand both themselves and the youth culture as manifestations of the changing class structure.





NOTES

1. For an elaborate theoretical articulation of this, see Enzo Paci, *Funzione delle Scienze e Significato dell'Uomo* (Milano, 1963), an English translation which is forthcoming. Also see "The Phenomenological Encyclopedia and the *Telos* of Humanity," in *Telos*, vol. 1, no. 2, Fall 1968, pp. 5-18.
2. Cf. Herbert Marcuse, *Soviet Marxism* (New York, 1959). For a shorter account, cf. Paul Piccone, "Dialectical Logic Today," in *Telos*, vol. 1, no. 2, Fall 1968, pp. 38 ff.
3. For a good example of this left-wing chauvinism, see Eugene Genovese, "Black Studies: Trouble Ahead" in *Atlantic* June 1969, pp. 37-41.
4. The situation of RYM II is more promising precisely because they have not as yet articulated a consistent theoretical perspective. As such they lack an overall strategy, though it may be argued that they see themselves as catalytic agents.
5. For a suggestive analysis along these lines cf. Paul Piccone, "Student Protest, Class Structure, and Ideology," in *Telos*, no. 3, Spring 1969, pp. 116-132.
6. Karl Marx, *Capital*, Vol. 1 (New York, n.d.), chapt. XI-XII.
7. Paul A. Baran and Paul M. Sweezy, *Monopoly Capital* (New York, 1966).
8. Henri Lefebvre, *The Explosion* (New York, 1968).
9. John Kenneth Galbraith, *The New Industrial State* (London and New York, 1967). For a more concise analysis cf. John McDermott, "Technology: the Opiate of the Intellectuals," *New York Review of Books*, Vol XIII, no. 2, July 31, 1969, pp. 25-35.
10. Cf. John McDermott, *op. cit.*
11. John and Margaret Rowntree, "Youth as a Class," *Our Generation*, vol. 6, nos. 1-2 pp. 155-190.
12. Cf. John McDermott, *op. cit.*

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From Youth Culture to Political Praxis

Paul Piccone

One of the main sociopolitical developments of the '60's has been the increasing polarization of culture into two camps: official bourgeois culture and what is usually referred to as the youth culture. Dissident cultural trends have always existed but their significance has tended to remain, at best, marginal, unlike the youth culture of today whose main thrusts are being felt at every level of modern society. This influence is so important that even traditionally retrograde and mystifying establishment sociology has had to recognize it by reifying it from the level of a *socially* determined phenomenon into a natural – and therefore a-historical and a-temporal – “conflict of generations”. By structuring the phenomenon in these terms what is occluded is precisely its revolutionary character since, as a conflict of generations, the youth culture is not seen as a definite reaction to certain very concrete social institutions, but as simply another eternal *condition humaine* which we can only discuss, but never alter. Thus, the escalating institutional insanity of the status quo that initially gave rise to it, is ideologically whitewashed. This scientific fraud has long since been exposed by radicals, yet the youth culture has not been fully analyzed, thus leaving unclarified many questions upon whose answers rests the entire strategy of the movement with respect to establishing and consolidating a political base.

At this stage, however, the youth culture presents itself as an abstract negation in the hegelian sense since it ultimately ends up by presupposing precisely those elements of bourgeois culture that it instinctively wants to eliminate. Although the very character of the youth culture makes it very difficult to analyze, this polymorphous and unstructured element can itself be negatively seen as an implicit reaction within its neat, scientific categories, fails to grasp history and change, thus ultimately presenting a static world-view whose dialectical otherness turns out to be precisely the youth culture. Hence, the latter presents itself as another world-view aspiring to replace the official one by setting up new institutions in place of existing ones. This youth culture as, a world-view has been recently articulated by Roszak⁽¹⁾ in a book that, as will become clear shortly, can be taken as its manifesto or, as he prefers to call it, the theory of the counter-culture. It is no accident that this work is being acclaimed by the underground press as “a brilliant piece of wordcraft”,⁽²⁾ and as “a marvelous book . . . which looks the major problems right in the teeth without flinching”³ even though it is actually no better than fourth rate and contains more slogans, distortions and superficial analyses than most of the nonsense about culture presently flooding the market. It is thus advisable to examine some of the main theses put forth by this work.

In a nutshell, it proclaims what the hippies have *claimed* to be their ideology – something that has nothing to do with their actual *praxis*. Thus the ideology of the counter-culture as articulated by Roszak rejects politics outright as a means whereby to remedy the wickedness of official culture and society,⁽⁴⁾ yet the hippies are, because of their rejection of bourgeois culture, forced directly into a political context. Whether they like it or not, they have to face politics: institutional repression is too close to let them forget about it, and in fact, the ranks of student dissidents that have been shaking the American universities out of their traditional lethargy are swelled with hippies who have consistently put themselves on the line. Of course, the members of the youth

culture are not themselves fully aware of what they are doing, so when asked, it is not at all surprising that they give an ideologically conditioned answer. But as Marx put it, a man cannot be judged by what he says of himself, rather, by what he actually does. According to this standard, the youth culture is by far one of the most important political forces today.

As the underground press has already indicated in its own way, Roszak's very mode of presentation, in the pop-sociological or journalistic style, plunges him into a paradox for, in terms of his own thesis, the "culture" and the "counter-culture" represent two distinct life-styles typified respectively by objectivism and subjectivism. It is roughly the same contraposition that was given twenty years ago by Koestler in his *The Yoga and the Commissar*, with the difference that Koestler understood the issue (even if the solutions that he suggested left a lot to be desired) while Roszak and the youth culture, in general, do not. Insofar as language is an objective institution which, as Marcuse has shown,⁽⁶⁾ can become as alienated and alienative as anything in bourgeois culture, to describe what is happening by means of it as Roszak does, presupposes becoming caught precisely in the objective trap that the counter-culture is reacting against. It is not by chance that the "freaks" attempt to develop new means of expressions and that their own views are usually articulated through poems or Dylan's ballads which, unlike alienated discursive forms of expression such as "intelligentese", can readily crack through the one-dimensional thought that, in enclosing the wealth of reality within poverty-stricken technocratic categories, produces an evaporation of meaning. Yet, even the youth culture, on the ultimate analysis, does not avoid Roszak's paradox and, as such, turns out to be an abstract negation.

But what exactly is the paradox? It is the contraposing of the living experiences of the rebelling youth to the dead and mechanistic routines of the technocracy and subsequently attempting to grasp the latter by means of the former, thus assuming precisely what was to be negated. It is another version of that paradox with which Wittgenstein closes his *Tractatus* "What we cannot speak about we must consign to silence."⁷ What cannot be dealt with "meaningfully" is what falls outside of the one-dimensional domain of science - those mystic claims that cannot be objectively verified in the same way as, e.g., Snell's law of refraction. Roszak's distinction between culture and counter-culture starts out along these same lines with the difference that the subjectivity of the counter-culture is presented as the hope for Western culture, while in Wittgenstein it is the "scientific" and the objective that performs such a task. Moreover, Wittgenstein was astute enough never to attempt to catch the subjective and the mystical by means of the scientific, while Roszak amateurishly articulates the counter-culture by means of official cultural means. Thus Roszak is guilty of the same charges that he levies against orthodox culture: what he offers as an alternative is nothing different from what already obtains.

Both what Roszak accuses official culture of doing and what he does with the counter-culture are instances of what Whitehead called "misplaced concreteness", i.e. the confusion of abstract categories for the living reality which they articulate and, in so doing, mutilate and particularize. It is customary to distinguish between appearance and reality, abstract and concrete, immediate and mediate, objective and subjective, experience and thought, etc., in order to meaningfully articulate what takes place in human activity. But in employing those distinctions, it is very easy to fall into the trap of treating both poles of the distinctions as categories, thus implicitly collapsing reality into appearance, the concrete into the abstract, the immediate into the mediate, the subjective into the objective, and experience into thought. The two poles of these distinctions are the two vectors of praxis: the theoretical aspect can be theoretically elaborated without doing injustice to it, but to simply theoretically elaborate the practical aspect independently of action entails implicitly transforming it into another theoretical aspect and, consequently, obliterating the distinction. As we painfully discover at the end of the first chapter of Hegel's *Phenomenology*, the original "immediate" was mediated all along. But this is because the object was treated throughout as a mere category which, as such, cannot be other than theoretical. It does not mean that, since

all discourse is by its very nature theoretical, there is no pre-theoretical or pre-categorical domain to which the theoretical discourse ultimately refers. Yet, the pre-theoretical or pre-categorical domain is obviously not identical with what is predicated of it, i.e., the theoretical domain. The two coincide in human praxis where all categories and theories ultimately find their foundation. Misplaced concreteness results when this pre-categorical domain is treated as if it were categorical or theoretical, thus losing sight precisely of that domain that was to function as a base and replacing it by another abstract category. Bourgeois culture is abstract and irrelevant precisely because it is not based on this pre-categorical domain but rather it is based upon another abstract category – capitalist reality – which, however, functions as if it were concrete and pre-categorical. The counter-culture realizes the irrelevance and abstractness of official culture, and rejects it in its entirety. But insofar as counter-culture simply presents a cultural alternative, it fails to penetrate the precategorical reality within which it has to function and, as such, it eventually becomes another expression of it. The self-liberation attainable within the counter-culture, to the extent that it does not alter the concrete social context within which the liberated individual will have to operate, can only be temporary for the real causes of alienation and isolation that presently reduce the human subject to the level of a mere repressed and abstract consumer remain operative. Thus the counter-culture can become another political deadend that in the ultimate analysis simply duplicates the cultural avenues of social integration that the establishment so desperately needs in a period of deep social crisis.

According to Marxist theory, it is the problem of the base and of the superstructure extrapolated from an early industrial context to one of automation and cybernation. In a post-scarcity society the traditional superstructure (culture) seem to have collapsed, not in the sense that there are no longer contradictions between the two – a situation possible only in a classless society – but in the sense that superstructure has come to penetrate the very base. At this point the very meaning of base and superstructure change, and old left analyses turn into slogans completely divorced from the reality that they were meant to explain. As Marcuse has pointed out, the classical internal contradictions of capitalist society have been reconciled by the ability of advanced industrial societies to remedy that situation of deprivation that previously made the working class into a revolutionary agency. Of course, on the international level, the class struggle has been transposed between the metropolises and the Third World – as Rosa Luxemburg clearly outlined half a century ago. But within the advanced industrial societies what has historically differentiated the abstract from the concrete, bourgeois society from the proletariat, and made it so that the abstract functioned as if it were concrete and the concrete as if it were abstract (the reversal whereby commodities become alive and the live producers of these commodities become alienated objects), i.e., the fact that the unsatisfied human needs of the workers are *real* when contraposed to the ideological cultural constricts, ceases to exercise its corrective role and becomes another extension of that ideology to which it was initially contraposed. Thus Soviet Marxist ideology, chained to historically obsolete categories, has become but another indirect prop of precisely that society that it explicitly seeks to destroy.⁸ The classical notion of the base has become an abstract category that no longer corresponds to the pre-categorical reality which initially gave it a privileged ontological status with respect to the superstructure thus becoming a mere extension of it. The pre-categorical foundation is nowadays to be found beyond the life-style of bourgeois society where the criterion is no longer an empty stomach, but an empty spirit – and therefore an empty life, notwithstanding its glittering chrome and shiny plastic. Here is where the new theories of revolution begin to gather revolutionary momentum: bourgeois life – even by bourgeois standards – is becoming unbearable. It is at this point that the new sensibility becomes very relevant: in left Husserlian terminology, it is the return to the *Lebenswelt*, the precategorical domain within which we all live but which can be and is occluded by categorical structures that ultimately render the very human subject into an abstract – a mere object of manipulation, what C. W. Mills called the cheerful robot of suburbia.

Within such a context it is clear why in the 1960's, rather than class-struggle

American society has a counter culture whose password is not the overthrow of the ruling class, but the "Great Refusal." The major thrust of the counter culture is precisely the search for the authentic which today appears all around us as having been visited into the "phony" and the "artificial." It is not accidental that the most viable categories of the counter culture are "sincerity" and "naturalness." But what the counter culture has also realized is that *mere* intellectual or theoretical therapy of these problems simply reproduces the old ruts in different forms: the way out of it is not through another more elaborate or "better" ideology or theory, but through an activity that will allow the subject to find himself and his fellow human beings, not by manipulating or being manipulated by the abstract categories of bourgeois culture but by creating a new social order free of the hang-ups of the old one. The real *bete noir* of the counter culture, therefore, is precisely that abstract intellectualism found in Roszak.

But what happens when, for all practical purposes, the class-struggle becomes interpreted as an "economistic conflict" within bourgeois culture? The objective contradictions between labor and capital are transposed to reappear on the international level between advanced industrial societies and the third world (imperialism); and internally between producers and consumers (culture). Internationally, liberal ideology becomes the categorical mystification for the new economic relationships, while internally "culture" becomes the new crucial mediation between producers and consumers. Within such a new context the rise of the youth culture can be a crucial moment in the development of a new revolutionary consciousness. But if its catalytic function is misconstrued and seen as the revolution itself, it simply becomes another mystification of the real revolutionary possibilities that it carries.

Rozzak's theory of the counter-culture is precisely one of these hypostatization of a revolutionary moment to the level of the resolution itself, with the consequence that the counter culture becomes but another bourgeois mystification functioning as a drain of genuine revolutionary potentials. The counter culture, as a *mere* negation of the new ideological mediation whose main objective function is the molding of consumers to fit the pre-set casts of the producers, simply substitute these casts without at all affecting the new version of the capital-labor struggle, i.e., between the consumers and the producers. "Doing one's thing" is never going to be a major threat to imperialist political economy. In fact, if converted to a new ideology, as in Roszak, it simply reproduces in a new form, all of the old bourgeois mystifications. To see how this happens, it is advisable to briefly examine some of Roszak's claims in the light of liberal ideology.

What is the major tenet of bourgeois ideology? As Marcuse brilliantly indicated almost 40 years ago,⁹ it is the radical disjunction between the "public" and "individual" — a disjunction whereby "doing one's thing" is obtaining as much as possible for oneself without infringing on the collective interest embodied in the "*res publica*". But what is the *res publica*? On closer analysis it turns out to be a political arm of the class that controls the private economic world. On the other hand, the very privatization of man within that society prevents the exposure of the ideological fraud. In fact, the individual and society are opposite poles of the same dialectical continuum so that the radical separation of the two is but an additional means to present genuine radical action¹⁰ — the kind of action that not only changes the object, but also the subject — thus finally resulting not only in a new rational society, but also in a new rational man. Roszak reproduces this ideological disjunction under the guise of the technocracy and the counter culture: one takes on the function of the *res publica* while the other becomes the individual's collective subjectivity embodied in the counter culture. In the same way that classical bourgeois ideology ends up by degrading the *res publica* and inflating the role of the individual, Roszak disparages technology and science and glorifies the counter culture.

The implication is that what is in store for future generations is the total rejection of technology and science as the *fons et origo malorum* of today's alienation. What is overlooked is that it is not science or technology *by themselves* that produce the one-dimensional society, but the abstract use of both science and technology by a ruling class in the attempt to retain unchanged their historically obsolete hegemony in society.



Science and technology are not inherently evil, on the contrary: they offer such a great hope for human freedom and happiness that no society in the near future will be able to do without it. To even suggest otherwise is to engage in romantic dreams that overlook the brute and ruthless character of pre-technological societies. The counter culture as a revolutionary phenomenon is only possible in a sick advanced industrial society, and would be meaningless in any other context.

It is, once again, the problem of the categorical and pre-categorical that is at play here. The counter culture criticizes official culture for having become irrelevant and alienated. In doing so it shows that such a culture has lost its precategorical base and now remains as an abstract category that initiates human beings. But this does not entail that *all* categories are bad, so that things such as science and technology, because of their very categorical character, will have to go. To take this step is to fall back on the worst kind of mysticism. What needs to be done is to seek to develop a counter culture which will eventually make it possible to create new categories founded in the precategorical domain and meant to realize its inherent teleology. Of course, given the existing socio-economic situation, the counter culture can, at best, only give a vision of what it might be like within such a new state of affairs, for any implementation of this categorical restructuring entails a revolutionary transitional period during which not only is the socio-economic foundation of the old culture (capitalism) destroyed, but a new one is created where the vision implicit in the counter culture can find practical realization. In other words, it is not simply a matter of discarding old categories and replacing them with new ones, as Husserl, in his social naivete, thought possible,¹¹ but also of changing the concrete environment within which these categories operate and of which they are an expression.

In terms of the movement, the counter culture presents both a promise and a threat. It is a promise at least insofar as it indicates that, no matter how efficient and sophisticated, no system can ever completely alienate and dehumanize man.¹² Thus, the pessimism found in Marcuse's *One Dimensional Man* turns out to be essentially unfounded: man is a creative being that *can* see through the ideological mystifications of advanced industrial societies. The very existence of the counter culture is the living proof that *total* alienation and integration is impossible. Yet this negative moment is not by itself sufficient.

To the extent that the counter culture can remain simply *another* culture, it can easily become a new avenue or social integration for the rebellious youth into a more sophisticated system. It is no mere accident that, parallel to the counter culture, there have been concomitant phenomena whose ultimate function is precisely the placation and integration of youth. What is all this talk about "sensitivity training" that is presently sweeping every campus in the country? Upon closer examination, it turns out to be the official version of the counter culture meant to turn inward the anger and frustration that the system generates in youth. The claims of "sensitivity training" sound strikingly similar to those of the counter culture: verbal communication is alienated and no longer allows for the expression of feelings, thus a new mode of non-verbal communication has to be devised that will allow human beings to truly communicate and express their "true" selves. To the extent that language has become another extension of the system, it is to be expected that it tends to convey only the logic of that system, to the exclusion specifically of what it occludes and mystifies. From this, however, it does not follow that language is *ipherently* alienated and alienative so that, in order to avoid or bypass alienation, it is necessary to reject *all* traditional modes of rational expression. To do so entails two extremely reactionary consequences: (1) all talk of social revolution becomes *ipso facto* irrelevant and alienative; and (2) "sensitivity training" and "sensitivity-trained" people become phenomena that can be easily reconciled with the existing state of affairs.

What happens is that sensitivity-trained individuals, like the psychologically or psychoanalytically treated patients, are adjusted to the "sick" social context in contraposition and reaction to which they originally become sick.¹³ Thus the socially explosive social situation created by "abnormal" individuals, is defused by making the

individual's neuroses coextensive with the institutionalized "sickness" of the system. In more concrete terms, the main impetuses of the youth culture are sexual repression and authoritarianism. What sensitivity training does is to seemingly evaporate authoritarianism within a plethora of friendliness (without at all affecting the economic basis of authoritarianism, i.e., private ownership and control of the means of production), and institutionalize permissiveness — in the age of the pill, sexual promiscuity is very compatible with computerized exploitation. Thus, it integrates precisely those causal factors that initially gave rise to the youth culture. It is not accidental that "sensitivity-training" is fast becoming the "core" of the new educational experience.

Youth culture is a threat to the movement to the extent that it can pose itself as the answer to the problems that generate it. This self-definition is very compatible with imperialism abroad and consumerization at home. What it requires of the system is that, rather than producing more Edsels and electric toothbrushes, it turns out more amplifiers and leather-goods — something that market-research can readily ascertain. On the other hand, the youth culture is a promise since it indicates that the plastic life of bourgeois society is suitable only for Madison Avenue mannequins and not for flesh-and-bones human beings. As such, it can be a catalytic moment in the development of that revolutionary consciousness without which no serious radical political movement can be sustained and transformed into concrete political action.

FOOTNOTES

1. Theodore Roszak, *The Making of a Counter Culture* (New York 1969).
2. Cf. Lawrence Lipton "Making a Counter Culture, in *Los Angeles Free Press*, October 10, 1969 pp. 34ff.
3. Langdon Winner's review of Roszak's book in *Rolling Stone*, no. 45, November 1, 1969, p. 36.
4. Roszak, *op. cit.*, Chapter 11, "An Invasion of Centaurs" pp. 42-83.
5. Arthur Koestler, *The Yoga and the Commissar* (London, 1948). For an excellent criticism of Koestler see Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Humanism et Terreur* (Paris 1947).
6. Herbert Marcuse, *One-Dimensional Man* (Boston, 1964), pp. 85ff.
7. Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* (New York, 1961), pp. 160-1
8. This, of course, is, in a nutshell, Marcuse's thesis in his *Soviet Marxism*.
9. Herbert Marcuse, "Zur Kritik der Soziologie," in *Die Gesellschaft*, Band II (Berlin, 1931) pp. 270-280.
10. For an excellent explication of "radical action," see Herbert Marcuse "Beitrage zu einer Phenomenologie des Historischen Materialismus" in *Philosophische Hefte*, No. 1, July 1928, section 2.
11. Cf. Edmund Husserl, *Die Krisis der Europaischen Wissenschaften* ed. by Walter Biemel (Den Haag, 1954). For an excellent criticism of Husserl along these lines, see Antonio Banfi, "Husserl e la Crisi della Civiltà Europea," in *Aut-Aut*, no. 33-34, pp. 1-17.
12. This is one of the main points in Enzo Paci, *Funzione delle Scienze e Significato dell' Uomo* (Milano, 1963).
13. For an excellent critique of psychoanalysis, see Herbert Marcuse "Abriss der Psychoanalyse" in his *Kultur und Gesellschaft*, (Frankfurt en Mein, 1965).

RIFLE NO. 5767

This is the story of Felix Faustino Ferran,
and the record of his rifle.
Felix Faustino Ferran, on the cold night of January 19,
in the trenches of the Revolution,
somewhere in Cuba,
told me this brief but enormous poem
of his rifle no. 5767

It is the greatest poem of the Revolution

A black Cuban: he spoke gravely, warmly.
A black Cuban, his smile large and clear,
spoke for our whole country,
spoke with simple words, steel flowers
militiaman 1061 spoke.

I have forgotten the beginning, the first word.
I can hear the hoarse voice and see his hand
curl around the barrel of his rifle,
and then not knowing a poem had begun
I hear:

Viviana, the trigger guard,
Antonio, the barrel,
Caruca, the bolt,
Filiberto, the sling,
Irene, the chamber,
Lucia, the trigger,
Fabian, the safety,
and the stock of the rifle, me.

Each part of the rifle, a child,
each part a flower of his blood,
a work of love furiously defended.
For them, for his children,
for everyone whose names
are on each part of the militiamen's rifles,
the hoarse voice of militiaman Felix Faustino Ferran,
black Cuban, founder of this country,
on the unforgettably cold night of January 19,
in the trenches of the Revolution,
where I had come to read verse from a book,
showed me the very heart of poetry.

by Felix Pita Rodriguez
translated by Max Crawford

from *The Peninsula Observer*, Sept. 1, 1969

Rock Culture and the Development of Social Consciousness

Joe Ferrandino

"This wheel's on fire
Rolling down the road
Just notify my next of kin
This wheel shall explode."
— Dylan

INTRODUCTION

Over the years most socialists have argued that in order for the radical transformation of capitalist society to take place a "new man" would be necessary. To them this meant a socially conscious man who understood the contradictions of capitalist society as *traditionally conceived* — i.e., a man who understood his role as alienated laborer, who understood the reasons for that alienation, and who would move to alienate that alienation through radical political activity. The focus of this view is man *as laborer*. These men failed to see man in his totality as an economic, social, and cultural being.

As David Gross and Stuart Ewen put it in their respective articles in recent issues of *Radical America*:

"Marxist theory in the 1930's, for example, rested with an attack on the economy and not on the culture which sustained it.(1)¹"

"To view proletarianization in early industrial America solely as the creation of 'workers' in the most colloquial sense (i.e., men who work in factories) ignores the social mode of capitalism."

Many members of the New Left are quite aware of this short-coming (to put it mildly) of the Old Left. They also see the need for a "new man," not only as laborer (in the factory sense, since the "factory" may now be a knowledge factory), but as man transforming himself through historical *praxis at all levels*, even down to the socially conditioned infrastructure of man. Herbert Marcuse has articulated this well:

"... the displacement of the negating forces from their traditional base among the underlying population, rather than being a sign of weakness of the opposition against the integrating power of advanced capitalism, may well be the slow formation of a new base, bringing to the fore the new historical Subject of change, responding to the new objective conditions, with qualitatively different needs and aspirations.(3)[#]"

"... society would be rational and free to the extent to which it is organized, sustained, and reproduced by an essentially new historical Subject.(4)¹"

The latter half of the 1960's has seen the beginnings of the development of this new historical Subject — primarily in and through the youth culture. This culture, as well as the political practice of the New Left, can be viewed as insurgent in the sense that it almost totally rejects the values associated with the bourgeois culture. If we are to accept the theses of Marcuse, Ewen, Sklar, *et. al.* this insurgent culture in the face of advanced industrial capitalist society becomes extremely important in the context of the *real*

possibilities for making a revolution in this country. It is important in the following sense (I will briefly sum up what I take to be the basic argument of the above position. Many of the points made – especially by Ewen – will be elaborated further on.): Man is more than just a factory laborer. The bourgeoisie recognized this very early in the development of the American political economy. With the moves toward shorter hours and higher wages in the early years of the 20th century it became clear that in order to maintain the capitalist system two things would be necessary – two things which work hand in hand – a) the control of man *outside* of the factory in order to desensitize him for factory life *as worker*, and b) the creation of new domestic markets in order to perpetuate capitalist modes of production – which meant creating *consumer man*. Ewen says:

“Ideological growth refers to the needs of a mass industrial capitalism to produce, change, or habituate men into responding to the demands of the productive machinery.

“While the nineteenth century industrialist coerced labor both on and off the job, to be the ‘wheelhorse’ of industry, modernizing capitalism sought to change ‘wheelhorse’ to ‘worker’ and ‘worker’ to ‘consumer,’ on and off the job.(5)”

If then one of the new forms of control – perhaps the *main* form of control – over the worker is through the coercion of his off-the-job activities, through a coercive cultural apparatus, then the destruction of this means of control and the creation of a truly human and liberating culture can be viewed as revolutionary. This also implies that a *new working class* has been created as proletarianization (consumerization) proceeds at all levels of life. This *new working class* includes *both* the so-called intellect (white collar) workers and the manual (blue collar) workers, the latter categories becoming inadequate to explain the phenomenon of proletarianization both on and off the job. Radical theory must see production in the broad sense; the production and reproduction of relations and not only production of objects, instruments and goods. George Metefsky of the White Panther Party emphasizes the importance of recognizing what he aptly calls “cultural imperialism” as a crucial factor in the maintenance of the status-quo:

“...the workers’ middle class identity, and culture supporting that identity, must be seriously weakened before they can identify with the revolution... To awaken them, middle class culture itself must be smashed.(6)”

The worker drives himself in the plant or office daily in order to be able to consume (himself) in the electric backscratchers, tail-finned cars, and color TV sets he accumulates. Metefsky’s point is well-taken.

The New Left is now at a difficult juncture since although it is the case that the youth culture does have many progressive elements (in light of the above argument), it also contains many reactionary ones. These will be amplified through the discussion and possible directions for the Left will be indicated. The important point here, however, is to understand that this “cultural consciousness” or coming-to-consciousness through culture does have a history, a history that is the result of the dialectical tension between a social group (youth) coming to consciousness in and through their cultural *praxis* and an oppressive and manipulative bourgeoisie constantly attempting to seize the culture and turn it against itself. For the bourgeoisie, control of the culture means not only controlling man outside of the factory (in the case of youth, outside the school and family), but it also means producing new social relations – creating a new man down to a biological level (in Marcuse’s sense) – mass consumer man. A fundamental concern of this paper will center around how this struggle on the part of youth was and is being waged against bourgeois control, cooptation, and consumerization. One of the most salient expressions of this culture – especially over the past twenty years – has been the music of the youth – *Rock*. What I propose to do is examine the history of the development of this youth culture in terms of its music (“rock culture” if you will) in light of its relationship to the emergence of social consciousness within the broader context of monopoly capitalism.



THE ROOTS

Rock culture begins in exploitation and appropriation. In the late 1940s the big band era, which had carried a generation through a war and was readying them for another, was on the decline. Much of the black big band sound had been effectively coopted by the Paul Whitemans of the day in order to make it palatable to the white consumer consciousness. A sound that began around the turn of the century in New Orleans ghettos, which evolved into rag time and ultimately into the black big bands, had been, in effect, turned into its opposite – music by whites for whites – and drained of any critical social content. (A contemporary example of a similar phenomenon is the Boston Pops treatment of the Rolling Stones.)

At the same time that this sound was collapsing, the more vibrant elements of black music at that time were coalescing with what was left of the big band into a new form. These elements included the *blues* (perhaps *the* foremost contributor to the history of rock), both rural and urban. The best known of the rural blues singers at the time was Leadbelly, whose song *Good-night Irene* was number one in 1950 – but not by Leadbelly (he was too black, but Gordon Jenkins and The Weavers were just fine). The urban blues were simply the rural blues ghettoized as the blacks went north in search of the promised land and found Chicago instead. Out of these roots came the great black rock and roll artists of the 1950's – Chuck Berry, Little Richard, Clyde McPhatter, Ray

Charles, Jimmy Reed, Bo Diddley, Ivory Joe Hunter, etc. (I make references only to those people who did achieve some degree of recognition in the 50's. It was only in the middle 60's that people began to "discover" the blues artists who carried the tradition of urban blues through the 30's, 40's, 50's, and 60's - e.g., Howlin' Wolf, Homesick James, Little Walter, Muddy Waters, etc.) The other elements were *gospel* - always a part of the black history and very close to the blues; *jazz* - again close to blues and also the black version of the big band sound - including people like Charlie Parker, Billie Holiday, Dinah Washington; and lastly, the *boogie piano* (Jimmy Yancy, Meade Lux Lewis). This piano style was copied almost directly by Little Richard, Fats Domino and other pianists of the 50's. These elements coalesced in the late 40's and very early 50's and were given the name rock and roll - two of the most commonly used terms in late 40's rhythm and blues songs. Alan Freed, whose function in the 50's was very similar to today's Bill Graham, manager of the Fillmores - East and West - i.e., rock entrepreneur, coined the phrase.

At the same time there was developing a large social group whose consciousness was the receptive element for this music - youth. Their backgrounds were predominantly new working class. With the exception of the blacks this group was perhaps the most disenfranchised at the time.

These were the formative years of the knowledge factory and defense industry as institutional safety-valves for surplus manpower - primarily youth. The need to absorb surplus manpower into either one of these two industries was not as acute at that time as it was to become in the late 50's and after. As the Rowntrees state in *The Political Economy of Youth*:

"While civilian government employment during 1950-65 increased only 2% as a proportion of adult population, students and military personnel during the same period increased by 6.4% as a proportion of adult population. (Together the change was 8.4%.) These defense and education industries are particularly suited to absorb workers almost indefinitely, and the workers they absorb are primarily young. In 1965, almost three-quarters of the armed forces were under 30 and 56% were under 25. Almost all students are under 35, and about 95% are between the ages of 14 and 24. The task of absorbing the surplus of the U.S. economy has therefore increasingly fallen on the shoulders of young people.(7)"

In 1950 the need to go to college was not as great among working class youth (especially sons and daughters of factory workers) as it was to be ten years later. This meant for many of them dropping out of high school. In fact it was almost a status symbol to drop out and take a job in a service station. The defense industry was, of course, hard at work in Korea, but the level of social consciousness was so low that again it was almost a status symbol to join up and fight the Communists. (These attitudes are not uncommon in many 'traditional' working class areas today; however, among the working class youth working in the factories or in the armed forces involved in today's youth culture, strong positions against the draft, racism and imperialism are developing.)

The bourgeoisie had effectively taken hold of the cultural apparatus - to such an extent that those being sucked into the capitalist machine had very little if anything in the way of cultural salvation. The barrenness of the cultural scene at the time can perhaps best be seen by the fact that among the most popular TV shows were *The Life of Riley* and (a little later) Jackie Gleason's *The Honeymooners*, both of which portrayed 'blue collar' workers as a bunch of buffoons totally subservient to their masters. The movies were packed with McCarthyite anti-communism, and shows like *South Pacific* which defined happiness as "Some Enchanted Evening," were on Broadway. The music scene wasn't much better, with Vic Damone, Vaughn Monroe, Theresa Brewer and Patti Page, and songs like "Forever and Ever" by Perry Como, "Buttons and Bows" by Dinah Shore and other greats like "A Bushel and a Peck," "Our Lady of Fatima," and "Enjoy Yourself, It's Later than You Think" on the charts.

Needless to say, under the heel of McCarthyism (and Nixonism) organized labor, and the Old Left had either retreated or moved right to liberalism. There wasn't very much that was happening that spoke in any way to the actual lives of these young

people, which is the way the bourgeoisie preferred it. Rock and roll came into being in opposition to this bourgeois culture and although able to relate to youth, the relationships that did obtain were for the most part determined by the bourgeoisie. That is, the analysis that Ewen makes in "Advertising As Social Production" of capitalist productive relations vis-a-vis the *workers* in the 1920's can also be applied to the emerging youth culture of the 50's. The bourgeoisie recognized the necessity to control something potentially dangerous to them (witness the violence at rock and roll show fights, in street gangs, etc. – imagine that coupled with a social consciousness). They also saw the potential for new markets. The latter meant the attempted *destruction* of the liberating aspects of the culture and the *construction* of repressive social relations in order to meet productive needs.

In the formative years of rock and roll this practice on the part of the bourgeoisie took the form of exploitation and appropriation. As indicated, particularly in the case of Leadbelly, the music was appropriated from blacks and done by whites primarily for whites. This became standard operating procedure through the early 50's under the appropriate heading of "cover" records. This meant that the record company would consciously seek out black artists in order to pick up what sounded like saleable tunes which would then be recut and marketed with established white personnel (losing the black content). Some of the most blatant examples were the McGuire Sisters' "Sincerely," originally done by the Moonglows, Kay Starr's "Wheel of Fortune," originally done by the Cardinals, Bill Haley's "Shake Rattle and Roll" originally done by Joe Turner, and Elvis Presley's "Money Honey," originally done by Clyde McPhatter and the Drifters. The exploitative feature added another dimension. It is by now well known how record companies would buy rights to a song mostly from black people and then make millions off it. Billie Holiday's whole life is a testimony to this type of racist exploitation.⁽⁸⁾ A more obvious example (and actually one of the most famous "cover" records) is Big Mama Thornton's song "Hound Dog" (written around 1952-53 by Leiber and Stoller). She sold her rights to the song for \$500.00. Elvis Presley sold over two million copies and Big Mama Thornton never received another penny.⁽⁹⁾

This type of exploitation/commodification served a number of purposes from the point of view of the bourgeoisie. First, it took what was potentially some of the most critical and subversive music (namely black blues), drained it of its critical content and turned it into its opposite to buttress the status quo. Secondly, by controlling the artists, the media, etc., this "cultural imperialism" was an excellent method for channelling the tension and rage generated by an oppressive system (again gang fights, rock and roll shows, and bourgeois controlled dances and record hops served this purpose). And thirdly, it provided for new domestic markets.

"While agreeing that 'human nature is more difficult to control than material nature,' ad men nonetheless discovered in such general notions of human self-conception useful tools for advertising, given their desire to predictable control men in order to create new habits and desires for consumer products.⁽¹⁰⁾"

What could be better? – one could control people through their culture and even make money off it. But for the capitalist there were a number of contradictions involved which outline the beginnings of the struggle by youth to find themselves in and through their cultural practice in the face of bourgeois manipulation.

NEW FORMS, OLD CONTENT

Around 1953-54 the contradiction between what the songs were originally and what the songs were as presented by the media was becoming apparent (primarily through the people who really got into the music and began collecting "originals"). The static styles of those who passed for real rock and rollers were no longer tolerable to growing numbers of young people (both white and black and primarily urban oriented) whose whole life style was the antithesis of the Vic Damone death style. As Jonathan Eisen put it:

¹¹ Rock music was born of a revolt against the sham of Western culture; it was direct and gutsy and spoke to the senses. As such, it was profoundly subversive. It still is. (11)¹⁴

In 1955 Laverne Baker's (a black woman) original version of "Tweedle Dee Dee" gained a greater popular reception than the white Georgia Gibbs version. LaVerne Baker even went so far as to take "the issue of 'covers' to her congressman who decried the practice on the floor of the House but was unable to do anything about it since 'covers' were legal." (12)

This move signalled the recognition of black in rock and roll but it was not at this time the recognition of *black as black*, but *black as white*. That is to say, with the exception of a few artists, almost all the black rock and roll artists who achieved any notoriety whatsoever did not sing about anything that was ever remotely related to the black experience. This was particularly true of most of the "great" groups – The Platters, the Harptones, Moonglows, Valentines, Four Tunes, Billy Ward and The Dominoes, etc. Many of the songs projected an idealism that was almost religious. What had developed was a new *form*, but this form was infused with the old sham content. First of all, most of the problems dealt with in the songs were false problems in the sense that they almost invariably centered around "boy-girl" relations in a false way. They were heavily male chauvinistic – juxtapose Gloria Mann's "Teenage Prayer" to The Videos' "Trickle Trickle" for example. The male is hot and heavy and usually roams a lot. The female is passive and just wishes he would pick her from the others (competing all the time) so that she could become his property as a steady girl and later as a housewife. The situations were super-romantic and tended toward the view that all the problems in the world would be solved "When We Get Married." It would be "Heaven and Paradise," etc. Frankie Lyman and the Teenagers are an excellent example of this phenomenon. A black group – New York City ghetto oriented – they made the grade on such great tunes as "Why Do Fools Fall In Love" and "I Want You to Be My Girl." The cover photo on the album they did for GEE has all five dressed like Yale students – dark trousers, white shirts, white "letter sweaters" with a big T in front, and, of course, processed hair. In fact, since the Establishment had started on the juvenile delinquency kick in an attempt to thwart dissident elements among the youth culture, the Teenagers even felt it necessary to *apologize* in a song titled "I'm Not a Juvenile Delinquent." This is a blatant but certainly not uncommon illustration of the seizure and destruction of a culture by taking the potentially negative elements, denuding them of their negative characteristics, and assimilating them into normal capitalistic social relations. It is therefore not very surprising to learn that Frankie Lyman died from an overdose of heroin two years ago in his late 20's, and that Little Willie John, a victim of the same kind of exploitation, died in jail about the same time as Frankie Lyman.

The focus on interpersonal/boy-girl relations worked well in the interest of the bourgeoisie who could control the youth while at the same time creating mass consumer man (in this case, youth). All of one's energies were channelled into these pseudo-problem areas (in the sense that what is really a social problem was defined in terms of an individual aberration) – the biggest problem was not the *kind of society* that forces the fetishization of one's penis; but simply, can one make it with Marsha on Saturday night? Further, the social relations were of course not healthy ones – i.e., there was almost no real sexuality and everything was defined as neat and clean, malt-shop romances, etc. Given this, the control factor was not very problematic. In "The Affirmative Character of Culture" Marcuse puts it rather well:

¹¹ Release of sensuality would be release of enjoyment, which presupposes the absence of guilty conscience and the real possibility of gratification. In bourgeois society, such a trend is increasingly opposed by the necessity of disciplining discontented masses. The internalization of enjoyment through spiritualization (i.e., the abstract character of boy-girl relations in this music) therefore becomes one of the decisive tasks of cultural education. By being incorporated into spiritual life, sensuality is to be harnessed and transfigured. From the coupling of sensuality and the soul proceeds the bourgeois idea of love. (13)¹⁴

At the same time the consumerization (proletarianization) of youth was progressing well. Besides the usual cultural items such as radios, records, etc., one had to have the "right" commodities in order to make it socially (mouthwash, acne cream, hair tonic, etc.) Mass consumer youth was being created. Ewen has an excellent discussion of the rise of social psychology as an ideology for control and consumerization. He quotes social psychologist F.H. Allport:

"Our consciousness of ourselves is largely a reflection of the consciousness which others have of us . . . My idea of myself is rather my own idea of my neighbor's view of me. (14) "

PROGRESSIVE DIRECTIONS

Nevertheless, there was struggle and in the face of malt-shop romanticism there emerged with and through this music two semi-progressive elements: sensuality (though channelled) and rebellion (though primitive) – and concomitantly a growing sense of community. That is, in the struggle of the youth culture to become itself in opposition to the attempted mass bourgeoisification can be found the beginning of social consciousness.

The sensual element came primarily through the musical form – especially in the work of black rock and roll artists (although Elvis Presley was also a help.) The heavy up beat rhythms, shouts and screams, and bodily movement in the face of a white musical culture that was totally anti-sensual was a progressive step. Dancing (as in the jitterbug) was serving to bring to consciousness the recognition of one's body; i.e., it was an unsophisticated attempt to overcome the mind-body alienation. Eldridge Cleaver in *Soul On Ice* says:

"Bing Crosbyism, Perry Comoism and Dinah Shoreism had led to cancer, and the vanguard of white youth knew it. (15) "

Though Cleaver's descriptions are primarily directed toward the music of the late 50's and early 60's (as opposed to the earlier 50's), the similarity is evident, particularly in the following passage:

"They 'the young' couldn't care less about the old, stiffassed honkies who don't like their new dances: Frug, Monkey, Jerk, Swim, Watusi. All they know is that it feels good to swing to way-out body rhythms instead of dragassing across the dance floor like zombies to the dead beat of mind-smothered Mickey Mouse music. (16) "

Yet it must be kept in mind that the dances were always confined to certain "acceptable" forms and in this respect served as an excellent means for channelling this emerging sensuality.

"The Pleasure Principle absorbs the Reality Principle, sexuality is liberated (or rather liberalized) in socially constructive forms. This notion implies that there are repressive modes of desublimation, compared with which the sublimated drives and objectives contain more deviation, more freedom, and more refusal to heed the social taboos. (17) "

The history of rock and roll dances is the history of the emergence of a more liberating sensuality until in the late 1960's the dance almost totally rejects all traditional western forms and refuses to be structured even within the standardized confines of dances such as the Jerk, Watusi, etc. As late as 1967 the American Broadcasting Company was still trying to market the "Bugaloo" – dance, dress, TV show, etc. But it was evident at this time that youth were demanding more of their

culture than another plastic commodity. The Bugaloo didn't make it.

Most white and black up-tempo rock and roll music evidenced this emerging sensuality in terms of form. Probably the best example artistically was Little Richard. His performances in person were an attempt to introduce the subject into what was purely an object-to-object relation. The song was Little Richard – he moved, sweated, screamed and, in general, tried to break through the pseudo-individuality of previous "stars" and assert himself as a real individual. Listen to "Jenny, Jenny." But even here it was still the Little Richard of the diamond rings, the expensive cut-rite suits, and processed hair. The rock-sale system had forced Little Richard to sell himself. In some cases the sensuality also came across in content – usually in a somewhat vulgarized form as in Hank Ballard and The Midnighters' "Work With Me Annie," "Annie Had a Baby," and "Annie's Aunt Fannie." These songs were overt in their sexual references and were consequently banned from radio air play. Nevertheless a type of sexual consciousness was developing and the songs sold well. As usual the conservative bourgeoisie got very nervous. The following are examples of some of the more reactionary measures taken at the time:

¹¹ *Houston* – The Juvenile Delinquency and Crime Commission banned over fifty songs in one of its weekly purges.

Chicago – A radio station broke R & R records over the air as a daily ritual.

Iowa – A radio station got so carried away banning "unsuitable" rock records that even songs from the Broadway musical *Damn Yankees* were kept off the air.

Washington – A Senate Subcommittee began looking into the correlation between R & R and juvenile delinquency.

New York-Variety, in an editorial entitled 'A Warning to the Music Business' said, "The most casual look at the current crop of lyrics must tell even the most naive that dirty postcards have been translated into songs." Another article in *Variety* stated that R & R would make 'a negative global impression for the U.S.' (18) "

The other element that I have termed progressive in this music was the primitive rebellion (as expressed in gut-level social commentary) that helped build a sense of youth solidarity. Most of this social comment was very low-level with an almost total lack of historical analysis – but it spoke to the masses of youth who were experiencing a tremendous sense of alienation. The comments were primarily directed at the authority figures – parents, teachers, and the social system in general. The alternative to this oppressive system was always the youth rock culture (which was for the most part under the control of bourgeois productive relations). Some criticisms however were also directed to the work place – e.g., The Silhouettes' "Get A Job," Fats Domino's "Blue Monday," and the Coasters' "Quarter to Eight" (19) which contained the lines, "I'm tied to my job, my boss is a big fat slob." The bulk of the musical criticism, however, was directed toward the authority figures. Even the police/arrest system came in for some criticism as a Kafkaesque procedure in the Coasters' "Framed." (20) Most of the other Coaster songs dealt with parents ("Yakity Yak") and the school system ("Charlie Brown"). They were speaking to youth who were feeling the same kinds of frustrations the Coasters were describing. But again, the dissent was contained within the traditional structures. Charlie Brown, in opposition to the school authority, instead of becoming a leader of organized resistance, was "the clown." The bourgeoisie wanted to keep it that way.

Chuck Berry transcended this. While never getting quite to the level of the protest songs of the 60's, Berry told it like it was. "No Particular Place to Go" sang of youthful alienation. "Almost Grown" told of having to give up the youth scene to make it in the Establishment. "Sweet Little Sixteen" and "Rock and Roll Music" were fine descriptions of the youth culture. "Too Much Monkey Business" is one of the best pieces of social comment (from the rock culture perspective) at the time. The latter song in both form and content is almost a *direct* parallel to Dylan's "Subterranean Homesick Blues." (21) As the Rowntrees put it:

"...the young have taken the mark of their oppression – their youth – and

turned it into a signal by which to recognize the fellows with whom they wish to express solidarity. (22)"

Chuck Berry was a self-conscious rock and roll artist. One of the few who had a sense of history and who understood and sang about the historical importance of the youth culture. That is, Berry grasped the tension between the culture which contained the elements of liberation and the society which repressed the possibilities of liberation. This tension is captured well in Berry's "School Days." The song documents an extremely repressive and typical school day and then states:

"Soon as three o'clock rolls around
You finally *lay your burden down*
Close up your books
Get out of the seat
Down the hall and into the street
Up to the corner and round the bend
Right to the juke joint you go in." (my emphasis)

This song was one of the most profound criticisms (in the context of the youth culture) of the knowledge factory versus youth culture to come out of the 50's. There is no doubt that Berry was the spokesman for a growing consciousness. In reference to Mann's *Doctor Faustus* Marcuse comments on black music:

"In the subversive, dissonant, crying and shouting rhythm, born in the 'dark continent' and in the 'deep South' of slavery and deprivation, the oppressed *revoke the Ninth Symphony* and give art a desublimated, sensuous form of frightening immediacy, moving, electrifying the body, and the soul materialized in the body. (23)" (emphasis mine)

Or, as Chuck Berry put it, "Roll Over Beethoven!"

With this kind of music it was very easy to see how a sense of community was beginning to develop. People began to recognize that the problems that they were experiencing were not just their own individual problems (although the bourgeoisie was working hard at attempting to maintain that image). This musical social comment evolved dialectically. The form of the music came into being in opposition to the traditional forms. Yet this new form contained the same old alienated content. The new form thus required an alteration of the content and as the musical history proceeded and the content became more meaningful, new forms were required, as we shall see.

THE CULTURAL SCENE IN GENERAL

A word about the general cultural scene at the time . . . How was the music a reflection of the practical cultural activity of youth and vice versa? This time was the most acute in the development of the youth culture. With few exceptions (noted above), the level of consciousness was at the level of individual consciousness (which is why the kinds of inroads that Chuck Berry was making were very important). The social problems were internalized which led to a false analysis which suggested false solutions. If one couldn't "make it" (sexually, socially, etc.), it was his own fault and not the system's. In other words the connections between seemingly "individual" problems of "adjustment" and an exploitative and oppressive social system had not been made. The bourgeoisie re-enforced these attitudes in order to market the mass personality. This type of internalization usually resulted in tremendous feelings of guilt and impotence and frequently manifested itself in self-destructive tendencies (hard drugs, motorcycle and auto races and stunts, gang fights, etc.). Compensation usually took the form of a facade of toughness (e.g., the Cheers' "Black Denim Trousers and Motorcycle Boots") and rebellion against authority.

Although the youth culture did involve youth from the whole new working class (and even in rare cases bourgeois youth), it was primarily among working class youth working in factories, the armed forces or preparing in high school for the same, and among black youth (often unemployed and unemployable) that these characteristics

manifested themselves most acutely. This is perhaps due to the fact that they were born into violence and tension – the factory, the family (where the social relations were already strained by the working conditions of the parents usually resulting in extreme authoritarianism), and the school (where it wasn't the dunce cap but the fist), etc. The violence which characterized the rebellion took many forms (some mentioned above). On the one hand much of it was channelled in the right directions – namely, toward the institutions that were immediately oppressing them, e.g., property (theft and vandalism were extremely common), the family (constant parental disagreements), the educational system (as objectified in the principal or teacher – who would be called names, fought with, spat upon, etc.) and even the police and officers in the armed forces. But, on the other hand, there was no overall social analysis which meant that much of the violence was misdirected (against each other) and, in this sense, it is understandable that many of the hardest participants in this “rebellion” are now policemen.

A sense of community was developing which was important but it was a community that was, in many cases, organized around false issues, and therefore, one that was very easily controllable. One's immediate neighborhood and the degree of toughness determined who was a friend. The enemy was usually everyone else. (Dances and rock and roll shows sometimes served to break this down; however, these events also served as good places for the release of inter-gang antagonisms.) Despite the lack of ownership of private property, the internalization of the master's mentality had taken such hold that *turf* fights became commonplace (many of these along racial lines). Compare this level of social consciousness to those people consciously struggling in defense of People's park.

“HEROES”

The individualism, inarticulateness, guilt, etc. were objectified in some of the 50's “heroes.” Marlon Brando in the “Wild Ones” was such a hero. James Dean was another. He was the existential hero/anti-hero who saw sham and phoniness for what it was. He experienced in his own life, as well as on the screen, the social problems that youth was confronting – but again, it was on an individualistic internalizing basis.

“James Dean expresses in his life and films the needs of adolescent individuality which, asserting itself, refused to accept the norms of the soul-killing and specialized life that lie ahead. (24)”

As the title of one of his films indicates, James Dean expressed *A Rage to Live* against a society that was dehumanizing people every day.⁽²⁵⁾ James Dean presents an interesting counter to the bourgeois art critics who consistently demean youth and working class people because they have “inferior tastes.” In James Dean youth was able to identify authenticity and relate to it, albeit on an individualistic level, in terms of their own lives.

Another 50's hero was Elvis. His major contribution to the developing culture was the emphasis on sexuality (though well controlled). His negative contributions, however, surpassed his positive one. That is, Elvis Presley served first of all as excellent testimony to the individualistic ethic – that in this society, any poor boy can make it. The bourgeoisie made sure this message was well presented and saw to it that most of Elvis' movies used this as a theme. This move by the bourgeoisie was an attempt at giving further credence to a system that was becoming suspect to many youth. Needless to say, Elvis' being drafted was still another buttress to the system in the form of the rapidly developing ‘defense’ industries. Secondly, since the myth was that anyone could make it, many of the youth attempted to do so. This again, served the purposes of control (since their primary energies were directed toward singing on the corner in the hope that some producer would find them) and consumerization of the culture (musical instruments, sheet music, copyrights, etc. became important cultural necessities). This type of consumerization grew tremendously in the late 60's. One almost *had* to belong to some

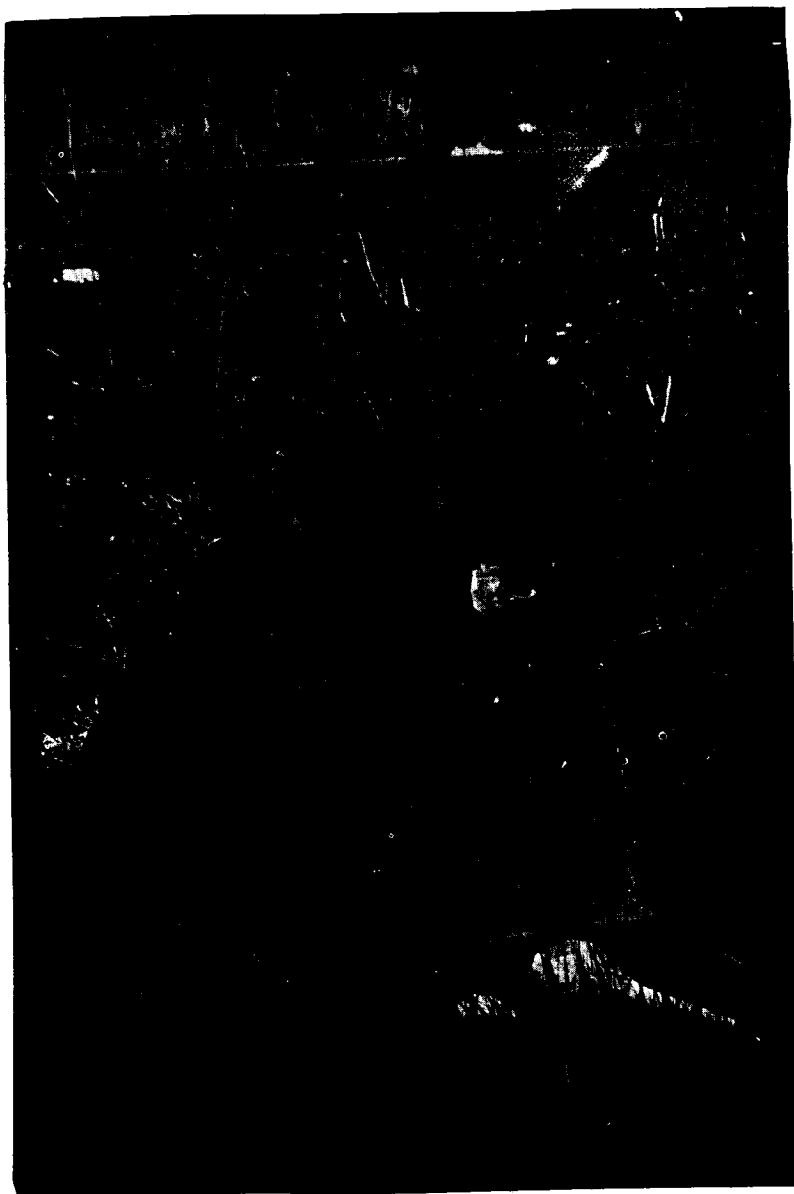
sort of singing group, own an electric guitar, amplifier, etc. in order to maintain social acceptance. New needs were created and met within the dominant structure of advanced industrial capitalism. Moby Grape put it well in song when they said:

"Can I buy an amplifier

On time

I ain't got no money now

But I will pay before I die.(26)



OTHER THRUSTS

Although rock and roll was the dominant popular musical trend in the 50's, there were a number of other cultural/musical thrusts that should be mentioned. First, there was the Ginsberg/Kerouac phenomenon, which was essentially the working class *angst* at an intellectual level. Their rebellion took more creative forms. Instead of beating up a school teacher, they dropped out, took head drugs, read and wrote poetry and hit the road. They emphasized spontaneity and naturalness in the face of artificial mass culture. But, there was no in-depth criticism and no analysis. Second, there was the urban blues, which did not gain any real audience until the 60's. Third was the other "popular" musical form -- namely, country and western. C & W, like rock, contained many contradictions. On the one hand, its roots were honest, straight-forward and human (as in the original Jimmie Rodgers and Hank Williams); but, on the other hand, much of it had been perverted by C & W entrepreneurs and turned into a commodity -- all form and no content. The two other musical thrusts at the time were to end up as the continuation of the youth culture of the 50's and the roots for the youth culture of the 60's -- folk music and the protest music of the Old Left.

The musical Old Left in the 50's had been unable to relate to the youth of the 50's. Those who did retain some of their original analysis after the McCarthy repression (which moved most of the Old Left right to liberalism⁽²⁷⁾) were unable to relate that analysis to the new working class -- and to youth in general. Their songs and slogans were primarily factory oriented. I think it can be said that Chuck Berry did more to begin to raise social consciousness than any Left artist in the 50's. In fact, as Carl Oglesby points out, much of the thrust of the Beat Movement was due to a lack of any real critique of the quality of life on the part of the Old Left.⁽²⁹⁾

As the content of rock and roll began to take on quasi-progressive overtones, new forms began to develop. Youth was beginning to search for newer and more meaningful types of cultural and social relations. In the late 50's "ordinary" rock and roll had reached perhaps its all-time low, both in form and content (Chuck Berry was in jail, and Little Richard had found religion). The best rock and roll music at this time had its roots in C & W and took on the forms called "rock-a-billy" and "Tex-mex" (for which some credit can be given to Elvis).⁽²⁹⁾ The Everly Brothers and Buddy Holly are the two best examples. Both were able to convey an honesty and straightforwardness in form and content which was opposed to the "rock" that was getting all the hype. Their music also revealed an appreciation for language and message. Parallel with this was the emerging of Hollywood folk music -- the Brothers Four, the Highwaymen, Christy Minstrels, Chad Mitchell Trio, Kingston Trio, etc. A new form was evolving -- but again, in the way in which it could easily be used to channel and control. The music of these "folksingers" was semi-hip, sometimes funny, but rarely subversive and the artists themselves were neat, clean and certainly American. The bourgeoisie was also busy locating and grooming clean-cut "rock stars" in an attempt to keep the heat off. This was originally done by the smaller record companies, but soon became a big-business practice. Fabian and Frankie Avalon were what they came up with. This type of plastic rock and roll star did take with some of the more unsophisticated elements of the youth culture. But ever-increasing numbers of youth were demanding more from the artists than Fabian's "I'm a Tiger." Those who rejected this plastic package deal sought meaning in the newly emerging forms.

The contradiction in the development of the education industry -- namely, that some real understanding of the nature of the beast was beginning to grow -- coupled with some of the above cultural developments helped develop the base for the liberal bourgeoisie to start making moves in the late 50's which culminated in the election of Kennedy in 1960. While a majority of the youth culture stayed with rock and roll, many, especially working-class students who attended the more liberal northern universities, as well as what Martin Sklar calls the non-academic intelligentsia -- free lancers, detached artists, etc.⁽³⁰⁾, took to this new form -- folk music. These youth were the vanguard of the struggle against the bourgeoisification of rock and roll. In

conjunction with their distaste for "mass culture," they were rapidly becoming aware that the abstract ideals of the U.S. — freedom, justice, equality, etc. were not being realized. This problem was located very conveniently in the South. It was at this point that some liaison between the folk culture and the remnants of the Old Left began to develop — i.e., the youth culture was taking on some overt political content. The new musical forms beginning to emerge in the late 50's/early 60's, reached out to a rediscovery of new cultural roots. Lawrence Goldman put it this way:

"...the folk music world was composed to a large extent of the rebellious children of ex-radical middle-class families. These families had once been active, often in support causes associated with the Communist Party. They were still sympathetic to radicalism and regarded themselves, whether they were active or not, as 'progressives.' It should be remembered that in the 1950's the Left consisted of a small band of harried and desperate people, divided by ancient quarrels, persecuted by the McCarthyites, abused by the cold war liberals and betrayed by the Khrushchev Report and the Hungarian Revolution. They were tired, impotent and unsure of where they were going or why they were going there.

To protect and preserve itself, the Left created a series of myths which, though originally based on a careful analysis of the political situation, had become, after a time, a means of avoiding reality. The Left came to talk of the Negro rather than Negroes, of the Worker rather than Workers, of the Thirties rather than the fifties, and of the People rather than people. The folk music world was one of the few places left in American cultural life...where those myths still retained their emotional force.⁽³¹⁾"

This abstract analysis, while reflecting a more advanced level of social awareness than that of the 50's (in the sense that parts of the system itself were singled out for criticism), was still a liberal view. "Help Others" was the motto. The system in general was fine; all that was necessary was the integration of the disenfranchised (the Southern black) into it. Alliances were made between these youth and the liberal politicians against the "enemy" — Bull Connor and the Southern racists. Again, control of the disenfranchised through the culture was assured by always keeping it within the context of reformist politics.

The new music, nevertheless, was clearly an advancement over the old. It re-introduced genuine emotion. Human relations began to take on a different perspective. In fact, much of the thrust of the folk scene can be viewed as a part of this cultural struggle to overcome the enforced capitalist consumer social relations. The immediate appreciation of the Kingston Trio folk types and gradual rejection of them for more "authentic" folk people accomplished two things. First, it indicated that the people involved in this culture were evolving new and higher artistic standards and secondly, it led to a recognition/appreciation of a totally different culture, one almost untouched by the advanced technology and one which involved different, more human ways of being. The folk music was much more articulate than most of the 50's rock and therefore required a much different collective response. Instead of the immediacy of jumping around to loud music, folk music demanded quiet listening, reflection, etc. In this sense, folk music can be viewed as the mediation between the fundamentally inarticulate rock of the 50's and the heavily articulate rock of the 60's.

DYLAN

The folk songs themselves were usually either original folk songs (e.g., "Barbara Allen") or some type of social comment (e.g., Phil Ochs' "Talking Birmingham Jam"). The form was the traditional folk form and the consciousness was the traditional liberal one. One of the new young folk artists who was able to break through both of these restrictions was Bob Dylan. Dylan's development from the early 60's to the present parallels the development of the consciousness of the youth culture and the concomitant development of the New Left. In this sense, Bob Dylan was making history and history was making Bob Dylan.

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Dylan's move to the East was primarily a result of his disenchantment with the bourgeois mass culture of the Hibbing (Minn.) working class and petit-bourgeoisie. His own history was one of a constant search for new cultural (musical) forms. He therefore came East as an eclectic – well-steeped in almost all of the musical strains of the 50's. He had a strong feeling for the blues, country and western music (particularly Hank Williams) and the best of the 50's rock and-roll. His folk hero was Woody Guthrie, who represented perhaps the best of the Old Left folk tradition ("This guitar kills fascists," was a Guthrie motto) but Dylan himself, along with the other young people, was developing a new genre – a genre struggling not only against the bourgeoisification of popular music and culture, but also against the old folk forms themselves. This new form was the urban folk culture.

During the early stages in the development of this cultural movement, Dylan and other urban folk artists seized upon both the traditional forms and content. Dylan, for example, affected a style and performed and recorded songs much in line with the originals, leaving some room for subjectivity in interpretation (as in Dylan's version of Blind Lemmon Jefferson's "See That My Grave Is Kept Clean"). Dylan, however, along with some of the other folk artists had a tremendous sense of history. He was aware of the contradictions of the society and the limitations of confining oneself to a musical style that was historically obsolete in both form and content. About his subsequent move to more topical music, Dylan said in a letter to Dave Glover:

"I'm singin' an writin' what's on my own mind now –
 What's in my own head and what's in my own heart –
 I'm singin' for me an a million other me's that've
 been forced t'gether by the same feeling –
 Not by no kind a side
 Not by no kind a category –
 People hung up an' strung out –
 People frustrated an' corked in an' bottled up –
 People in no special form or field –
 age limit or class –
 I can't sing 'Red Apple Joice' no more
 I gotta sing 'Masters a War' –
 I can't sing 'Little Maggie' with a clear head –
 I gotta sing 'Seven Curses' instead –
 I can't sing 'John Henry'
 I gotta sing 'Hollis Brown' –
 I can't sing 'John Johannah' cause it's
 his story and his peoples' story –
 I gotta sing 'With God On My Side' cause it's my
 story and my peoples' story –
 I can't sing 'The Girl I Left Behind' cause I know
 what it's like to do it –
 I gotta sing 'Boots a Spanish Leather' cause I know
 what it's like to live it
 But don' get me wrong now –
 Don' think I go way out a my way not t' sing no folk songs –
 That aint it at all –
 The folk songs showed me the way
 They showed me that songs can say somethin' human --(32) "

As Dylan's consciousness grew in and through his songs, so did the folk culture. He was, as he put it, singing "his peoples' story"; the story of a cold war, nuclear mentality and John Birch paranoia ("Talkin' WWII Blues," "Talkin' John Birch Society Blues"); the story of the coming of age in such a society ("Bob Dylan's Dream"); and, the story of human relations in such a society ("Don't Think Twice"). It was through this infusion of contemporary content into traditional forms that Dylan was able to begin to build a mass base of young people who felt essentially the same way. Gramsci

describes this phenomenon:

"It is still the culture of a narrow intellectual aristocracy which is able to attract the youth only when it becomes immediately and topically political.(33)"

The people who were attracted to the folk culture were those who had been able to retain some sensitivity in the face of massification and who were constantly struggling against massification. Much of this struggle, however, was waged on the basis of the "symptom-disease" confusion. That is, they were aware of many of the symptoms of a diseased society – meaningless unproductive labor, racism, distorted social relations, etc. – but, very infrequently did they get to the real *causes* of these problems.

Many of the folk people were also "socially involved;" that is, their *praxis* reflected their distaste for these problems and the attempt to correct them – usually within the system. A great many of these people refused to work – i.e., to perform alienated labor – though many did engage in what they considered to be meaningful labor – organizing, social projects, voter registration in the South, and writing for topical folk magazines (*Broadside*, *Sing Out* etc. which were the forerunners of underground newspapers). They identified with the "folk" (usually in the abstract), and wore folk clothing – work shirts and dungarees – and behaved as "folk" were seen or thought to behave – more humanly/communally, etc. In terms of these social and musical confines, Dylan's struggle as a self-conscious artist with a deep feeling for history can be viewed as an attempt to break through these restrictions, explode the old forms, and create new ones always within the context of a growing social awareness. In "Only A Pawn In Their Game," it was the system that produces racism that was brought to task. In "The Lonesome Death of Hattie Carroll," it was the class nature of justice that was exposed and in "With God On Our Side" and "Masters of War," it was (respectively) the religious buttress of militarism and war profiteers that were indicted. But, as Dylan's development indicates, there was much more to be said and a larger audience to reach.

It must be kept in mind that although the folk culture was growing and the restrictions of both liberalism and the folk music form were being brought into question, the youth actually involved in the folk scene represented only a small minority of the nation's youth. It should also be kept in mind that the civil rights struggle had peaked and was on its way down. The blacks, through people like Malcolm X and Stokely Carmichael, were becoming aware that change in this society is not made by accepting handouts from white liberals, but by organized struggle. At the same time, the war in Vietnam was escalating despite the election of the "peace" candidate Johnson. The Berkeley FSM was also going full blast and beginning to articulate a critique of the university. The Rowntress capture much of the feelings of these times:

"The off-campus New Left also reached a turning point in 1965. Following Selma, SNCC moved from non-violence to self-defense and black power . . . It became clear to many young radicals that their emphasis on spontaneity and grass-roots activity had led them into a reformist dead end. Many saw that isolated projects, no matter how radical in themselves could not become spontaneously revolutionary. In the reassessments and reorientations of the last three years, youth have turned their attention back to the schools and to the promotion of the more militant class forms of action that have emerged in recent times.(34)"

Musically the Beatles and Stones had hit the nation with "good old rock and roll" – though more amplified and more up to date. Their early music was based on some of the best of the 50's, but was almost totally devoid of content (as in the Beatles' "I Want to Hold Your Hand"). This was the music of the majority of youth and since it and the Beatles (sweatshirts, wigs, etc.) were very easily marketable, this was where the bourgeoisie concentrated their attention. The music was criticized by the folk people as being impure and inarticulate, but this critical perspective was primarily elitist and essentially bourgeois. The folk purists were interpreting the music, not struggling to change it. Dylan, however, although originally a critic, had moved to a new position. He did see the necessity for change and struggle right here on the home front, not simply down South, which was essentially the same kind of ideological development taking

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place within the New Left. This precipitated Dylan's move to a new form – rock and roll, which was again, another instance of the old forms not being able to contain the new content. Dylan was also very critical at the political level. His earlier views were primarily within the liberal framework. As his social consciousness grew, so did his antipathy for liberalism (along with many others in the Movement). In his first major interview (in the October 24, 1964 issue of the *New Yorker*) Dylan expressed this antipathy:

"I fell into a trap once – last December – when I agreed to accept the Tom Paine award from the Emergency Civil Liberties Committee. At the Americana Hotel! In the Grand Ballroom! As soon as I got there I felt up tight. First of all, the people with me couldn't get in. They looked even funkier than I did, I guess. They weren't dressed right, or something. Inside the ballroom, I really got up tight. I began to drink. I looked down from the platform and saw a bunch of people who had nothing to do with my kind of politics. I looked down and I got scared. They were supposed to be on my side, but I didn't feel any connection with them. Here were these people who'd been all involved with the Left in the thirties, and now they were supporting civil-rights drives. That's groovy, but they also had minks and jewels, and it was like they were giving the money out of guilt . . . And then I started talking about friends of mine in Harlem – some of them junkies, all of them poor. And I said they need freedom as much as anybody else, and what's anybody doing for *them*?⁽³⁵⁾"

Here was not only a critique of liberalism (for Dylan this incident and his critique of liberalism are expressed in song in "As I Went Out One Morning" on *John Wesley Harding*), but an indictment also of the Old Left forms. Dylan was struggling not only to break through the old *musical* forms, but also through the old *political* forms, since most of these forms were predicated on bourgeois social relations. Dylan was practicing and speaking for what Marcuse was to later call the "new sensibility."

Dylan's new form – rock and roll – was criticized by those members of the folk culture who considered themselves "purists." The "purists" viewed Dylan and the new culture as their property. At Newport and Forest Hills in the summer of 1965, he was booed by these people. He responded in song – "It's All Over Now, Baby Blue." Thus, Dylan's struggle, at this point, was at many levels. On the musical and cultural level he was attempting to break through the forms that had already become static and in fact useful to the bourgeoisie. Dylan, the other folk artists, and the whole folk culture held little threat for the system as long as they were apart from the masses. Dylan's response, however, was essentially the same response as the emerging New Left, i.e., to move away from elitism and toward youth or as the title of Dylan's first folk-rock album stated, "Bringing It All Back Home."

The significance of this break should not be underestimated. Even so dynamic a left movement as that centering around the Wobblies in the early 20th century was unable to effect a break with the traditional folk forms – they simply used the traditional forms and inserted new content. Take, for example, two of Joe Hill's most famous songs "Casey Jones and Union Scab" and "We Will Sing One Song" whose tunes were respectively the original railroad ballad "Casy Jones" and Steven Foster's "My Old Kentucky Home." (Cf. Folkways Records FP-2039)

What was Dylan able to accomplish by this move? This topic is worth much more than time and space allows; however, it will be worthwhile to mention at least a few things. First of all, Dylan was able to reach more people. Some of his songs, e.g., "Subterranean Homesick Blues," did get on the radio and more and more people became aware that Dylan was articulating the frustrations, problems, and views on society that these young people were experiencing daily. This, in itself, served a number of purposes. It carried through what had begun to develop in the later 50's; a sense of community. The restrictions imposed by the internalization of problems were being shattered. A genuine critical consciousness was developing. In this way, this music also transcended the mediocrity and plasticity that the rock of the late 50's and early 60's had become, which meant in practice that new forms and new artists – artists who spoke to these people and their experiences – would be required. It also meant that cooptation would

have to move to a new level.

It was not only what Dylan said, but also how he said it that characterizes another of his contributions to the development of social awareness. Marcuse has argued that our universe of discourse is closed and that one way of attempting to keep it closed is by a repressive language – a language that is positivistically based, static, abstract, and at almost every instance turns the abstract “concepts” of liberation into their opposites in practice. It is, therefore, clear that any culture which attempts to do away with the old will have as one of its major tasks the liberation of language. Here Dylan’s work was very important. He was able to take the abstract language that had almost no relation to anything and concretize it within the practical critical experience of an evolving youth culture. In almost every phrase in every song on “Highway 61” and “Bringing It All Back Home,” was jam-packed some sort of critical perspective. This type of critique was usually expressed in semi-surreal imagery, but to most of Dylan’s following, the world was surreal – bowling ball *were* coming down the road and knocking people off their feet; heart attack machines *were* being strapped across the shoulders of the people in this society; people who sang with their tongues of fire *did* gargle in the rat-race choir, etc. (“Maggie’s Farm,” “Desolation Row,” and “It’s All Right Ma, I’m Only Bleeding” are three excellent instances of the almost total indictment of a dehumanized society). In this context, it is interesting to note that Bobby Seale and Huey Newton were also able to relate the black experience to Dylan’s “Ballad of A Thin Man” (as Seale recounted in a recent issue of *Ramparts*). George Metefsky points out:

“[Dylan’s] surreal rock reached the mass of U.S. youth with a revolutionary message: escape from ‘rational, liberal discourse’ into real, superintense experience. Instead of slogans, he created poetry that people listened to again and again, straining after the seductive lyric until they freaked right out of middle-class consciousness into sudden understanding.⁽³⁶⁾”

Marcuse makes a similar point:

“The new sensibility and the new consciousness which are to project and guide . . . [social] reconstruction demand a new *language* to define and communicate the new ‘values’ (language in the wider sense which includes words, images, gestures, tones). It has been said that the degree to which a revolution is developing *qualitatively* different social conditions and relationships may perhaps be indicated by the development of a language: the rupture with the continuum of domination must also be a rupture with the vocabulary of domination.⁽³⁷⁾”

It is part of my thesis that Dylan played a major role in the development of this new awareness through a new *way* of language. This is not to say that Dylan is or should be aloof from criticism. Alan Berger in an article “Acid and Revolution” (*Connections*, Jan. 1967, Madison, Wisc.) contends that some of the critique that Dylan offers at this stage does not go far enough in terms of a totally radical perspective, and I agree. (e.g., “Though the rules of the road have been lodged/It’s *only* peoples’ games that you got to dodge” from “It’s All Right, Ma (I’m Only Bleeding).”) However, it does seem clear that one cannot overlook Dylan’s negation of the old “biology” and his attempt at establishing a new one.

With these breakthroughs evolved new and higher standards amongst the youth for the artists and performers. The music had to be relevant to the developing new man. Topical rock artists were more and more in demand. The Beatles and the Stones had to relate to the times. The Beatles focused on alienation (“Eleanor Rigby”), mysticism (“Within You Without You”) and fun (“Yellow Submarine”). The Stones were more pointed in their attacks – “Satisfaction” was an almost total social indictment; “Mother’s Little Helper” focused on the necessity for drugs as a buffer to an oppressive social system; and, “Paint It Black” ended in a kind of nihilism. In terms of capturing the sense of alienation, Simon and Garfunkle were perhaps the best (as far as that level of consciousness goes) – “Sounds of Silence,” “Most Peculiar Man,” etc. and their “Silent Night 7:00 News” portrayed some of the more apparent social contradictions. Even plastics such as Sonny and Cher and the Turtles had to tailor their work to these new forms.

Here again, however, the tension between a culture attempting to assert itself and a system attempting to destroy it by cooptation once more emerged. Just as good old rock and roll was subverted as much as possible in the 50's in order to further inculcate the consumer's mentality, it was now folk rock that became the vehicle for cooptation. The record companies were doing a grand old business, hip entrepreneurs were popping up all over, and many of the artists (either due to a lack of integrity or money) were now spokesmen for Coca-Cola, white levis, and rock and roll equipment. But since this was one side of a contradiction and since capitalistic greed knows no bounds, it was not infrequent that subversive ideas got sold. As Metefsky says in regard to Dylan:

"Dylan's use of profit-oriented media to spread this revolutionary message established both the dominant pattern of hip activism, and the foremost contradiction within the hip movement. Indeed, the contradiction between liberation and the use of capitalist media is the basic problem for any cultural revolution under capitalism.(38)"

The Rowntrees argue similarly about the youth culture in general:

"Viewed one way, 'youth culture' is a merchandisers' invention and a vehicle of false consciousness. However, it also offers support for many alienated youth that may make it possible for them to translate their disaffection into open revolt.(39)"



OTHER DEVELOPMENTS – LOVE AND HAIGHT

Bourgeois culture was producing its own potential grave diggers. As cooptation and consumerization escalated, so did the social realities – Vietnam, black revolt, etc. and consequently so did the political activism of the young. Underground newspapers which had begun on an almost total drug trip (EVO, Oracle, etc.) were not only springing up all over the place but were also involved in a much more serious kind of politics. Along with them, anti-war organizing, demonstrating and draft resistance grew. The blacks were getting their shit together and were being supported by white youth. More frequent and more critical attacks, both theoretical and practical, were being directed toward educational institutions – college and high school. And, more generally, a *new life style* was coming into being – one that was antithetical to the bourgeois

massified life style. This life style manifested itself in many ways: in dress – a looser clothing style nowhere as restrictive as the old; in appearance – long hair, beards, no make-up, etc.; and more importantly in behavior – new, more human, social relations really became the basis for *praxis*. Much of this “feeling for the other”, however, lacked a good social analysis and consequently emerged in abstractions – “Love” and “Flower Power.”

This ideology reached its apex in San Francisco during the 1967 “Summer of Love” in the Haight-Ashbury community. The lack of good analysis made for a community filled with contradictions. On the one hand, there was the liberating life style. People were trying to live a kind of utopian socialism – communal sharing, lack of private property – based on the new, more human social relations. There was also a refusal to perform alienated labor (keep in mind that these young people were rejecting the positions offered them in “the middle class”). People were dropping out of “straight” society. In this sense, the “new sensibility” was emerging:

“The social expression of the liberated work instinct is *cooperation*, which, grounded in solidarity, directs the organization of the realm of necessity and the development of the realm of freedom.(40)”

But, on the other hand, there were a lot of problems with the scene. One was the view that all one had to do was get his head together and all the problems would be solved. To an extent introspection, self-analysis, etc. were all necessary as a means to a more pervasive social end. But, for many the means were the end. This resulted in the heavy use of drugs (again, not the right drugs used intelligently as a means to greater social awareness, but only drugs used as an end in themselves) in the attempt to have instant freedom. Nicolaus makes the point that drugs also served (and still do serve) as a means for the promotion of internal group solidarity.(41) I would agree in the cases of pot and perhaps acid, but many of the Haight people graduated very readily to harder drugs such as heroin and speed. *Dealers* introjected the capitalist mentality and bought low and sold high, making plenty of money off their “brothers.” In practice drugs and the drug ideology also served as an excellent means of controlling potential dissidents (as they have done in the ghetto). In a certain sense the *users* also introjected the bourgeois mentality by attempting to solve their social problems through drugs. Their parents fought alienation, oppression, and frustration with alcohol, tranquilizers and sleeping pills. They did it with LSD, speed and heroin.(42)

These contradictions within the “love movement” were indicative of at least a bad if not a false analysis of society. Although most of those involved held that the society is one way or another was badly in need of change, the connections to capitalism were usually not made, thereby resulting in a false positive – love. It was assumed that exemplary gentle love-like behavior could change material conditions. As if throwing flowers at Rockefeller would automatically cause him to give up his oil interests to the people of Latin America. This was brotherhood in the abstract since it failed to take into account the historical conditions which could have served as the practical guide for the direction of these newly developing social relations. The decline of the Haight and the growth of the New Left has, in practice, educated masses of young people to this fact. Frank Zappa and the Mothers of Invention, while themselves more cynical and nihilistic than consciously radical, did provide in song a critique of this notion of love in the abstract and the whole Haight ideology on *We’re Only In It For the Money*:

“... *psychedelic dungeons cropping up on every street . . . I will love everyone. I will love the police as they kick the shit out of me on the street.*”

In addition, there was no doubt that the bourgeoisie loved love and flower power since they were very easily turned into a product. Flowers and love became styles – in dress, art, etc. Auto makers put out a car with flowers on it right from the factory. The plastic hippie was created – from \$38.00 sandals to the \$15.00 leather headband. Having done their job for the Indian upper classes, Maharishis and Swamis were brought in to sell inner peace for \$5 per meditation. The Haight and East Village were turned inside out and instead of becoming real peoples’ communities, they became hip tourist

Inner Peace...\$5 per...



attractions where the "hip boutiques" could fleece hippies and tourists alike. Some communal activities did meet with some success — primarily the underground newspapers, communications collectives, Digger Free Stores for food and clothing, etc., but on the whole, most were short-lived. This is not to say that everyone was immediately coopted. On the contrary, many of those who were among the original community organizers were able to see through this and fought against it. The cooptation was aimed at the new people who hadn't at that time achieved the level of consciousness that the others had. In total opposition to this bourgeois destruction of the scene, the most socially conscious of the hippies did a beautiful thing: they declared "The Death of the Hip" and marched through the Haight with a coffin into which were thrown bells, flowers, etc. A new level of social consciousness was beginning to emerge. For many this meant the beginning of radical politics — i.e., the understanding that *social change does not come out of the stem of a flower*. For others, it meant a renewed cynicism and a desire to start anew. These people felt that the big city environment had caused the failure so they split to start communes in the country. (As an aside, it might be worthwhile to mention that some of these commune experiments, e.g., in New Mexico are now being funded by the big foundations, primarily for two reasons — 1) to get rid of the potential dissidents; and 2) to create conflict between the poor Indians and Mexican-Americans on the one hand and hippies on the other, since the former have no land and are forced to live a more uptight existence which causes them to view hippies and their "liberating life style" as elite bourgeois.)

The San Francisco music scene pretty much reflected these kinds of contradictions. On the one hand the hip entrepreneur developed (the theater managers, the record company managers and the liaison people), and advertising took on the hip style and bought-off many of the more creative film makers, writers, artists, and musicians. But on the other hand, something new to the rock and roll scene developed -- peoples' music. This culture was struggling to maintain itself. Therefore, while the bourgeoisie catered to the plastic hippie at \$5 a seat in some downtown theater, the peoples' groups played free in the park. They played the music that was totally relevant to these peoples' lives. They played *blues*; they played *head music*; and, they played *political music* because these were all parts of the day-to-day community experience. Of course, the police busts came time and time again (and Columbia records has the audacity to put out a record ad which says "The man can't bust our music," when in fact Columbia is *the man*) which served to educate people more to the reality and not the ideal. The musical groups -- Country Joe and the Fish, The Jefferson Airplane, The Grateful Dead, etc. also lived communally, shared their incomes, etc. They were also very involved with the student movement wing of the New Left culture and frequently performed at university rallies and anti-war demonstrations.

The music and culture evolving out of this scene served to break down the alienation between audience and artist (since the artists were the people and the people were artists in the sense that they lived art. Groups like the SF Mime Troupe even went further to involve in their street theater people who were in no way involved with the culture). Along with these developments and the rise of black nationalism, came the appreciation of black music, as black. Blues singers such as Howlin' Wolf, Muddy Waters, BB King, *et. al.* who had been around for many years were now being listened to and imitated, primarily, I think, for two reasons -- 1) because of the honesty in the music, and 2) to extend a hand to a culture that had struggled and survived despite the many years of cultural, racial and economic exploitation. In this sense the white youth saw in the black blues singer a brother waging the same kind of struggle he was waging.

"No matter how many people exploit it, black culture, is a revolutionary peoples' culture, because it developed in opposition to and bitter knowledge of capitalism, and because it enabled blacks (unlike the American Indian) to survive cultural imperialism and grow as a cultural entity(43)"



When in 1968 Dick Clark (American Bandstand) observed the new dance, musical and life styles he remarked, "This music is subversive; these hippies want to change society. It's not like the nice clean music of the fifties." Although the Haight failed and the love balloon burst, that cultural movement served a tremendous educational purpose for the New Left. As Nicolaus puts it:

"[the] style and appeal of hippie subculture may well fade away, but the vision of a practical culture in which man is free from labor, free to begin at last the historic task of constructing truly human relationships, probably has been permanently launched and will continue to haunt capitalist society as the spectre of its own repressed potentialities.(44)"

THE PRESENT SCENE

There is no doubt that the present level of social awareness among youth is far above that of the 50's. The Rowntrees make a comparison between the communal aspect of the present culture and the Beat Scene of the 50's:

"The communities also offer laboratories for the development of communal, life-affirming forms of living, eating, sharing in, and participating in public activities. Contrast the bouyancy of contemporary youth culture with the nihilism, individualism and withdrawal of the 1950's.(45)"

Of course this culture is still engaged in a struggle — a struggle against consumerization, cooptation and neo-romantic ideology. It has been through this struggle that this greater social consciousness has emerged. This emerging consciousness is presently manifesting itself in many ways. There is first of all the ever-growing radical community, i.e., a community composed of people who are transforming themselves through their social practice and at the same time attempting to transform the society at large. The students/hippies have been able to ally themselves with other members of the New Left — workers, blacks, army organizers, etc. — through *both* their respective cultural *and* political practices. This growing consciousness is also reflected more precisely in the present music, much of which relates directly to the social practice of both the artist and the audience. To cite a few examples — Gordon Lightfoot's "Black Day In July," Bob Seeger's "2 plus 2 Is On My Mind," the Earth Opera's "American Eagle Tragedy," Credence Clearwater's "Bad Moon Rising," and Bobby Darin's (!) "Simple Song of Freedom" sung by Tim Hardin. Listening to almost any black radio station will indicate that black music has also taken on a new relevance. Most of the above music has been heard on Top 40 radio. The "underground music" only heard on LP's and some FM stations goes beyond this to overt political and social critiques.

This distinction between Top 40 and underground or "schlock rock" vs. "good rock" is understood by most members of the youth culture. As emphasized earlier, they are demanding more from the artists (this will perhaps explain part of the reason for the tremendous changes undergone by people like Bobby Darin — from "Splish Splash" to "Simple Song of Freedom" — and Dion — from "Run-Around Sue" to "Abraham, Martin, and John"). As Tony Taylor of the rock group Grafitti states:

"A few years ago people would request bubble gum music that the groups wouldn't dig playing. Now they're asking for the Cream's stuff — good music.(46)"

The artists therefore have had to undergo changes in order to keep up with the developing culture. The Dave Clark Five faded but Dylan, the Beatles, and the Stones have changed and stayed with these cultural developments.

The Beatles and the Stones are interesting cases in point. They have both evolved dialectically against and with the cultural and political movements. From a heavy dependence on 50's rock, they moved to greater social content, to drugs and finally to the statement of a quasi-political ideology (the forms of the music also requiring drastic

changes along the way). For the Beatles this ideology is "Give Peace a Chance" through non-violence and love. For the Stones it's "Street Fighting Man." The album "Beggar's Banquet" is a fine musical statement of contemporary politics. A song like "Factory Girl" indicates not only a tremendous development in both form and content as compared to the lack of political content in the 50's, but also a tremendous development in the Stones' own artistic history (e.g., "Stupid Girl," etc.)

This type of development, as I have maintained, is due in great part to the dialectical relationship between the artist and the cultural/political milieu. The sensitive artist is being led by the cultural/political movements and he, in turn, is in the creative vanguard of these movements. To paraphrase Hegel, the artist comprehends his times in thought. Thus, it is no surprise that much of today's music is directly relevant to the most intense period of political activism in the last three decades.



If it is the case, thus, that the cultural movement is giving direction to the artist and vice versa, what kinds of directions for the movement seem to be emerging? First and most obvious is the thrust of the culture itself. If mass culture does serve both to control man and to direct his needs (i.e., man on and off the job), then it must be this bourgeois culture, as Metefsky claims, that must be smashed in order to awaken people to the repressive reality of the social system. This has been successful (to the extent that it has overcome bourgeois cooptation, consumerization, etc.) as far as many working class young people are concerned — primarily those in suburban high schools, the universities, those working in the service industries, street people more and more from blue collar backgrounds, and the increasingly, draftees and enlisted men in the armed forces. Through their cultural and social practice they have been able to develop a social critique and attempt to implement change on the basis of it. Witness the rapid growth of coffee houses near army bases, the extensive use of marijuana by the troops, as well as much more developed forms of struggle. Also, it is encouraging that many young factory workers were in attendance at Woodstock. The second point is more specific: exactly where should this cultural thrust be concentrated? Although many of the new working class youth are developing revolutionary potential, it remains the case that these people do not yet comprise the masses of American people whose lives are still controlled and manipulated by the cultural apparatus. If the cultural apparatus controlled by the bourgeoisie can be smashed at this level, then the real possibilities for a social transformation will emerge.

“... the disorderly, uncivil, farcical, artistic desublimation of culture constitutes an essential element of radical politics: of the subverting forces in transition.(47)”

I believe that some of the contemporary artists most sensitive to the cultural/political climate have been attempting to practice cultural subversion – The Rolling Stones by putting “mass man” back into perspective (in the whole of *Beggar's Banquet* especially “Salt of the Earth”); the Band by breaking down the abstract categories associated with “mass man” such as Southerner, Northerner, Worker, Soldier, etc. by singing very sensitively about human beings as real people with real histories (e.g., “The Night They Drove Old Dixie Down”); and, finally, Dylan, who has extended his hand as a representative of a particular new working class background – the college educated urban youth – to other working class people young and old, and to American roots – country people, Johnny Cash, etc. (as in *John Wesley Harding* and *Nashville Skyline*). These thrusts are taking place at a time of intensified social crisis when bourgeois remedies are increasingly failing.

Thus, a two-pronged attack both on and off the job can be made. One of the ways that connections can be made between the same kind of repression on and off the job is through the new culture. For example, a New Left organizer recently told of his experiences organizing in a predominantly white, ‘blue collar’ working class neighborhood. He found himself stymied and thwarted until he discovered that both he and the people in the community really dug Dylan’s *Nashville Skyline*. The excitement of this common experience provided the catalyst that helped get his organizing project off the ground. The insurgent culture serves as a good way of bringing together disparate social forces – youth, different sectors within the new working class, lumpen people, blacks, etc. Many of those involved in the culture are already transforming themselves in and through their practice.

“The new sensibility has become, by this very token, *praxis*: it emerges in the struggle against violence and exploitation where this struggle is waged for essentially new ways and forms of life: negation of the entire Establishment, its morality, culture; affirmation of the right to build a society in which the abolition of poverty and toil terminates in a universe where the sensuous, the playful, the calm, and the beautiful become forms of existence and thereby the *Form* of the society itself.(48)”

Marcuse is talking about the emergence of the New Historical Subject who is transforming himself right down to his socially conditioned infrastructure. The new culture thus serves a negative function by smashing the old cultural forms which only serve to dominate man. This culture thereby emerges as a new positive force in practice by offering new and liberating cultural forms and ways of being. One of the tasks of the New Left should be to practice and spread in our own day-to-day activities this “new sensibility” with the aim of subverting the repressive culture and building a movement to transform the repressive society at large. I have tried to indicate the very important role that rock culture has played in the historical development of this social consciousness and new sensibility. Woody Guthrie put it this way: “Our songs are singing history.”

FOOTNOTES

1. David Gross, “Toward A Radical Theory of Culture,” *Radical America*, Nov.–Dec. 1968, p.9.
2. Stuart B. Ewen, “Advertising As Social Production,” *Radical America*, May–June 1969, p.42.
3. Herbert Marcuse, *Essay on Liberation*, Beacon Press, 1969, p.52.
4. Herbert Marcuse, *One Dimensional Man*, Beacon Press, 1964, p.252.
5. Ewen, op. cit., p.45.
6. George Metefsky, “Right On Culture Freeks!,” *Kaleidoscope*, Madison, Wisc., Sept. 1969.

7. John and Margaret Rowntree, "The Political Economy of Youth," REP, p.9.
8. Billie Holiday's autobiography, (*Lady Sings the Blues*, Lancer, 1956) is a moving chronicle of this type of exploitation.
9. This practice still continues. Jesse Fuller's "San Francisco Bay Blues" is a more up-to-date example. As popular as the song was, as of two years ago he had received no money for it.
10. Ewen, op. cit., p.49.
11. Jonathan Eisen, *The Age of Rock*, Introduction, p. xv.
12. Eye, Oct. 1968, p.51.
13. Herbert Marcuse, "The Affirmative Character of Culture," *Negations*, Beacon Press, 1968. p.110.
14. Ewen, op. cit., p.49.
15. Eldridge Cleaver, *Soul On Ice*, Ramparts, 1968, p.195.
16. Ibid., p.81.
17. Marcuse, *One Dimensional Man*, p.772.
18. Eye, op. cit., p.52.
19. I'm not sure of the exact title of this latter song.
20. Almost all the Coasters' songs were written by Leiber and Stoller.
21. Most of these songs can be heard on the album "Chuck Berry's Golden Decade" on Chess.
22. The Rowntrees, op. cit., p.20.
23. Marcuse, *Essay on Liberation*, p.47.
24. Edgar Marin, "The Case of James Dean," *Modern Culture and the Arts*, McGraw-Hill, 1967, p.450.
25. Ibid., p.459.
26. From the song "Naked If I Want To" on Moby Grape's first album.
27. See James Gilbert's *Writers and Partisans*, Wiley & Sons, 1969.
28. Carl Oglesby in *Evergreen*, Feb. 1969.
29. It should be mentioned in fairness however that two strains of "standard" rock of this period did retain some of the integrity of the earlier 50's - the music of Phil Spector (though he served the bourgeoisie well as "America's First Teenage Millionaire" - see Tom Wolfe's *Kandy Kololed Tangerine Flake Streamline Baby*) and the music of Motown. The only reason I mention these is that it was this music plus the best of the earlier fifties that the Beatles, Stones, and Dylan were into and much of their earlier music (not Dylan) was almost direct copying of this music.
30. Martin Sklar, "On the Proletarian Revolution and the End of Political-Economic Society," *Radical America*, May-June 1969, p.19.
31. Lawrence Goldman, "Bobby Dylan - Folk-Rock Hero," in *The Age of Rock*, ed. Jonathan Eisen. p.210.
32. Bob Dylan, *Broadside No. 35*, Nov. 1963.
33. Antonio Gramsci, "Marxism and Modern Culture," in *The Modern Prince and Other Writings*, p.85.
34. The Rowntrees, op. cit., p.27.
35. *The New Yorker*, Oct. 1964, pp.86-88.
36. Metefsky, op. cit.
37. Marcuse, *Essay on Liberation*, p.33.
38. Metefsky, op. cit.
39. The Rowntrees, op. cit., p.23.
40. Marcuse, *Essay on Liberation*, p.91.
41. Martin Nicolaus, "The Contradiction of Advanced Capitalist Society And Its Resolution," REP, p.7.
42. Theodore Roszak in his article "Capsules of Salvation" (*Nation*, Vol. 206, 1968) has a good discussion of this particular phenomenon.
43. Metefsky, op. cit.
44. Nicolaus, op. cit., p.8.

45. The Rowntrees, op. cit., p.24.
 46. *Jazz and Pop Magazine*, Dec. 1968.
 47. Marcuse, *Essay on Liberation*, p.48.
 48. *Ibid.*, p.24.

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"TO CREATE AT LONG LAST
 A SITUATION WHICH GOES
 BEYOND THE POINT
 OF NO RETURN"

Ho Chi Minh: Good-Bye and Welcome

Ho Chi Minh!

*Stong men in Hanoi bend double in sorrow
to see you go, and we in America who love
you for your valor against our own violators,
we would-be guerrillas weep in anger
on the established pavements of September
where partisans like hordes of leaves will soon
sweep black and red against the troops of death.*

*How beautiful are those who from the mountains
to the plains walk among the people bending
low over rice in the purple dusk or over
the heavy morning millstones:
bringing news of peace in war
they show upright souls singing like a hawk's eyes,
and a steel that flashes fire
When it strikes the flint of obstruction.*

For two thousands

*For two thousand years leeches big as a malign sky
sucked up the red land, bleaching the people of blood,
and the clatter and dust of foreign armies
clouded the rosy sunrise in the east.*

*Once the people roused their slumbering thunder
and crunched the imperial trumpets of Kublai Khan –
then the white man twisted their bodies into crops
and whores and clerks for the shops,
and their minds
were stopped by the poppied chalice of the Christians.*

*Ho! You came with a plan,
a party, and above all affection
and unshakeable love the people:
forsaking all the pleasures and plucked plumage
of pride and preferment, career and office,
you stripped to the naked necessities of war
and gave yourself to the fatherland and the revolution.*

*Now that the wide-sweeping guerrilla motion of dawn
closes in on that dark room of gambling men
who play games with peoples to pack their pockets and paunches –
now that the steely trap of peace grows bright
encircling the Cyclopean rage*

more

*of American darkness with its trail of bloody stripes
of air raids and its hemorrhaging stars
and the exploded hopes of empire's horoscope –
let the people everywhere take heart
who have like Ho been heroes,
hearing the far sweet music of their freedom,
marching to destiny's drums.*

*For passing, he remains:
The Old Man lives in children,
the jungle fighter tenderly gazes out of the eyes
of peasants embracing their own rice sheaves
and workers tending their own hearths and their roses
and soldiers hearing Ho's step by their side.*

*Now as those wise eyes like a hawk's are shut
in each heart Ho smiles
and every niece and nephew though he weeps
knows that his spirit keeps
alive where revolutionaries die,
alive where comrades defend the fatherland,
alive where elders guard unborn tomorrows
alive where youthful dreams can pass to deed
and the soul waits not like a dry spring unfulfilled
not knows the gnawing need
for rice or power or speech or fellow man.*

*One spring the doves will nest
among peach blossoms of the southern delta,
and the hawks fly back and forth
over the high and liberated mountains.
The April petals of dawn
will break gently over the sleeping children
who will rise to sing.
Men and women will put love and poetry
into their works and words,
and the sun will smile
happily like our white-haired Ho.*

*Good-bye, Old Man!
Welcome forever to the human race! –*

*Some things don't change,
some hawks will not be tamed,
some heroes never die.*

by Howard L. Parsons

Stand Still Suitcase, till I Find My Clothes

PAUL A. GARON

The impetus for this article was the knowledge that the basic facts about the blues, and the working class culture of which they are a part, are obscure to most people. While it is not my purpose here to give a history of black people in America, I'm sure that much can be learned from the blues singers, their songs, and their music. No attempt will be made to construct a concrete theoretical framework -- it has been attempted before, with little success; but much that is significant about the lives of the black people, in rural areas as well as in our large cities, is manifest in the blues.

In 1890, four-fifths of black America lived in rural areas. By 1950, less than one-fifth lived in rural areas -- the remaining four-fifths lived in towns and large cities, South and North. It is no accident that the number of rural blues recordings has progressively diminished. Indeed, if there was not a newly initiated youthful white audience to buy many of the records now being produced, contemporary country blues records would be almost non-existent. Almost all blues records bought by black people today are distinctively urban performances. The blues have a history, however, and it is my intention to investigate earlier recordings to see what is revealed about black people in urban and rural America.

Before attempting any analysis of the lyrics, it may be best to supply a few working definitions and/or general descriptions of the music. What is meant by 'blues' can be discussed in general terms only: the variability of styles from region to region makes it very difficult to supply a specifically formed definition. The terms 'country' (or 'rural') and 'urban' will be discussed later -- hopefully their definitions will become apparent through examples.

In attempting to establish a criterion for what was and was not to be included in their discography of all blues and gospel records made prior to 1943, Dixon and Godrich could only state that all performances were distinctively 'Negroid'. 'In the last resort,' they said, 'the whole listing itself is a definition of what we mean by blues and gospel.' (1) One can offer a general description of a typical blues, however. Usually, it is played in 4/4 time, with 12 bars divided into three sections, with a general rhyme scheme of AAB (the first two lines being identical and the third being different, but rhyming with the first two). The third line usually resolves the theme stated by the first two lines. Blues songs are not usually narrative, but they can be. The harmonic structure of a typical 12-bar blues is as follows:

1234	56	78	9 10	11 12
I	IV	I	V (IV)	I
Tonic	Sub-dominant	Tonic	Dominant 7th (Sub-dominant)	Tonic

In the above example, if the blues was played in the key of E, the Tonic chord (I) would be E, the Sub-dominant chord (IV) would be A, and the Dominant chord (V), usually made a 7th in blues, would be B7, or a B chord with a 7th added to the chord. The substitution of the sub-dominant chord (IV) for the dominant chord (V) in the tenth bar is almost always done in urban, or city, blues. Although a 12-bar structure is usual, many blues are based on an eight or sixteen bar structure. The flattening of the 3rd, 5th, and 7th notes of the scale is a characteristic of blues. It must be remembered that the above description is intended as a guide and not as a hard and fast rule. Some songs will contain only a few of the above characteristics and may still be described as blues.

Although this article is not the place for a discussion of the origin of blues, it can be stated with some assurance that blues existed, in the country and in the fields, perhaps in a slightly different form, long before they were ever recorded. That the first distinctively black vocalist (Mamie Smith, 'That Thing Called Love', Okeh 4113, 2/14/20) and the first blues vocal (Mamie Smith, 'Crazy Blues', Okeh 4169, 8/10/20) were definitely urban, and that the country blues went unrecorded until 1924 (Papa Charlie Jackson, 'Original Lawdy Blues', Paramount 12219) is, more than anything else, a testimonial to the record companies' reluctance to risk entering any field that had not hitherto been explored (or exploited).

While there are obvious reasons why a given blues singer may not be representative of the black population, there are also a number of reasons why a blues singer may not even be representative of the blues singing population. Invariably, blues singers of the 1920s, when interviewed today, mention 'great' blues singers of their day who never made any records and whose names are completely unfamiliar to the most ardent blues fans, scholars, etc. For example, Yank Rachell is a mandolin and guitar player who recorded with Sleep John Estes in the '20s and who made records under his own name in the '20s, '30s and '40s, as well as the '60s. Besides the men he recorded with, he remembered many excellent musicians from his early days: Willie Newbern, Walter Franklin, Jess Rawles, Sharron Hayley ('best guitarist in the area'), and Son Goss. Of these men, only Newbern ever got on record, and he only made three rather rare records for Okeh in 1929. The rest of them, some perhaps better musicians than any of the recorded artists from that area, are lost forever. There are many reasons for this. Many men did not want to record (some were too busy, some were too lazy, while others felt that recordings would make their jealously guarded repertoires 'public domain'). There were those who did want to record, but who did not know how to go about it. It was necessary to be on hand and available when record companies sent their field units or talent scouts to the area, and of course, many who auditioned failed to qualify. This often meant nothing more than failing to please the manager of the session. While many fine performers did not

appear on records, for reasons mentioned above, the style and quality of recorded blues was certainly varied, and there were many excellent blues performances that were recorded.

There were many musical differences between those first recorded urban blues and their country counterparts. More instruments have been employed in the urban blues, while the role of each instrument became more specialized. Urban blues have been louder, often amplified in later years, and the number of available rhythms and tempos is larger. The tempo chosen for a composition was much more rigidly adhered to in the city than in the country. In his book *Urban Blues*, Charles Keil states that the city blues have

...a broader variation of structures...(a slight increase in the use of eight-, sixteen-, and twenty-four-bar patterns and much greater use of tags, codas, breaks, vamps... analogous to what jazzmen call the bridge or release in standard popular tunes...)(2)

The lyrics become more narrative in city blues as opposed to the links of couplets (sometimes unconnected in specific thematic content) so often used in country blues. Within any given composition, the style and structure of a country blues can become so diverse that urban bluesmen, trained to rigidly adhere to a given structure, find it exceedingly difficult to accompany country artists.

Keil explains why the early city blues were structured as they were: A three-minute time limit was necessary if the performance was going to be issued on a ten-inch 78 rpm record; the companies wanted the music to be as predictable as possible so as to reach a wider audience; and the companies worked under the theory (still prevalent today) that if a song was a success, another song done in the same pattern would also be a success.(3)

The country bluesman, on the other hand, was usually not a musician professionally. He played for his friends, he played to beg for money, or he played for country suppers and dances. The role of blues as a dance music is revealed by several of the artists' remembering certain songs not by whether they were blues or ballads, but by whether they were waltzes, reels, or cakewalks. It was to the advantage of the country bluesman to have a large repertoire of songs with different rhythms and tempos, just as it was to his advantage to have his songs run longer than three minutes in order to satisfy the demands of his listeners and the dancers. This is contrasted with the strictures applied to urban blues mentioned in the preceding paragraph. As would be expected, many country artists and groups had difficulty performing within the limitations (time, etc.) established by the recording companies.

Within the country blues, there are many stylistic divisions and variations that can be broken down, generally, and classified on a regional basis. Most of the descriptive terms that follow apply to music that is produced principally by guitars.



The Mississippi blues, commonly referred to as the Delta sound, is characterized by drones; fretting is often done with a bottle-neck or knife blade; the sound is heavy and rough, often fantastically driving and powerful as exemplified by the 'Midnight Shimmy' style (Garfield Akers, 'Cottonfield Blues', Vocalion 1442, 1929; see also William Harris's 'Bullfrog Blues', Champion 15614, 1928, or Charley Patton's 'Moon Going Down', Paramount 13014, 1930).

Texas guitar playing is light; it is usually more sophisticated and dextrous than that which comes from the Delta, and it is characterized by less chording and more single note runs (as in any of Blind Lemon Jefferson's recordings for Paramount; see also Lightnin' Hopkins' 78 issues -- Hopkins LPs are often more Rhythm and Blues than anything else, but careful selection will yield excellent examples of Texas guitar style).

The East Coast sound shows a more marked influence by white musicians (hillbilly, usually); the sound is sweeter, and can be highly rhythmic, as in certain North Carolina performances (e.g., the guitars of Buddy Moss and Blind Boy Fuller on 'Oh Lordy Mama, No. 2', Oriole 6-04-56, 1936). Many Georgia artists, especially those from Atlanta, played 12-string guitars, and indeed, most 12-string guitarists that were recorded seem to be from that city. Many of the Atlanta musicians commonly use a chord pattern based on a sixth, with the guitar tuned to an open chord; to the experienced ear, these Georgia bluesmen are easily identifiable. (See any of the many recordings of the Georgia artists Barbecue Bob (Hicks), Charlie Lincoln, Willie Baker, and Blind Willie McTell, all of whom recorded during the twenties.)

As migrants carried their music to urban areas, a new subdivisional process arose. In the 1950s, the modern, country-influenced, amplified bands of Chicago (Muddy Waters, Howling Wolf) were much more powerful and much more reminiscent of the Delta than were the bands of Detroit. Not nearly as rough-textured, and much more sophisticated, were the big-chest tone voices that gave Kansas City bluesmen the name 'shouters' (e.g. Joe Turner). And Memphis, which had been during the twenties the center for activity for the country jug bands (while Louisville was the center for the more sophisticated jazz-type jug bands) became the center for a pattern of song structure that BB King is commonly credited with originating and popularizing. This single-note guitar style, often using a large band for support, pervaded every urban area that had a sizable black population.

The basic outline of the changes that occurred from region to region, from country to city, from the twenties to the fifties, presents many difficulties to the interested observer. For example, what were the differences between the lives of the Mississippi and the Georgia bluesmen that produced the differences in their music? Was the result due only to a difference in exposure and influence? A few scholars have suggested that the hardships of the black man in Mississippi produced the more 'soulful' sound of the Delta. All that can be said with any assurance on this point is that the Mississippi bluesmen were less influenced by white musicians than were the East Coast bluesmen.

More about the lives of the singers, and the differences between city and country life, is manifest in the lyrics of the songs.(4) Just as we have seen that the structure of a song is less rigidly determined in the country than in the city, we can also note that the lyrics of recorded country blues were often improvised on the spot. The singers fumble, mispronounce, and forget much of their material.

Within the country blues, there are variations in the lyrics from region to region. Although the term 'rider' (lover) was used by singers from all areas, the term 'pharoh' (for girl friend) is confined to use by a few singers from Memphis and from the Delta. Yank Rachell ('Little Sarah', Victor 38595, 1929, Memphis) sang:

'I've got a little pharoh, she weigh about 90 pounds. (2x, i.e. twice)
But her mama and her paper sure won't 'low me 'round.'

A nonsense word, heavy with 'obscene' implications, the word 'mamlish' was used almost exclusively by Alabama singers (Ed Bell, Walter Hawkins). Ed Bell ('Mamlish Blues', Paramount 12524, 1927), in speaking of his ability to provide sexual pleasure, sang:

'Must I sell it or keep it for my, keep it for my mamlish self?'

With culture contact, even through phonograph records, as a means of diffusion of the various patterns of song structure and lyric composition, isolation was complete enough to keep such words as 'mamlish' from finding their way into the repertoires of singers from other areas.

In many ways, the general themes of urban blues were similar to those of country blues. There are specific differences, however. Before Paramount recorded Papa Charlie Jackson, the record companies were reluctant to issue country blues because they felt the market was limited. It was limited, of course, but not nearly as much as they thought. Records by such city singers as Bessie Smith far outsold even the most popular country artists. In short, the artists performed for different audiences of different sizes. Although it would be ridiculous for Bessie Smith to mention someone's name in a song, other than a public figure, and expect her audience to respond with a feeling of familiarity, many country blues artists sang songs with intensely personal allusion and imagery -- imagery and allusion that did not escape their small, regional audience. From a 1929 recording (Charley Patton, 'Tom Rushen Blues', Paramount 12877):

I lay down last night, (?-----?). 2x
When I woke up, Tom Rushen was shaking me.

Got up this morning, Tom Day was standing 'round. (2x)
If he lose his office, he'll be running from town to town.'

Tom Rushen was the sheriff of a small Mississippi town, Merigold; Tom Day was the sheriff before Rushen. An urban audience on Chicago's South

Side would certainly consider the reference to be obscure, and would not appreciate it nearly as much as the Mississippi residents of the Merigold area.

In 1941, playing in a country style, Yank Rachell ('38 Pistol Blues', Bluebird 8732) sang:

I had a little trouble way down at Tom Wilson's place. (2x)
It was just below Al Rawles, down past Mays place.'

Tom Wilson ran a roadhouse near Brownsville, Tennessee; Yank was pinned against the wall by a man with a pistol. (5) Apparently, Al Rawles, an undertaker whose name was familiar to most black people in that part of Tennessee, had his funeral parlor near Wilson's roadhouse.

Indeed, the lyrics often became so personal that every item in the text of a song could be traced to a specific incident in the singer's life. Sleepy John Estes ('Little Laura Blues', Bluebird 8871, 1941) sang:

'She dreamed she had loved me
Held me close to her breast
She told Jimmy that much of the dream
But she wouldn't tell the rest.
Little Laura was a dreamer...'

Laura was an early girl friend of Sleepy John's, and the 'Jimmy' mentioned in the song was James 'Yank' Rachell, (6) Estes' partner for his Victor recording sessions in the late twenties. The sophistication and anonymity of the city made such personal references obsolete and meaningless in urban blues.

The working life of the urban black man was reflected in his songs, just as was the working life of the rural black man. Peetie Wheatstraw (also called 'The Devil's Son in Law'; in reality, William Bunch) recorded nearly 200 songs in the twenties and thirties. Using his piano, a guitar, and an occasional harmonica or trumpet (Jonah Jones for one or two sessions!), he sang of the urban life of the St. Louis ghetto. In the middle of his career, the depression struck, hitting hardest at those already oppressed by poverty. Jobs were exceedingly difficult to find, impossible for many. In a 1936 blues ('No Good Woman', Decca 7170), done with another blues singer, Bumble Bee Slim, Wheatstraw sang:

'She was my woman, I gave her my last dime. (2x)
During the bad depression, when change was hard to find.'

The Works Project Administration (WPA) and related relief programs brought some aid to the black people, those most victimized by (and those most distant from) the 1929 stock market crash. The attitude of the black people to the potential benefits of the programs was ambiguous, to say the least. In 1934, Walter Roland ('CWA Blues', Melotone 13103) sang about one of the earlier relief programs:

'My woman told me to 'get up this morning, go get yourself a job,
I want you to try and stick here, while the time is hard'.
I hollered 'Hey woman, are you going my way.'
Says 'I believe I'll go try to get me a job working for the CWA.'

She told me folks going around here talking about they got jobs for sale,
If you want a good job, just go down to that county jail,
And holler, etc.

You know that CWA will pay you \$9.60 a week,
You don't have to worry about that welfare something to eat.
You just holler, etc.

I told my woman this morning about half past three,
I said 'Wake up early and come go with me.'
I said 'Hey woman, do you want to go my way?
'Cause I got a job working on that CWA.'

You know I want to take my woman down to that welfare store,
I'm gonna carry her this time and I won't have to carry her no more.
And I holler, etc.'

Another singer recorded an anti-WPA blues (Casey Bill Weldon, 'WPA Blues',
Vocalion 03186, 1936):

'Everyone's working in this town and it's bothering me night and day. (2x)
It's that homewrecking crew that works for the WPA.

The landlord come this morning, knocked on my door,
He asked me wasn't I gonna pay my rent no more.
He said 'You have to move, if you can't pay.'
And then he turned and walked slowly away.
So I'll have to find some other place to stay.
They're gonna tear my house down, that crew from the WPA.

I went to the relief station, I didn't have a cent.
They said 'Stay on where you're stayin', you don't have to pay no rent.'
But when I got home, they was tacking a notice on my door,
'This house is condemned, you can't live here no more.'
So a notion struck me, I'd better be on my way.
They gonna tear my house down, that crew from the WPA.

Started out next morning, I put a lock on my door.
I swore I wouldn't move, 'cause I had no place to go.
The real estate people, they all done got sore.
They won't rent to no relief clients no more.
So I know I had to walk the streets night and day.
Cause that mean wrecking crew's coming, from the WPA.

A notion struck me, I thought I'd stay a day or two,

But I soon found out that that wouldn't do.
Early next morning while I was laying in my bed,
I heard a mighty rumbling and brick come tumbling down on my head.
So I had to start ducking and dodging and be on my way.
They were tearing my house down on me, that crew from the WPA.'

Several years later, the same singer was to sing another song about the WPA
(Casey Bill Weldon, 'Casey Bill's New WPA Blues', Vocalion 03930, 1937):

'My baby told me this morning, just about the break of day. (2x)
'You better get up this morning, get you a job on the WPA.'

I said 'I'm a gambler and I gamble night and day. (2x)
And I don't need no job on that WPA.'

She said, 'I'm leaving you, Daddy; that's all I got to say.' (2x)
I'm gonna quit my pimp, get me a man on the WPA.'

So hard luck has overtaken me, have to throw my dice and cards away. (2x)
Have to get me a job, on that WPA.'

In 1937, Peetie Wheatstraw recorded 'Working on the Project' (Decca 7311):

'I've been working on the project, begging the relief for shoes. (2x)
Because the rock and concrete are giving my feet the blues.

I've been working on the project with holes all in my clothes. (2x)
Trying to make me a dime, to keep the rent man from putting me outdoors.

I am working on the project, trying to make both end meet. (2x)
But the pay-day is so long that the grocery man won't let me eat.

Working on the project, my gal's spending all my dough. (2x)
But I've waked up on her and I won't be that fool no more.

Working on the project with pay-day three or four weeks away (2x)
How can you make ends meet when you can't get no pay?'

In 1940, when the gloom of the depression had lifted considerably, Wheat-
straw sang of the good jobs to be had at the steel companies ('Chicago Mill
Blues', Decca 7788, 1940):

'I used to have a woman that lived up on the hill. (2x)
She was crazy about me 'cause I worked at the Chicago mill.

You can hear the women hollering, when the Chicago mill whistle blows. (2x)
Crying, 'Loose my man, please, and let him go.'

If you want plenty women, boys, work at the Chicago Mill. (2x)
You don't have to give them nothing, just tell them that you will.



When I went to work, I worked at the Chicago Mill. (2x)
So I could get plenty women at my free good will.

So bye bye boys, go on and have your thrill. (2x)
You don't need no money, just say you work at the Chicago Mill.'

Most of the songs that referred to the WPA were done by artists who were essentially urban. To the country black man, the WPA was rather far away, and the steel mills were even more so. When there was work, it was of a different sort. Only recently, through interviews with other singers, was it discovered that Charley Patton was a logger when he wasn't singing. Yet, in one of his first recordings ('Down the Dirt Road', Paramount 12854, 1929), he sang of his anger and frustration using this image:

'I feel like chopping it, chips flying everywhere.'

(Patton's words are often unintelligible; he growls, slurs, and distorts his words to fit the rhythm of his songs. Many listenings were necessary before the line was deciphered.)

The work life of rural blacks centered around farming, and this is reflected in their songs. There are many country blues with such titles as 'Farmhand Blues' (Texas Alexander, Okeh 8576, 1927), and 'Milk Cow Blues' (Kokomo Arnold, Decca 7026, 1934); one artist (Kokomo Arnold, 'Bo Weevil Blues', Decca 7191, 1935) sang of one of the many incidents that made the farm life difficult:

'Boll Weevil, come out of my flour barrel. (2x)
Says we got the Boll-Weevil, mama, boll-weevil everywhere.

Says I went to my Captain, asked him for a pack of meal. (2x)
He said, 'Leave here Kokomo, you got weevils in your field.'

Now Mister Weevil, how come your bill's so long? (2x)
You eat up all my cotton, now you started on my youngest corn.

Says the merchant to the doctor, 'Don't sell me no more CC pills, (2x)
Cause the boll-weevil down here in Georgia done stop these cotton mills.

Now Mister Weevil, if you can talk why don't you tell (2x)
'Bout poor Kokomo down here in Georgia catching a lot of hell?'

Other rural blacks worked on levee camps, road camps, or railroad section gangs throughout the South. Texas Alexander 'Section Gang Blues', Okeh 8498, 1927) was trying to tell of the difficulties and hardships of the section gang when he sang:

'I've been working on the section, section 32,
I get a dollar and a quarter an hour
And I won't have to work hard as you

Umm, I get a dollar and a quarter an hour
And I won't have to work hard as you.

Captain, captain, what's the matter with you?
If you got any Battleaxe, Battleaxe, please, sir, give me a chew. (2x)

Captain, captain, what time of day?
He looked at me and walked away.' (2x)

It is in the sphere of economic activity that we find what is perhaps the largest difference in rural and urban culture. It is in this sphere, too, that we find graphic thematic difference in the texts of songs.

Although many black people today feel that the war the United States is engaged in is not their war, they, along with nearly the entire nation, felt differently about World War II. What follows is a rather typical WWII blues (Peter Cleighton, '41 Blues', Okeh 06375, July 1941):

'War is raging in Europe on water, land, and in the air. (2x)
If Uncle Sammy don't be careful, we'll all be right back over there.

The radio and newspaper, they all force me to believe. (2x)
Yeah, Hitler and Mussolini must have the snatching disease.

Ain't gonna be no peace in Europe till we cut off Hitler's head. (2x)
And Stalin catch leprosy, Mussolini lose his mind.

This whole war would soon be over if Uncle Sam would use my plan. (2x)
Let me sneak in Hitler's bedroom with my razor in my hand.'

The blues are characterized by a kind of candor and honesty unknown in the realm of popular song. Themes that are shunned in popular songs are treated openly in the blues. Although deviancy and perversion were present in rural areas, the anonymity of the city presented a more comfortable background for those afflicted. (It may also be said that the teeming ghetto areas did little to provide anonymity, but on a large scale, they did.) George Hannah, an urban black man, sang about his homosexuality ('Freakish Blues', Paramount 13024, 1930) and 'Peachtree' Payne, singing sometimes in a man's voice and sometimes in a woman's voice, sang his 'Peachtree Blues' (Okeh 8103, 1923) in a clearly urban style. Champion Jack Dupree, an ex-prize fighter and a city dweller, sang 'Junker Blues' (Okeh 06152, 1941):

'They call, they call me a junkie 'cause I'm loaded all the time;
I don't use no reefer, I be knocked out with that Angel wine.

Six months, six months ain't no sentence, one year ain't no time,
They got boys in penitentiary doing nine to ninety-nine.

I was standing, I was standing on the corner with my reefers in my hand,
Up step the sergeant, took my reefers out my hand.

My brother, my brother used the needle, my sister sniffed cocaine,
I don't use no junk I'm the nicest boy you ever seen.

My mother, my mother she told me and my father told me too.
That junk's a bad habit, why don't you leave it too.

My sister she even told me and my grandma told me too,
That using junk, pardner, was gonna be the death of you.'

Paul Oliver, in his book, *Blues Fell This Morning*, lists no references to addiction or sexual perversion that are not distinctly urban.(7)

To the rural black man, the city was often a golden dream, the land of peace and opportunity. Bob Campbell ('Starvation Farm Blues', Vocalion 02798, 1954) sang:

I'm going to Detroit, I'm gonna get myself a job. (2x)
I'm tired of laying around here, working on this starvation farm.

I'm going to get a job working in Mr. Ford's place... (2x)

But to many blacks who already had come North to the city, there was nothing but disillusionment and disappointment. Jazz Gillum sang about his woman and her difficulties in adjusting to city life ('Go Back to the Country', Bluebird 34-0730, 1945):

'Now you clown with your grocery man cause your bill is too high,
You don't want to pay taxes, you just want to get by,
You better go back to the country, way back out in the woods.
I'm tired of hearing you hollering that city life ain't no good.

You want the finest house in town for two or three dollars a month,
You seem to think it's all right for you to go out in the park and hunt,
You better go back, etc.

You want a whole lotta credit to pay off once a year
But you owe the salary you make for just liquor and beer
You better, etc.

You decorate your window with your great big rusty feet,
You want hogs in your back yard so you can have enough to eat.
You better go back to the country, way back out in the woods.
Plant you forty acres of cotton and try to do some good.'

Less humorously, Gillum also sang ('Down South Blues', Bluebird 9004, 1941):

'There's a sign on the building, we all got to move right away.
I ain't got no money, no rent that I can pay.

It soon will be cold, I ain't got no place to go.

I'm going back South where chilly winds don't blow.

I'm going back South where the sun do always shine
When I get to Vicksburg, I'll be hard to find.

I'm going back South where I used to live.
Goin' back to Vicksburg, way up on the hill.'

Leadbelly found that the tales of Northern equality were only myths ('Bourgeois Blues', Musicraft 227, 1939):

'Me and Marthy was standing upstairs
Heard a white man saying we don't want no Negroes up here.

Tell all the colored folks to listen to me
Don't try and buy no home in Washington, D.C.

These white folks in Washington, they really know how
To chuck a colored man a nickel just to see him bow.

Home of the brave, land of the free
I don't want to be mistreated by no bourgeoisie....

CHO: Lord, this bourgeois town, ooh, this bourgeois town,
I got the bourgeois blues, I'm gonna spread the news around.

Bill Gaither, who spent much of his time in Louisville, as well as in Chicago, Indianapolis, and other urban centers, sang this blues ('Creole Queen', Okeh 06561, 1941):

I been on relief in Chicago and soup lines in Kokomo. (2x)
But I'm going right back down South where I won't be driven from door to door

All I want is some overalls and a grip that fits just right. (2x)
My baby can fix me cornbread and cabbage, and I'm New Orleans bound tonight.'

NOTES

1. Robert M. W. Dixon and John Godrich, *Blues and Gospel Records--1902 to 1942* (London: Brian Rust, 1964), p.2. This work is a 765 page discography with nearly 20,000 entries.
2. Charles Keil, *Urban Blues* (Chicago: U of Chicago Press, 1966), p. 54.
3. *Ibid.*, p. 57.
4. See *ibid.*, pp. 71-73 for a method of lyrical analysis using Bales Interaction Scale.
5. Personal interview with James 'Yank' Rachell.
6. *Ibid.*
7. Paul Oliver, *Blues Fell This Morning* (New York: Horizon Press, 1961).

LEFT LITERARY NOTES:

MASSES OLD AND NEW

MARTHA SONNENBERG

Dialectics demand the all-sided consideration of relationships in their concrete development and not the pulling of a piece out of one thing and a piece out of another.

Lenin, Selected Works, Vol. 9, p. 63

The left is one dimensional. It's like only on the political level and it's fighting only with 19th century weapons, and it isn't intersected in total revolution. It's not into sex, it's not into music, it's not into the way people live.... the political left gets into very bad bags.

Jerry Rubin, interview in The Movement, November 1968

It is generally agreed that the experience of American art and artists with the Communist Party in the thirties is represented by the notion of the subordination of art to politics. The experience is characterized by the cult of proletarianism in art, the concept of art as propaganda, the direction of aesthetic criteria by party functionaries. Most studies of this experience* have relied solely on the nature of Stalinism as an explanatory force; that is, the entire experience is seen as a function of Stalinism. Thus Howe and Coser, in *The American Communist Party*, characterize the literary experience of the 1930s as 'a direct consequence of the international Stalinist line on cultural matters.' In these studies, the independent variable becomes the party, in this case the Stalinist bureaucracy, and the dependent variable the human material that it molds to suit its needs. Such a conception of human activity as a passive response to an autonomous force follows from an ahistorical methodology. The experience of artists in the thirties is seen as a momentary aberration, as a 'brief flirtation with cultural Stalinism', rather than as an integral part of American cultural and political history. What I want to show is that many of the characteristics of art and artists in the thirties existed as tendencies in America long before there was a Communist Party here. Stalinism was not the sole reason for the subordination of art to politics in America; there were other forces working, independent of Stalinism, which could lead to this effect.

I have focused on two magazines, *The Masses* (1912-1917) and *The New*

Robert Minor



Drawn by Robert Minor, October-November 1915

O Wicked Flesh

A MASSES ATTACK ON ANTHONY
COMSTOCK, LEADING CENSORSHIP ADVOCATE.

Masses (1927-1946) which seem to me to capture the essences of their respective times and to crystallize the nature of their differences. Both magazines were the creations of men and women with aesthetic interests as well as radical politics -- but the relations of art and politics was very different in the two magazines.

NEW MASSES AND OLD

From 1912, when Max Eastman became its editor, until 1917 when the government banned it because of its anti-war position, *The Masses* remained true to the words in its masthead:

...A revolutionary and not a reform magazine; a magazine with a sense of humor and no respect for the respectable; frank, arrogant, impertinent, searching for the true causes; a magazine directed against rigidity and dogma wherever it is found; printing what is too naked for a money making press; a magazine whose final policy is to conciliate nobody, not even its readers...

Within its pages, artists, poets, intellectuals came together to create one of the most articulate and colorful expressions of American socialism. Regular contributors, in addition to Eastman, included Floyd Dell, John Reed, Carl Sandburg, John Sloan, Louis Untermeyer, Art Young, Sherwood Anderson, William English Walling, and Frank Tannenbaum. They came together in a conscious attempt to bridge the gap between art and politics; they intended their magazine to be a 'meeting place for revolutionary labor and the radical intelligentsia'.⁽²⁾ *The Masses* was, in fact, the first American socialist magazine to devote its attention to art as well as to politics. It included substantial amounts of poetry, short fiction, drawings, not merely as space fillers or as part of a self-conscious art section, but as an integral part of the magazine's composition.

The Masses was marked by an atmosphere of cultural and artistic freedom -- there were no political limitations on the art in the magazine. The subject and style of work was left entirely to the artist himself. The magazine became famous for its Ash Can school artists -- Art Young's and Robert Minor's pictorial jabs at capitalism were trade marks of *The Masses*. But just as many of *The Masses*' drawings were non-political; typical were Hugo Gellert's drawings of frolicking children and animals.

The same flexibility extended to the magazine's politics. *The Masses*' editors openly identified themselves as Socialists: 'We are a Socialist magazine. We shall print every month a page of editorials reflecting life as a whole from a Socialist standpoint.'⁽³⁾ The editors recognized the necessity for membership in a socialist organization and distrusted the isolationism of many artists, and the noncommittal attitude of radicals, who refused to join any organization. Yet they never deified the Socialist party. They were hostile to the reformist tendencies within the party and sympathized with the I.W.W. Their flexible conception of party politics allowed them to criticize

aspects of party life with a humor that the artists of the thirties denied themselves. In this spirit they sharply satirized the good party member who categorized all of human experience in terms of left wing factions:

A Syndicalist, you know, is a Possibilist Anarchist, just as a Socialist is a Possibilist Utopist, but a Syndicalist is an Antistatist, whereas a Socialist is a Statist and a Political Actionist, only an Antimilitarist and Pacifist. I'm a Collectivist Revisionist myself. Now, it's a funny thing, but my brother claims to be a Herveist, and says he's a Possibilist Sabotist, but at the same time an Extremist Communist and a Political Actionist.... I don't think that's a possible thing, do you?

‘I thought he was a Chiropracist,’ I said.(4)

From almost every standpoint *The New Masses* appears as the antithesis of the old *Masses*. Artistically and politically, the easy flexibility of *The Masses* was countered by the rigidity of the party line in *The New Masses*. When *The NM* began in 1926 there was little hint of the rigidity to come. Writers like Joseph Freeman, Michael Gold, Joshua Kunitz, Waldo Frank, considered themselves ‘drummers of the revolution’ and wanted a journal through which they could play this role. But by 1928 Michael Gold was established as editor and the cult of proletarianism had set in. Proletarianism had three aspects to it. One was the social origin of the artist -- he or she should be proletarian. Since most of the writers were of middle class origin, this meant that writers spent a great deal of time criticizing each other for elements of bourgeois style and consciousness in their work, and a great deal of time feeling guilty for not being proletarian.

Secondly, proletarianism referred to the content of art. Though there were always debates about the exact nature of proletarian art, by 1930 Gold had developed a series of criteria for proletarian artists; his list of nine points is representative of the whole thirties' experience because of its stylistic rigidity and its romantic notion of the working class. Point 3 concerned content: ‘Every poem, every novel and drama must have a social theme or it is merely confectionary.’ Point 4 was directed to style: ‘As few words as possible. We are not interested in the verbal acrobats -- this is only another form of bourgeois idleness.’ And point 7: ‘Away with drabness, the bourgeois notion that the workers' life is sordid... There is horror and drabness in the worker's life, and we will portray it; but we know this is not the last word; we know that this manure heap is the hope of the future.’(5)

The third aspect of proletarian art was that it follow the party line. The 1930 Kharkov Conference, the ‘Second World Plenum of the International Bureau of Revolutionary Literature’, demanded that writers and artists openly become partisans of the Soviet Union and adopt the political line of the Communist Party.(6)

Such is the sharp contrast that exists between the two magazines. But to concentrate on that contrast at the expense of everything else obfuscates the relationship that exists between the artists who created the magazines. Looking at the two groups in terms of their concepts of activity as radical artists,

and their concepts of the nature of art, we begin to see an historical relationship between the two against which the experience of the thirties appears, not so much an anomaly, but as an understandable development.

THE DIVISION BETWEEN ART AND POLITICS

In spite of the unrestricted presence of art in *The Masses*, its artists were not able to achieve a synthesis of art and politics. *The Masses'* artists were still bound by a conceptual division between art and politics; that is, they saw art and politics as ultimately distinct modes of human activity. *The Masses* group's acceptance of this division is evident in their inner conflicts about their own activity and their conception of the role and function of art.

The editors of *The Masses* felt a tremendous anxiety about their activity as radical artists. As they saw it, it was an either-or proposition which pulled at 'opposing impulses'. Either they could devote themselves to art and become inactive in the real world, or they could devote themselves to politics and relegate their art to the role of a hobby, 'a more or less private emotional satisfaction'.(7) Floyd Dell wrote, 'I had to hold on to my Socialist philosophy and yet get from it the freedom to be an artist.'(8) Later he told a young Joseph Freeman:

It is useless for people to say that it is a superior kind of mind which can function both in politics and in art. It is a vain compliment, which but temporarily assuages the unhappiness of the type in question. That superiority is a painful one, consisting in fact of a spiritual conflict between opposing impulses.(9)

Louis Untermeyer recalled that *The Masses* artists were all plagued by 'the feeling that we weren't 'doers', makers of revolution.' The radical artist, he said, was a kind of 'schizophrenic', constantly torn between the demands of his art and the practical necessities of his politics.(10) These artists did not conceive of a synthesis between art and politics, of art as a form of revolutionary activity, or of radical consciousness as a liberated aesthetics. They lacked what Marcuse has called 'faith in the rationality of the imagination'.(11)

The inorganic view of life which saw a division between art and politics was thus transposed to an inorganic view of art. Art itself was compartmentalized into notions of 'pure' art and 'political' art. Political art was that art defined as informational, as propaganda. Pure art was all that was left over, all art which was not political. There was no conception of a Surrealist art through which the material and cultural expressions of a revolutionary consciousness could be combined; in fact, many of *The Masses* group were hostile to experimental tendencies in art. Floyd Dell expressed this limited notion of art when he wrote:

I did endeavor to educate my Muse, teach her something about Evolution, Socialism... but she could not be trusted; she would presently re-

vert to some earlier uneducated and sentimental stage in which she was more at ease... as a Revolutionary Working-Class Muse she was sadly tongue-tied.(12)

What Daniel Aaron, in his *Writers on the Left*, calls *The Masses*' 'refusal to subordinate their art to their politics', was in fact the maintenance of their art as distinct from their politics. Their desire 'to get from Socialism the freedom to be an artist', was satisfied by their identity as artists who existed and worked adjacent to the political struggle, but still independent of it. Between the covers of *The Masses* art and politics cohabitated, but their union was never consummated.

The differences between the two magazines was that while *The Masses* artists allowed their 'pure' art to exist side by side with their politics and their 'political' art, *The New Masses* artists condemned 'pure' art as 'merely confectionary'. Both groups held the same criteria for the distinction between the pure and the political in art; it is this distinction which is central to the whole problematic relation between art and politics. The division between pure and political art, or between artistic activity and political activity can be seen as part of the larger dichotomy of the ideal and the material (e.g. thought vs. action; beauty vs. necessity; emotion vs. reason). In this context the whole division between art and politics appears as part of bourgeois ideology. Both Marcuse and Karl Mannheim (13) point out the connection between the rise of the bourgeoisie and the development of an ontological separation of the ideal and the material. Mannheim wrote:

The rise of the bourgeoisie was attended by an extreme intellectualism... the complete separation between theory and practice, of the intellectual sphere from the emotional sphere. Modern intellectualism is characterized by its tendency not to tolerate emotionally determined and evaluative thinking.(14)

Marcuse sees this split as the ideological justification for a mode of existence which denies the beautiful and the sensual to most men. The bourgeois consciousness is such that man does not expect beauty from his material existence, but seeks it in the ephemeral world of culture, art, ideals:

The world of the true, the good, and the beautiful is in fact an 'ideal' world insofar as it lies beyond the existing conditions of life in which the majority of men either work as slaves, or spend their lives in commerce, with only a small group being concerned with anything more than the provision and preservation of the necessary... What is of authentic import to man, the highest truths, the highest goods, and the highest joys, is separated in significance from the necessary by an abyss. They are a 'luxury'.(15)

Radical artists in 1912 as well as 1935 were constricted by the perceptual and linguistic categories of a bourgeois ideology which had erected barriers between what Marcuse calls 'sense experience' and 'instrumentalist reason'. As a consequence, 'the power of the imagination was repressed... (and) sac-

rified to the requirements of effective reason.'(16)

Interestingly, it was Waldo Frank, a New Masses artist during the thirties, but originally with The Seven Arts, who best articulated and perceived both the connection between bourgeois ideology and the division between art and politics, and the steps by which that division could lead to the subjection of art to dogmatic politics in The New Masses. In 1935 at the first American Writers' Congress, Frank spoke on the 'Values of a Revolutionary Writer'. In this speech (the full implications of which went unnoticed by party functionaries) Frank said that the deepest cause of the subjection and impotence of writers and artists was - not the party - the 'hidden ideology of the American system which... most of our writers have absorbed.' This ideology Frank then identified as:

...an empirical rationalism based on fact-worship, on a fetichism (both unscientific and unpoetic) of the finished cut-and-dried report of the five senses, which is not remotely related to the organic rationalism... implicit in the historical dialectic of Marx... It is, since it ignores the organic and evolving nature of man, by definition the foe of all creative work; the foe, therefore, however hidden, of art, and in the Marxist sense, of revolution.(17)

This ideology ultimately led the artist to sacrifice his art to the dictates of pragmatic reason, or:

disbelief in the autonomy of the writer's art; in its integral place as art in the organic growth of man and specifically in the revolutionary movement. This self-distrust makes the writer capitulate as artist; leads him to take orders, as artists, from political leaders...(18)

Thus the feeling of The Masses artists 'that we weren't 'doers'...' was organically and historically a precedent to The New Masses artists' feeling of revolutionary impotence. For The Masses the conceptual antagonism between 'empirical rationalism' and 'the rationality of the imagination' was manifested only in a mechanical combination of art and politics. For The New Masses, the antagonism led its artists essentially to write themselves out, as artists, of revolutionary activity altogether. Thus wrote Genevieve Taggard, a New Masses poet:

If I were in charge of a revolution, I'd get rid of every single writer immediately; and trust that the fecundity of the earth would produce another crop when I had got some of the hard work done. Being an artist, I have the sense that a small child has when its mother is in the middle of house work. I don't intend to get in the way.(19)

Events do not just 'happen'; men make them happen, and they make them happen because they think, perceive themselves and the world in particular ways. If we view a social phenomenon in terms of conscious human activity we cannot view it as an end in itself, as an isolated event in time and space. Rather, we see events as part of historical processes, as the result of hu-

man activity over a period of time. The experience of writers in the thirties did not simply 'happen', nor was it merely a function of Stalinism. It emerged from particular and general social-historical conditions. This is not to discount the impact of Stalinism or to deny its repressive characteristics. But, to paraphrase E. P. Thompson (20), it was not an external force - the Stalinist bureaucracy - working on 'some nondescript undifferentiated raw material of humanity', which turned out at the other end a 'fresh race of beings', exploited and subordinated artists. The Stalinist bureaucracy was imposed upon men, artists and writers, who had inherited particular traditions, particular ways of looking at themselves and their art from their precursors of 1912-1917. As such, these men created the thirties experience as much as they were created by it.

In looking at the experience of *The Masses* and *The New Masses* we should try to avoid what Thompson calls 'the enormous condescension of posterity'. It is true that these artists were restricted by their own conceptions in their attempt to combine art and politics, and that those conceptions had dire consequences. Yet they aspired toward a worthy goal, and if they did not reach it, neither have we -- in understanding the reasons for their failure perhaps we can gain insights for our own struggles.

NOTES

1. Irving Howe and Lewis Coser, *The American Communist Party*, p. 278.
2. Max Eastman, *Enjoyment of Living*, New York, 1958, p. 409.
3. *The Masses*, December 1912.
4. *The Masses*, March 1913.
5. *The New Masses*, September 1930, pp. 4-5.
6. *The New Masses*, February 1931.
7. Floyd Dell, *Homecoming*, New York, 1933, p. 127.
8. Dell, p. 178.
9. Quoted in Joseph Freeman, *An American Testament*, New York, 1936, p. 167.
10. Louis Untermeyer, in interview with the author, February 12, 1968, Berkeley, California.
11. Herbert Marcuse, *An Essay on Liberation*, Boston, 1969, p. 26.
12. Dell, p. 100.
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15. Marcuse, *Negations*, pp. 90-91.
16. Marcuse, *Essay...*, p. 29.
17. Waldo Frank, 'Values of a Revolutionary Writer', in *American Writers' Congress*, ed. Henry Hart, New York, 1935, p. 75.
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20. I borrow the methodology from E. P. Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class*, New York, 1963, p. 194. The importance of Thompson's work is his emphasis on men as the creating subject of history.

* Daniel Aaron, *Writers on the Left*, New York, 1961. James Gilbert, *Writers and Partisans*, New York, 1968. Irving Howe and Lewis Coser, *The American Communist Party*, esp. Chs. VII and XI, New York, 1962.

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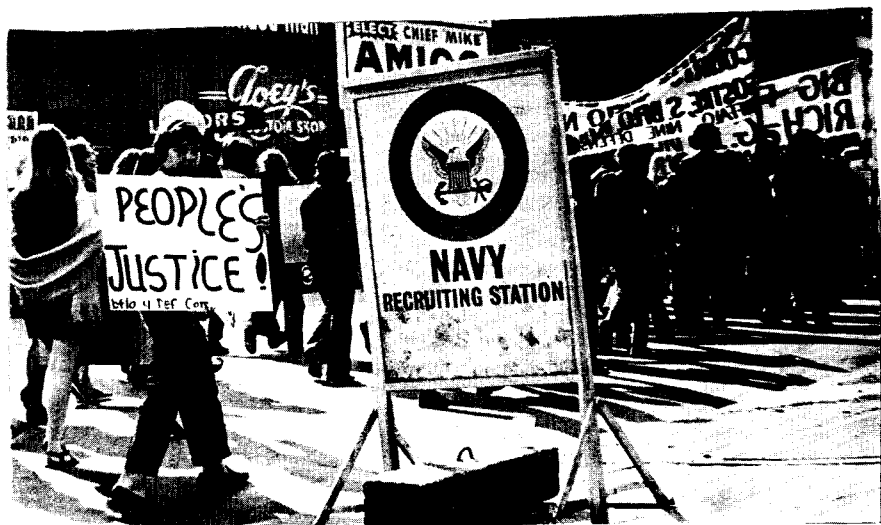
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