

Advertising's pre-enlightened days were ending, however. Thomas Frank, in 1994's *The Conquest of Cool*, wrote of "advertising as a cultural criticism" — a movement in and of itself. Pre-enlightenment, the industry was viewed more as a science, a pure numbers game, and creativity was given short-shrift at the expense of a sort of neutral exposition, or social editorial. As more and more youth dropped out, tuned in and turned on in response to Timothy O'Leary's call, advertising adjusted its rhetoric in a revolution from the inside. Seeing they were potentially losing the big game, 'progressive' advertisers such as Bill Bernbach had discovered creativity in advertising in the late 1950s. He realized *hip* did not evolve from crunching numbers and following the linear myths of American life, but from seeking out "anti-advertising" opportunities, i.e., by embracing the kids and the increasing numbers of adults in American society who were seeking alternative expression in the 1960s.

Advertising came up fast beginning with the Volkswagen campaign of 1959 by Madison Avenue's Doyle Dane and Bernbach. The campaign transformed the former "Nazi" car into something else — an "anti-car" that made a statement. The car rejected normality, i.e., big fins and motors, and road hogging dimensions. What was good (and successful) for cars became good for an array of products and services, from car rentals to beauty products to soft drinks; and it hasn't stopped. Nike's latest ad campaign is careful to remind us that Steve Prefontaine, the long distance runner who died tragically young in 1975, was first and foremost a "rebel." (I knew Prefontaine. He was a drunkard who ran.)

To meld an understanding between consumers and producers, it would be left for the technocrats of advertising to eventually embrace the counterculture by the forces of co-optation. When Peter Coyote and Emmett Grogan led the Diggers in San Francisco in the mid-1960s they inadvertently discovered themselves as news items. By performing in the street and keeping a communal lifestyle focused on humane values, they understood themselves to be — as Coyote writes in *Sleeping Where I Fall* (2002) — in "a common quest for transformation (on) the edge of the counterculture." On December 17, 1967, the Diggers held a "Death of Money" parade in conjunction with the Hells Angels and the poet Michael McClure, a highly publicized affair that featured the first free rock concerts of the Grateful Dead and Janis Joplin in San Francisco's Golden Gate Park. The experience impressed certain suitors in the filmmaking business as well as the Diggers themselves, who were, Coyote says, "flushed with our ability to make things happen." They became part of "the emerging countercultural aristocracy." In that cauldron Coyote discovered the exhilaration and disgust he felt for being singled out and courted by the hip scenarists and journalists who were determined to exploit the Diggers.

Coyote is convinced that Peter Fonda and Dennis Hopper got it all wrong in the movie *Easy Rider* (1969), which he advised on, pointing to a failed third act that picked the counterculture's bones clean by killing the movie's heroes. In the movement Coyote envisioned, violence was out of character. In the movie it became a gratuitous plot device. The movie was, he argues, intellectually dishonest, which happens to be the inevitable result of the romantic impulse of cinema and its rhetorical character. It was, in Coyote's mind, counter-propaganda and a "sideshow to the real work of the Diggers — free life amid the desert of industrial capitalism."

Before *Easy Rider*, *Bonnie and Clyde* (1967) found an audience willing to embrace its two Depression era anti-hero criminals, whom write Horowitz and Carroll, "appealed to 1960s fantasies of a mobile youth culture, escaping from adult institutions and living more 'naturally.'" The movie, straight out of the mainstream Hollywood ethos, divided critics. Some thought the movie romanticized violence. Others saw it as a parable of the times, raw with new views on sexuality, freedom, and the sweep of rebellion that had become America as epitomized by "the long hot summer" of 1967 when riots and protests of the Vietnam War and racism became pandemic.

By 1967 the countercultures of the antiwar movement, the hippies, black and academic radicals and the advertising sloganeers had melded. They were all credited-up and rolled into one alt-Everything, prepared to embrace the newest members of the alt-lifestyle everybody sought. Tom Wolfe wrote about the support black radicals, such as Huey P. Newton, Bobby Seale and Eldridge Cleaver gained among the upper class in his exposé, *Mau Mauing the Flack Catchers* in 1970. The Black Panthers were but part of the convergence of alt-consciousness and politics. Enter the radical feminists of the women's movement and the homosexuals. The Stonewall Tavern riot in New York's Greenwich Village in 1969 is the line of embarkation for gay rights. For the first time that year gays fought back when a corrupt law enforcement apparatus shook them down. Women found a solid voice in Betty Freidan's important 1963 study, *The Feminine Mystique*, which led to the National Organization of Women (NOW) and other groups committed to equal pay and rights for women.

The rhetorical convergence of the various aspect of the counterculture was stated succinctly by John Sinclair (circa 1969) in his essay, "We Are a People." Addressed to his Brothers and Sisters, "the message defined the counterculture experience as more than a protest movement. It had evolved into a full-on "liberation movement for total change and total evolution." Total freedom of the planet was its ultimate goal. In evolutionary terms the screed called for the overthrow of everything. It is thinly veiled Marxism, speaking of the ownership of society and the control of goods and services; of inadequate education and capitalism's utter meanness; of repression and colonial greed; of exploiters and brainwashers; of a lingering taxation without representation"; of endless war and the death machine; of a homegrown colonization; of secession.

Sinclair's effort to give meaning to the forces of dialectical capitalism is laudable. However, it is unnerving to remember what happened when American youth actually took to the streets in protest of the "death machine" rolling into Cambodia in 1970. To borrow from Bobby Fuller, they "fought the law, and the law won" at Kent State and Jackson State. If there were any doubts left about society's transmorgification from World War 2 savior



STEVEN LONGSTREET

to imperial power with fascist tendencies, they were canceled like a hippie's bad check. Along with the consensus of Sinclair's "brothers and sisters," the spirit of constitutional federalism had been wiped off the slate. Imperialism, and U.S. hegemony arose on the wings of the United States' burgeoning technology sector and the beginnings of globalization made possible by advances in transportation and communications. Roszak had nailed it all right. Corporate sponsorship of friendly dictators around the globe became the impetus to seeking power and the friendly corporate money to gain it. Sinclair's "people" would never again be represented by politicians, even in the utopian dream of the *New Age*, the next step in the evolution of alt-consciousness.

Unlike the *New Left*, with its vestiges in the Students for a Democratic Society (SDS), the Black Panthers and Weather Underground, all of which collapsed for reasons of class war and the murder, imprisonment, subjugation and assimilation of its principle proponents, the New Age is happily still with us. Who can resist a Tarot reading, a scented candle, a nicely turned vegetarian meal? Who can resist the economy of food co-ops and freedom as defined by ecological purity? Good food, good vibes, good times? They are there for those who have the New Age stuff — a car, say, that is hybrid, or better, a philosophy of multicultural, multi-ethnic, multi-nationalistic spirituality. A profession helps, one that offers the relaxation of meaningful work and reward enough to find comfortability where it exists. A job that pays well and is unlikely to be outsourced while

providing the freedom to transcend the mundane world of capitalism is New Age by definition.

New Age workers are not working to gather bushels of money, but rather toward peace and understanding. And what's so funny about that, asked Elvis Costello. They work to impart wisdom and knowledge, to deconstruct the abstract. It is simply unfortunate that New Age musician George Winston's music isn't quite as significant as Costello's. The New Age is lovely when you view it through the prism of its rhetorically charged constructs — "auras," "energy fields," "channels," "psychic perception," "aliens." It is a rosy world. At its conception, the New Age "appealed to professional elites because it combined the countercultural spirit with advanced science," write Horowitz and Carroll. The New Age became a lasting legacy of the counterculture because, in final analysis, it is benign.

There are other lasting perceptions of the rights and wrongs committed by countercultural adherents. Christian fundamentalists, particularly, revile the memory of the 1960s and its remnants. That is why they have fought so hard to gain the political hold they have at present. Liberals are still bogeymen among the conservatives. Liberals project a dangerous desire to be soft on criminals. They have ruined family values and support same-sex marriages. Liberals hate George Bush because he is an American. Liberals hate freedom and would give the country to the welfare-loving horde. Liberals own the media. Liberals are dividing America and are weak in the face of tyranny and terrorism, for goodness sake.

On the other hand, and there is an other hand unless it has been blown off in the most recent war, conservatives are intractable. Conservatives are hypocritical and two-faced, like Rush Limbaugh, who denounces and uses drugs. They drink the kool-aid in Halliburton's kitchen and love it. Conservatives designed the torture chambers at Guantanamo and Abu Graib. Conservatives protect their gun rights while the inner city is a battlefield. And, by the way, conservatives are divisive and own the media.

The din of debate between liberals and conservatives is a legacy of the counterculture. Until somebody, an enlightened leader perhaps, comes along with a new and improved brand of government, the reality will not change. The co-optation of Congress by corporate interests will continue as it has since the roiling of the first hints of U.S. neo-imperialism backed by the bomb. The legacy will remind us that 1970's *Vortex 1* was a state-sanctioned rock concert for radicals, pure enough to make the Vietnam War palatable for another day. The legacy will remind us that radicals are best kept in a fenced-off "free speech zone" blocks away from debate among the foreign and domestic policy apparatchiks of capitalism's nobility. The legacy gives us hip amid the clamorous call to suffer and die for "freedom," which Kris Kristofferson said is "just another word for nothing to lose."

All the words are just other words saying something paradoxical. The counterculture began as an absurd and contradictory moment and progressed to this instant. It was never anything more than a dream; it was never anything more than a dialectical impulse, a promotion and a statement, a rhetorical flourish. It was genius and guts. It was outlandish and criminal and oft stupid and protected by the United States Constitution. The counterculture is an old friend who cannot be forgotten or forsaken.

Terry Simons wrote this essay this past spring for a class taught by David Horowitz at Portland State University, "History of American Countercultures: 1945-1975." He is a 'returning' student.

TOO MANY WOUNDS

BY BARBARA DARBY

The time my friends and I sought out and joined the counterculture movement was a time of many paradoxes for us. These contradictions involved our generation's hopes for the future and the abundance of deaths and injuries happening to that same generation.

The wounds that happened to our leaders and our friends shattered our view of a loving world. One by one, as each new ideal was taken away our lives became more meaningless. We fled from this loss of meaning in our lives and instead of pursuing success and obtaining the "American Dream" as our parents had before us, we became part of a new and exciting counterculture movement.

We became a large voice in the '60s and early '70s and many of us used this voice in opposition to much of the oppression and injustice that was part of our American society during these and other times. Some say there was no reason for the counterculture movement, they say it just happened or was an extension of the "Beat Generation" of the '50s.

The counterculture movement may have originated earlier, however. The mass exodus of this alternative way of living in the late '60s and early '70s did not just happen. It was caused by the abundance of wounds in our society that overshadowed our lives during those times.

Our friends were beginning to return from Vietnam wounded and unable to relate to us the atrocities they were forced to be involved in. We comforted their return to our society as much as we could. We also knew they were somehow altered forever by the experience. Some friends died, gentle people blown to pieces. We felt powerless to change the direction of what was happening to our lives and country.

This is when I believe the greatest exodus into the counterculture took place. We were defeated and it was time to find our own way. Our country and our generation had suffered too many wounds. It was a time for our own type of civil disobedience.

My friends and I read Tom Wolfe's *The Electric Kool-Aid Acid Test*, which was published in 1968. It was about the lives of Ken Kesey and his friends on a cross-country trip in a psychedelic bus, and we turned our eager minds and thoughts to that adventure in the same manner we had devoured the books of John Steinbeck. This led to our acceptance of the "drug culture" and we explored and experienced all it had to offer. We hitchhiked to San Francisco and visited the places where it began. We went to see the Grateful Dead and attended music festivals where we freely ingested the drugs we brought to share or were offered by others. The best marijuana was sent or carried home by our friends in Vietnam. We had good times and became accustomed to living with limited resources. We were fond of talking about President Washington's "hemp" garden or Aldous Huxley's LSD trips.

Musicians, poets and writers, leaders and creators living in the '60s and at other times before and since are known to have used drugs to expand their view of their work and of the

world. It is well known that mind expanding drugs brought about changes in the music and lifestyles of many musicians and poets during the time of the counterculture movement. Indeed, drugs were a force that changed the consciousness of many who were eager to try new and different ways of looking at life.

However, those who label drugs as the main reason and attention of the counterculture miss the truth of those times by a large margin. The use of drugs did influence the movement and changed and sometimes led to the enlightenment of many who took them as well as those who didn't.

Drugs also led to deepening existing wounds in society. Friends died from overdose and others contracted lifelong disabilities because of their use. "Straights" just had to and did put a stop to the unrestricted use of them. They felt drugs eroded users' ideas of what and how a capitalist society should be and behave. Their actions caused much of the paranoia that became attributed to their smoking of marijuana and the taking of other drugs. Their attitudes contributed to more violent actions against American citizens, which caused additional wounds. There were many in the counterculture movement who never took drugs or "never inhaled." The counterculture was a way to divorce ourselves from the wounds that were being inflicted on citizens by other citizens.

By the time the Vietnam War was finally over, we barely noticed. We weren't watching the nightly news anymore. We began only to care about what was happening in our immediate circle of friends and about the highs we could obtain and the fun we could experience. When the war finally ended we were most likely with our friends who had returned from it, drinking dime beers at the local tavern. We could be found pausing from our conversations to join in as the whole crowded room sang in unison the ballad in which Don McLean told with a poet's voice the story of our times, *American Pie*.

So what about us now? We are still around and many of us still live with the wounds that have lasted from that time. We still distrust our government and its policies. We fail to fight for many just causes because we feel they will never be won through political means. Most of us still live within and take part in our polluting and consumer-oriented society and we also live with the guilt of its wastefulness and environmental destruction. Those of us who took LSD still wonder at the enlightenment about life and death that it gave us. We still get very angry when any injustice occurs.

Some of us still support many of the causes we have always believed in and our new American Dream is that Peace will still come. Many of us still pause in reflection when trying to decipher right from wrong and still have trouble finding the middle ground. We will always carry the wounds that caused the counterculture with us. They reside along with the strength gained from the healing of those wounds and I am hopeful that this is what will be passed on to future generations.

This article has been excerpted from a longer one Barbara Darby initially published in the July/August 1999 NCTE. She lives in Astoria.



VAN DUSEN BEVERAGES

ASTORIA, OREGON 325-2362