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Growing Up Postmodern

Neoliberalism and the War on the Young

EDITED BY RONALD STRICKLAND

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I
Introduction: What's
Left of Modernity?

Ronald Snieckus

Growing Up Postmodern takes its inspiration from Paul Goodman's Growing Up Absurd, an indictment of postwar American society's failure to provide the necessary conditions for boys to grow up into emotionally healthy and dignified adulthood. Writing at the end of the 1950s, hard upon the emergence of both the "youth culture" and the socioeconomic and cultural conditions that we now identify as postmodernity, Goodman saw modern American society as suffering from a long list of compromised revolutions. In Growing Up Absurd he called for a revival of progressive efforts in areas such as urban planning, social welfare, workplace democracy, freedom of speech, social harmony, sexual freedom, popular culture, and public education to produce a society that could inspire young people, an adult society worth joining.

In many ways the problems Goodman identifies are still with us today. He describes a postwar American society that was unwilling to fund adequate public education, and unable to provide meaningful and dignified employment for most of its citizens. At the turn of the century, despite the pro-education rhetoric of recent political campaigns, public education is still suffering after more than two decades of systemic underfunding from the 1970s into the 1990s. And during the high employment boom years of the 1990s the largest growth was in low-paying, dead-end service-sector jobs. Goodman describes a postwar society that was alarmed by youth violence and responded with increasingly punitive treatment of young offenders while the root causes of youth disaffection and hopelessness were ignored. In the last two decades, even as public education funding has stagnated, budgets for new prison construction are exploding and children, barely in their teens are being held responsible as adults for criminal behavior. Goodman describes a postwar society in which young people have "a little extra spending..."
money," so they "get around note and are exposed to the expensive glamour, but this is precisely not attainable by them unless they take short cuts." At the end of the twentieth century that Goodman observed in infancy has long since come of age. Contemporary youth are prematurely affluent—they have money for consumer electronics, fashion apparel, movies, and music CDs, but they linger in dependence upon their parents' assistance for basic living expenses, educational costs, etc. According to economic forecasts, many of them will not attain the level of economic security achieved by their parents.

These chronic problems of modernity have become the accepted status quo of postmodernity, as many people now appear no longer as problems but as the natural and unchangeable order of things. Indeed, for some contemporary cultural critics postmodernity is a revolutionary new social order in which the political projects and goals of the enlightenment—democratic political empowerment, progressive social policy, high-quality public education, etc.—have been rendered obsolete. In the consumerist theory of Jean Baudrillard, for example, the freedom to consume has replaced political freedom. In postmodern society, according to Baudrillard, subjectivity is forged and expressed through consumption. Postmodern consumption exceeds the fulfillment of need, expressing the subject's desire at the level of the "political economy of the sign," which is taken to surpass the society's economic relations of production. A breach of (if tacit) coalition of mainstream political leaders from the center-right to the center-left has come together under the banner of "neoliberalism," the hegemonic ideology of postmodem consumerism. Neoliberalism revives Adam Smith's "invisible hand of the market," seeking as Rosemary Hennacy has observed, "to free up the operation of the capitalist market from public (state) controls and regulations," and at the same time "to exceed the rationality of the market—in its schemes of analysis and decision-making criteria—in areas of social life that have not been primarily economic." The corporatopolitical strategies of neoliberalism have been gaining prominence since the economic downturn of the early 1970s. Under an expanded free-trade agreements industrial production has been displaced from "rust belt" U.S. cities into the "maquiladoras" region of northern Mexico and other "underdeveloped" locations where workers are weak, or nonexistent environmental protection regulations and undemocratic governments enable greater corporate profits and leverage for corporations to squelch further concessions from U.S. workers.

One of many harmful effects of neoliberal social and economic policy in the U.S. has been the corporate-sector demand for a curriculum of narrowly defined skills training in public schools and universities, undermining public education's role as a democratic social institution. Neoliberal attempts to link test scores and federal funding for education and to divert tax revenues to private schools have also taken a toll. Schools in poor rural areas and inner-city neighborhoods are scandalously underfunded in comparison with affluent suburban schools. And right-wing politicians call for "school choice" voucher schemes that would make tax dollars available to subsidize families who send their children to parochial schools. "School choice" advocates employ the neoliberal rhetoric of markets, arguing that forcing the public schools to compete in a "free market" would improve the quality of public schools, and arguing that all students should have the right to choose the school that best suits their needs. But the proposed voucher funds are never sufficient to pay the full cost of private schooling. Therefore, the inevitable result would be subsidies for middle-class families who can afford private schools while poorer children are left in even more seriously underfunded public schools.

**SUBVERSIVE CONSUMPTION AND HYPERCONFORMITY**

Beyond the effects of social disinvestment on public education, both consumerism and neoliberalism shape the lived experiences of young people and the subjectivities available to them in postmodern society. As Bill Oderer details in his chapter in this volume, consumerism developed in conjunction with the emergence of a new social agent—the "teenager." In the era of industrial capitalism social subjectivity was predicated upon the adult male worker's productive capacity; the subjectivities of women and children were constituted in relation to that of the adult male worker. According to the conventional logic of modernity, teenagers were not productive workers, hence they were not social agents. But they did become agents as consumers after World War II. The teenager is, in fact, the ideal subject of an economic order in which consumer demand for services and nondurable goods seemingly generates profits out of thin air. Teenagers are primarily consumers rather than producers, and most of their income is "disposable" income that can be spent on consumer-oriented consumer goods rather than basic necessities.

In addition to its emphasis on consumer demand—or "desire"—neoliberalism is marked by a tendency to obscure the relations of production of contemporary capitalism. Following Daniel Bol's highly influential _The Coming of Post-Industrial Society_ (1973), neoliberalism argues that we have entered a new phase of capitalism in which information processing is more important than industrial production. In the new information-driven economy, it is asserted, technological breakthroughs (primarily the development of virtually instantaneous global communications) have enabled the compression of time and space such that a surplus of material wealth is produced, making basic "needs" increasingly irrelevant for more and more people, and elevating "desire" as the principal concern of the postmodern subject. Is the books of conservative futurists like bibliotext (more on this below) accomplishing. But they tend to assume that industrial production has disappeared, that with the exception of a few isolated cases it has simply been restructured and relocated. In his early writings Baudrillard argues that the distinction between use value and exchange value is no longer tenable in late capitalism, thus rejecting Marx's critique of "commodity fetishism" and the concept of alienation. Both the concepts
of sex value (expressing human needs) and exchange value (expressing human desires) we an "organic extension of productive forces" (Baudrillard, 46) said, as such, both express the "purist" disciplinary ethics of capitalism. In the contemporary "information society" Baudrillard asserts, this disciplinary ethics leaves very little room for political agency. Confined with a glut of information, the manner we are entrenched in a network of media discourses, completely "informed" by the media, which is the same thing as being "formed" (213). The individual is a "double bond," which he argues, is exactly like the situation faced by young people in the transition to adulthood:

They are at the same time told to constitute themselves as autonomous subjects, responsible, free, and conscious, and to constitute themselves as subordinate objects, inert, obedient, and conformant. The child exists on all levels, and to these contradictory demands he is to reply by a double strategy. When we ask the child to be subject, he is to obey all the acts of disobedience, of revolt, of emancipation; short, the strategy of a subject. When we ask the child to be subject, he is to oppose just as obstinately and successfully a resistance as object; that is to say, exactly the opposite: absolutism, hyperconservatism, total dependence, passive, idiocy (213).

Autonomous "subject resistance" is generally considered positive "in the same way as in the political sphere only the practices of liberation, of emancipation, of expression, of self-constitution as a political subject are considered worthwhile and substantive." But the "autistic resistance" of refusal of meaning and of speech, "of the hyperconservative imitation of the very mechanisms of the system," is, Baudrillard concludes, the "winning" strategy of postmodernity, "because it is the most adapted to the present phase of the system" (213-19).

This "silent" resistance, Baudrillard emphasizes, is not all "passive" (215). But many cultural critics remain unconvinced. Following the lead of Michel de Certeau, cultural study scholars have examined the neoliberal marginalization of everyday life, searching for instances of "subversive resistance" in discursive practices such as youth fashion and popular music. In Postmodernism and Popular Culture (1990), Angela McRobbie analyzes "the role of the rag market" and the ongoing popularity of "veteran" fashion as an implicit critique of consumerism and the social inequities of late capitalism. In Black Noise: African American Music and its Impact (1991) Paul Buhle describes how rap music's postmodern concepts evolved significantly in the context of the mid-1970s bankruptcy crisis in New York. Faced with the widespread recrudescence of music programs in the public schools, young people created a new hybrid musical form through "sampling" of existing records and the use of playback and production technologies (such as the turntable and the standard) as instruments in themselves. In Ross's discussion of hip-hop culture there is an emphasis on the poverty, pedagogical, and political force of the discourse that distinguishes her analysis from other critics who treat the random nonsensical

Introduction: What's Left of Modernity?

A somewhat different argument for the revolutionary implications of postmodernity is found in Antonio Negri and Michael Hardt's recent book, Empire. Like both conservative jurists and left-liberal cultural studies scholars, Negri and Hardt argue that capitalism has entered a new stage—or "new times" in the phrase popularized by the British journal Marxism Today. But they emphasize the importance of understanding late-modernity as "crude" and they focus on labor rather than leisure as the driving force of subject-formation in postmodernity. In their view, the synthesis of Taylorism, Fordism, and Keynesianism that characterized under Roosevelt's New Deal produced a "factory society"—"the highest form of disciplinary-government," in which "the entire society, with all its productive and reproductive articulations, is subsumed under the command of capital." In the disciplinary society of late modernity, "productive subjectivities are forged as one-dimensional functions of economic development," but during the 1960s "the expansion of welfare and the universalization of discipline in both the dominant and subordinate coasts created a new engine of freedom for the labor multitudes," accompanied, by key moments of dissent and political destabilization such as the Civil Rights and decolonization struggles, the Vietnam War, and the feminist and gay rights movements (243). In the dominant-capitalist countries, they argue, the social struggles of the 1960s raised the cost of labor to the point at which it eventually forced a change in the "quality and nature" of labor itself.

The disciplinary regime seems no longer sufficient in containing the needs and desires of young people. The prospect of getting a job that guarantees regular and stable work for eight hours a day, five fifty-weeks a year, for an entire working life, the prospect of entering the nonstabilizing regime of the social factory, which had been a dream for many of their parents, now appeared as a kind of death. The class

of youth subcultural styles as self-evidently lucrative.

Absent this self-consciously polemical and pedagogical dimension, however, subversive consumption has obvious limitations as a resistant strategy. In the words of Dick Hebdige, youth subcultural styles are "meaningful mutations," capable of embodying a symbolic refusal of the social consensus in which western democracies depend, but in the end, "we amount of subcultural mutation can alter the oppressive mode in which the commodities used in subculture have been produced." The problems with the "trend-toward consumption" argument are fairly evident. The power to consume is distributed very unevenly, notwithstanding the claims of the dominant ideology. Even for the affluent the power to consume never means the desire produced by the advertising industry. By definition the consumer gratification nulls the critical edge, leaving us stalled in the effort to produce a better world, unaware that conditions could be different. NEOLIBERALISM AND LABOR
refusal of the disciplinary regime, which took a variety of forms but not only a negative expression but also a moment of creation, what Nietzsche calls a transvaluation of values. (273-74)

In order for this revolution to be achieved Negri and Hardt identify three positive demands implicit in this "mass-refusal": the right to global citizenship, the right to a social wage and a guaranteed income, and the right to reappropriation of the means of production (460-467). These are modest, enlightenment-inspired goals of the sort Paul Goodman could subscribe to, but, in Negri and Hardt's analysis, postmodernity presents the conditions for the achievement of these goals. They see the demand for global citizenship, for example, as the inevitable result of a labor regime in which corporations seek to exploit the labor of "under-developed" regions. Inadmissibly, or perhaps the better word is "collatorally," these ventures sometimes result in campaigns for unionization, skills training that translates to (postindustrial) jobs abroad, and higher standards of living that enables workers in the dispersed industries to contest oppressive local regimes and to emigrate to metropolitan regions. Of course, both the industrialized countries and the "developing" countries attempt to control these steps toward global citizenship through immigration quotas and the creation of "international industrial zones" aimed at discouraging unionization. Nonetheless, the counterroutines themselves indicate that the trend toward the "globalization" of labor threatens to undermine the use of national sovereignty as a means of controlling the freedom of workers.

The "new proletariat" of postmodernity is "not a new industrial class." The industrial working class of modernity, Negri and Hardt argue, represented only a temporary stage in the history of the proletariat, a stage at which "capital" was able to reduce value to measure. Production, under the conditions of contemporary global capitalism, by contrast, is more elusive; they call it "biopolitical." In postmodernity "the production of capital converges ever more with the production and reproduction of social life itself; it thus becomes ever more difficult to maintain divisions among productive, reproductive, and unproductive labor." This "calling for a social wage and a guaranteed sustained income for all, Negri and Hardt are opposing in particular the modernist concept of 'family wage,' the fundamental weapon of the sexual division of labor by which the wage paid for the productive laborer's conception is to support the reproductive labor of the worker's wife and dependents at home." (402) Since, in post-Fordist flexible production, labor has become increasingly collective and social, conditions are favorable for the demand that all activity necessary for the production of capital be recognized with an equal compensation such that a social wage is really a guaranteed income, "or, effectively, a 'citizenship income.'" This biopolitical regime of production also gives a distinctive emphasis to the fundamental Marxist demand for the worker's right to control the means of production. In the context of the "informalization of production" in postmodernity, all global citizens must also have "free access to knowledge, information, communication, and affairs." (407)

Attributing the current developments in global capitalism at least partly to the pressure of proletarian resistance rather than simply to capital's escalating need for expanded profits, Negri and Hardt shift the discussion of "desire" from the terrain of consumption to that of production. This moves toward a more focused, active potential for a postmodern revolutionary struggle, one in which the resources and opportunities made available for young people are crucial at stake, and one in which young people might conceivably be mobilized to play a more active role than simply rejection or subversive consumption. But the "new proletarians" Negri and Hardt describe still leaves out huge sectors of the global population. There is an immediate and urgent need to resist further privatization of resources and other kinds of social disinvestment. And, in their Hegelian desire as consumption" they leave aside the question of how to resist the ideological power of consumerism as well as the question of how to mobilize the oppositional force—however limited—from "subversive consumption." These issues are related to the adverse conditions of postmodernity and neoliberalism that make it difficult for young people to take control of their own lives—the relentless pressure to consume, the social disinvestment in education, the harsh responses to youth crises, and the continuing climate of intolerance for cultural diversity that falls heavily on the youn. The following chapters seek to intervene against these conditions and to continue the struggle for a better future.

CONSUMERS AND CRIMINALS

First, Bill Ongbey shows how post-1950s American advertisers successfully used images of "youth as fun" as a metaphor for a new consumer value system promoting commodity consumption and immediate gratification to the middle class as a whole. Those transformations in marketing practices were essential features of a new middle-class faction characterized by its pursuit of "liberated" lifestyles that laid emphasis on the achievements of self-expression and individuality through the consumption of "distinctive" products. From the beginning of the "teenager" phenomenon critics have recognized that the commercial interests ostensibly serving the teenage market were in fact "creating" the market and even the "social concept of the teenager" through their market research methods and media strategies. Ongbey traces the historical development of this criticism from the pessimistic "mass culture" studies of the 1960s and 1970s through the "subversive consumption" arguments of the 1980s and 1990s. To overlook this period he finds an ongoing ambivalence toward youth in the larger society: "almost simultaneously youth is both vilified as the most disposable evidence of cultural bankruptcy and celebrated as the existing precursor to a prosperous future." (Ongbey, 23) This dualistic attitude is borne out in the ways neoliberal policies of social disinvestment depend upon the construction of teenagers as a "market," public education, and especially extra-curricular programs such as music and art education, and services such as health.
care, recreation, and rehabilitation programs for juvenile offenders and other troubled youth are seen as programs and services for a consumer might choose or not choose (assuming ability to pay, of course), rather than as generally beneficial programs and services to which every citizen should have access.

Following Osgerby, Henry Giroux describes the effects of the corporatization of public education on high school students. Ironically, as Giroux points out in his chapter included here, "the corporate model of educational reform wraps itself in the democratic principles of freedom, individualism, and consumer rights," but the result is the inability to provide the broader historical, social, and political context necessary to render such practices meaningful and applicable (Giroux, 39). Faced with ongoing budget difficulties, many school administrators have opened up their captive student markets to fast-food, soft-drink, and athletic-wear companies in order to recoup program funds that should have been provided by tax reversion. Revenue from the sale of junk food on campus to children with limited food choices is considered a way to make a profit on the "brown bag" tax that the teachers have failed to collect.

Meanwhile, in the popular media, young people—especially the poor and young people of color—are denigrated as violent and marked as disposable. Some of the examples of this media hysteria are truly sobering. Giroux cites a spate of recent anti-youth films like 187, a Death Wish-inspired revenge fantasy in which Samuel L. Jackson plays a besuited teacher who systematically murders his problem students. In response to the "war on the young" waged by the corporate culture of neoliberalism, Giroux calls for an educational policy that protects students from coercive consumer appeals and the abandonment of public support for education.

The effects of neoliberal ideology upon inner-city youth are considered in Jerry Phillips' reading of Richard Price's Clockers, a 1992 novel which was later made into a film by Spike Lee. Phillips criticizes postmodern social theory's conception of the inner-city as an "urban jungle," existing outside of history and economic relations. Modernist writers like Marx and Goodwin considered youth alienation in historical and social context, but contemporary postmodern writers often invite us to think of inter-city youth as biologically determined and socially Darwinist terms—as a "breed" of "dangerous animal" (Price, 48). By contrast, Price's novel relentlessly insists upon the fundamental humanity of young people struggling on the margins of the postindustrial city. The sad revelation of the novel is that "while we may have passed beyond modernism in the form of literal statistics of Fordist industrial production, we still remain trapped within the horizon of social possibilities as determined by capitalist political economy."

As Giroux's list of violent anti-youth films demonstrates, one of the most prevalent media images circulating in public discourse during the last decade has been that of the teenager as sociopath. These media images reflect a tendency to replace rehabilitative correctional programs with merely punitive criminal justice for teenage offenders. In "Houseless Young Pedestrians" Gary Smith discusses this critical erosion of the juvenile justice system in the United States. At the end of the

nineteenth-century social reformers in Chicago established an alternative court structure that would become a national model for the rehabilitative treatment of juvenile offenders, but at the end of the twentieth century more and more teenagers are tried in adult courts with mandatory sentence laws that prevent judges from considering their youth or circumstances. At the same time, the economic impact of youth incarceration is significant. The construction of new prisons opens jobs and prosperity for economically depressed rural communities. Inside the prisons, inmates produce products and services for token wages. This neoliberal regime of social dislocation and "market solutions" to social problems helps keep taxes low and labor costs down, while the social costs of writing off so many young people as unwieldable criminals goes uncalculated.

"Growing Up Incarcerated" Elizabeth Kimmel offers a lens to ethnographic discussion of the literacy struggles of adult prisons. Kimmel shows how juvenile correctional facilities and prisons limit prisoners' literacy by systematically regulating prisoners' reading and writing. Seventy percent of prisoners in this country are illiterate, and research shows that when correctional facilities do provide educational opportunities for prisoners, recidivism rates decrease. Nonetheless, correctional institutions are reducing, not increasing, their educational programs. There is no coherent literacy program in any educational programming in our prisons, resulting in inapt and ineffective approaches and conflicting philosophies from state to state and prison to prison. In addition, none of the existing educational programs are designed specifically for prisoners. Mass literacy is a distinctly modernist phenomenon that, by all accounts, is declining in the visibly oriented culture of postmodernity. Yet, the prisoners interviewed by Kimmel see their literacy struggles as vitally important. For these prisoners, the authors of this book confront an oppressive social and institutional order without the mediating release of consumerist escapism, literary means to power against the system.

INTERPELLATION AND SUBJECTIVITY

Andrew Kurtz's and Tim Scheer's chapter explores different modes of interpellation in the gray area between modernist and postmodern subjectivity. In the complex matrix of ideological and interpretive effects of "first-person" video games Kurtz sees a recapitulation of the "manichean ideologies in which the only 'other' in the game is an enemy to be destroyed" that permeate most media and political discourses in the United States. In the public sphere where reductive oppositions and the simplistic responses they evoke are able to become ingenuous and yet also are held in check because they are "filtered through larger discursive structures such as racism, democracy, and globalization" (Kurtz, 107). But these modernist values are absent from the video game. These games give the power a false sense of being in control of their environment through the deployment of a prosthetic device (the joystick) that is very much like the experience of carrying a fire...
Consumerism, Feminism, Hypermasculinity

In "The Big Business of Surfing's Oceanic Feeling," Margaret Henderson analyzes the evolution of the Australian surfing magazine, Tracks, from its beginnings as a vanguard text of the counterculture to its current incarnation as a "glamorous, commercialized, rebelliously adolescent and hypermasculine" argus of postmodern consumerism. In Henderson's reading, the thirty-year history of Australian surfing subculture is interpreted through mapping the connotations of several discourses where the relationship between modernity and postmodernity is textualized—the 1990s counterculture, the professionalization of tenure as sport, second and third-wave feminisms and the attendant backlash, and the consumerist hypermasculinity of corporate-sponsored youth "athletic" all packaged especially for young male readers and surfers. These connotations can be read in Tracks, Henderson argues, because throughout its history the magazine has, however ambivalently, attempted to reconcile the growing contradictions between surfing as a countercultural lifestyle and surfing as a highly commodified professional sport. Over the decades, Tracks has steadily undermined the oppositional political force of the surfing counterculture by hardening its patriarchal ideology and masculinizing symbolic identities against the increasing demands by women for a space in the sport. Australian surfing is a

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For example, one can find in the containment of an oppositional discourse through a consumerist invocation of patriarchal ideology. In the following chapter, Angela Hubler discusses shortcomings in the representation of the "crisis of female adolescence" in writings by both academic and popular writers. Some contemporary observers locate the source of these problems, as Paul Goodman would, in the "nicking culture" that teaches girls that their value lies only in their appearance and sexuality. Nonetheless, they respond to the problems in narrowly psychological terms, offering therapeutic remedies that place the responsibility for the problems on the victims themselves and fail to develop a transformative critique of the social system. Mary Pipher's best-selling trade book, Reviving Ophelia, is a characteristic example. Pipher understands the self-mutilation, eating disorders, depression, multiple unplanned pregnancies, and suicide attempts of the girls she sees as socially induced problems. She provides suggestions for helping girls to develop the self-esteem to survive in a patriarchal society, and she calls for cultural changes such as better sexual-harassment policies and a redefinition of manhood to counter the traditional association of masculinity and violence. But her individualist orientation precludes a discussion of the collective social efforts necessary to change the society that she describes as sick. The problem with analyses like Pipher's, Hubler argues, is also the secret to their success—they simplify, psychologize, and individualize the effects of capitalist patriarchy on adolescent girls, and thereby present a palatable if not very useful version of the crisis of female adolescence for readers.

Concluding this cluster of essays, Jennifer Drake explores the contradictory forces of "third-wave," "capitalist," or "porn" feminism. Though it is strongly influenced by the anti-feminist backlash against the feminist movement of the 1960s and 1970s, third-wave feminism also represents a progressive feminist response to the backlash, drawing on critiques of mainstream academic feminism from working-class women and women of color. Power feminism accentuates many young people across lines of race and class at least partly because it offers success stories rather than victim stories. But the transformative potential of this hopeful, capitalist version of third-wave feminism is easily subsumed under the logic of acquisitive individualism. "Within the dominant culture," Drake observes, "power feminism" has been privileged as the new feminism because it shapes up as competitive individuation, meritocracy, consumerism, and catfighting, its mode being "work, bus, and/or draw your way to the top." Drake, 1984. Drake sees more promise in the "Girl Culture" movement, an aggressively sexy feminist music and "zine" culture that burst in the 1990s. Though it began as a grass-roots movement, Girl Culture was almost immediately colonized by the mass consumer products industry. Some observers, Drake notes, point out, see benefits behind this curse—Girl Culture circulates more widely and becomes a more popular discourse through the capitalist marketing apparatus. Drake is skeptical about this, but she explores two examples of third wave feminist polemic and what might be called a revolutionary public pedagogy in the music of Lauryn Hill and Ani Difranco. In the work of Hill and Difranco, she
demonstrates, Girl Culture intersects with history-saturated oppositional discourses—hip-hop culture for Hill and the folk and punk countercultures for DiFranco—to produce spaces where community and collective action can be imagined and made.

COUNTERCULTURE AND 1968

In "Post-'68: The Cy in the Streets" Astra Taylor traces to the recent wave of anti-global capitalism protests from the perspective of the post-1968 generation. For her, the protests are an expression of the "protest headquarter" of the past: a convergence of the Internet and the "affinity groups" of the 1960s. The Internet, she argues, has allowed for a new kind of organization and mobilization, one that is both decentralized and networked. The protests of 2005-2006 have been described as a "return to the roots" of 1968, a reaction against the perceived failure of the post-1968 generation to establish meaningful connections.

In "To Be Young, Countercultural, and Black," David Jones notes that the term "countercultural" has been associated with black liberation, and that this association is shared by many African American political and cultural activists. To Jones, the term "countercultural" has come to mean a rejection of mainstream culture and a return to African American cultural traditions. Jones argues that the term "countercultural" has often been associated with the idea of black power and radicalism, and that this association has been reinforced by the obfuscation of the term."
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"A Caste, a Culture, a Market": Youth, Marketing, and Lifestyle in Postwar America

Bill Osgerby

The high school set makes its own decisions about what to buy and where to buy it, often dragging their parents along in their wake. Thus teen-age boys have created the vogue for button-down shirts, Bermuda shorts, cologne sweaters, sport shirts, "by League" jackets and loafers. And the junior miss . . . leads the way in redecorating "particles," "man-tailored" shirts, ballet slippers, and skin-tight "skin" skirts or ballooning layers of petticoats.

Eugene Gilbert, in Harper's Magazine, November 1959

Writing in New Yorker in November 1958 cultural critic Dwight Macdonald drew readers' attention to what he depicted as a startlingly new social phenomenon—the American teenager. "Teenagers," the author affirmed, were now "not just children growing into adults but a sharply differentiated part of the population." As a generational cohort of unprecedented numbers, with unique levels of disposable income and an apparent thrust for the exciting opportunities opened up by postwar affluence, it did not seem unreasonable for Macdonald to conclude that young people represented an exceptional social formation. Proclaiming the advent of a "teenage revolution," he argued that American youth had "a style of life that was fast becoming sui generis." In these terms the 1950s had seen youth emerge as both a potent economic force and a compelling cultural influence, Macdonald opining that the American teenager had now taken discrete and distinctive shape as "a caste, a culture, a market."

For Macdonald it was their unparalleled spending power that, above all else, marked out 1950s teenagers as "a new American caste. "Economically," Macdonald