Looking back across forty years, the hyper-rational, science-dazzled Madison Avenue of the 1950s, with its ponderous bureaucracy and its armies of suburban commuters, seems to have been more a bizarre aberration than the advanced and enlightened place of wise consensus its apologists believed it to be. Admen today, although historical judgment is hardly their forte, look back at the rule-bound preachments of Reeves and Ogilvy with a kind of horror: if they study those pronouncements at all, it is to remind them of what they must never do. In other eras, the values and symbols of the industry have usually been the reverse of what they were during the 1940s and 1950s; the business's heroes a series of brazen rule-breakers in touch with the anarchic power of the carnivalesque, its villains the dead-weight yes-men. Tales of workplace madness have been particularly prominent in industry lore in recent years: a full-page newspaper ad placed in 1995 by the employees of the ultracreative Chiat/Day agency remembers Jay Chiat as a man who would "cut off a client's tie if he thinks it's ugly" and who "taught us to squash conventionality like ripe fruit"; Randall Rothenberg's 1995 account of ultracreative Wieden & Kennedy, makers of Nike advertising, details their office basketball playing, their officially sanctioned eccentricity, and at one point has agency principle Dan Wieden instructing his employees that the agency works like "a slime mold . . . we don't do things with what appears to be order."
ing by exploding angrily at a rude, pompous boss. The manic 1930s adman J. Sterling Getchell was notorious for his accelerated pace of living, his reckless personal behavior, and his defiance of clients. He mistrusted “science” and, according to one employee, “composure was against the rule” at his agency. Admen have long served symbolically as über-entrepreneurs, eulogists of capitalism’s endless cycles of change, its celebration of success, its scorn for failure. Their industry, as nearly every account of it not written during the 1950s agrees, tends to celebrate difference and encourage discontent, not to squelch them. After all, the slogan of Young & Rubicam has always been “Resist the Usual.”

But during the 1950s, advertising was marked by what Jackson Lears calls “containment of carnival,” a powerful effort to suppress the industry’s impulse toward difference under a stifling vision of managerial order. In the 1960s, this vision was turned on its head. Advertising narratives suddenly idealized not the repressed account man in gray flannel, but the manic, unrestrained creative person in offbeat clothing. The world of advertising was no longer bureaucratic and placid with scientism; but artistic and dysfunctional, a place of wild passions, broken careers, fear, drunkenness, and occasional violence.

The ads produced by the anarchic figures who led what came to be called the “creative revolution” broke decisively with the stilted, idealized, cliche-ridden style of the 1950s. A clean minimalism replaced complex layouts cluttered with different product claims. Humor, wit, and stylistic elegance returned from the advertising oblivion to which they had been exiled by deadly-serious USP scientism. But the ads of the creative revolution not only differed from those of the gray flannel past: they were openly at war with their predecessors. What distinguished the advertising of the 1960s was its acknowledgment of and even sympathy with the mass society critique. It mocked the empty phrases and meaningless neologisms that characterized the style of the 1950s. It deftly punctured advertising’s too-rosy picture of American life and openly admitted that consuming was not the wonder-world it was cracked up to be. It sympathized with people’s fears about conformity and their revulsion from artificiality and packaged pleasure. It pressed public distrust of advertising and dislike of admen. Comparing one brand to another and finding it lacking was and is a routine advertising technique; in the sixties, advertising actively compared a new, hip consumerism to an older capitalist ideology and left the latter permanently discredited.

It is a curious quirk of sixties historiography that, when running through the list of seismic shifts (in music, literature, movies, youth culture) that gave the decade its character, analysts never include advertising. And yet, given advertising’s immense presence in American public space, the big change in the attitude and language of advertising must be counted as one of the primary features distinguishing the cultural climate of the sixties from that of the fifties. Read as a whole, the best advertising of the sixties constitutes a kind of mass-culture critique in its own right, a statement of alienation and disgust, of longing for authenticity and for selfhood that ranks with books like Growing Up Absurd and movies like The Graduate. The difference between the advertising critique and the others, though, is the crucial point: for the new Madison Avenue, the solution to the problems of consumer society was—more consuming.

how to do it different

The towering figure of the advertising world of the 1960s—and a man of immense cultural significance generally—was Bill Bernbach, the guiding spirit of the Doyle Dane Bernbach agency (DDB). DDB altered the look, language, and tone of American advertising with its long-running campaign for Volkswagen and dozens of other brands; it altered the managerial style of Madison Avenue when its competitors, stunned by the power of DDB’s ads, rushed to replicate its less ordered corporate structure and its roster of creative talent. Advertising writer Larry Dobrow does not exaggerate when he insists that “among advertising professionals then and now, there is unanimous—often reverent—belief that the Doyle Dane Bernbach agency was the unchallenged leader of the creative revolution of the sixties.” Nor does Randall Rothenberg when, discussing the agency’s landmark campaign for Volkswagen, he writes simply that it “changed the culture of advertising.” Bernbach was at once a hard-headed adman and one of postwar consumerism’s most trenchant critics, Madison Avenue’s answer to Vance Packard. The ads his agency produced had an uncanny ability to cut through the overblown advertising rhetoric of the 1950s, to speak to readers’ and viewers’ skepticism of advertising, to replace obvious puffery with what appeared to be straight talk. Bernbach was the first adman to embrace the mass society critique, to appeal directly to the powerful but unmentionable public fears of conformity, of manipulation, of fraud, and of powerlessness, and to sell products by so doing. He invented what we might call anti-advertising: a style which harnessed public mistrust of consumerism—perhaps the most powerful cultural tendency of the age—to consumerism itself.
Doyle Dane Bernbach, the agency which he founded in the decidedly unrevolutionary year of 1949, was dedicated to what proved to be a unique but sound advertising principle. As the industry's preeminent leaders and theorists were amassing mountains of research and formulating scientific rules for effective advertising, Bernbach was declaring that rules were to be scrupulously ignored. The advertising business was fundamentally a matter of creating convincing advertisements, he believed, and no amount of formulas could replace the talented creative individual who performed this function. Bernbach's impulses ran in direct contradiction to the larger trends of the fifties. While writers from Norman Mailer to Theodore Roszak assumed (as many still assume) that the business “establishment” required a rigid, repressive system of order, Bernbach's philosophy of advertising, which would reign triumphant in the 1960s amid a seemingly endless series of successful and celebrated DDB campaigns, was exactly the opposite—a hostility to rules of any kind; a sort of commercial antinomianism.6

Bill Bernbach was an enemy of technocracy long before the counterculture raised its own voice in protest of conformity and the Organization Man. In 1947, he wrote a letter to the owners of the Grey agency, where he was then employed, which spelled out his opposition to the features of business organization that the mass society theorists would soon identify and attack. "I'm worried that we're going to fall into the trap of bigness," he wrote, "that we're going to worship techniques instead of substance..." The crucial problem, Bernbach insisted, was the dominance of rules and science, the priority of statistics and routines, the methods that would soon be heralded by Reeves and others as the hallmarks of an era of certainty.

There are a lot of great technicians in advertising. And unfortunately they talk the best game. They know all the rules. They can tell you that [pictures of] people in an ad will get you greater readership. They can tell you that a sentence should be this short or that long. They can tell you that body copy should be broken up for easier and more inviting reading. They can give you fact after fact after fact. They are the scientists of advertising. But there's one little rub. Advertising is fundamentally persuasion and persuasion happens to be not a science, but an art.7

Bernbach was an ideologue of disorder, an untried propagandist for the business value of the principles of modern art. He repeated his mantra in a variety of forms for years: advertising was an art; art could not be produced by a rigid scientific system. A booklet of his memorable sayings compiled by DDB begins with this aphorism: "Rules are what the artist breaks; the memorable never emerged from a formula." "Imitation can be commercial suicide," runs another. "Research inevitably leads to conformity," he announced in 1967. "For creative people rules can be prisons," he said elsewhere.8 Not only were rules deleterious to the creation of good advertising, but the very idea of established techniques had to be resisted. "Even among the scientists, men who are regarded as worshippers of facts," he wrote in a pamphlet called "Facts Are Not Enough," intuition is critical to discovery: "the real giants have always been poets, men who jumped from facts into the realm of imagination and ideas."9 Sometimes Bernbach's hostility to rules even took on a Consciousness III sort of averse to reason generally. "Logic and overanalysis can immobilize and sterilize an idea," he said. "It's like love—the more you analyze it the faster it disappears."10

In his 1957 account of Madison Avenue. U.S.A., Martin Mayer treats DDB as a peculiar anomaly among the large agencies he studies since it "deliberately rejects most of the tenets of modern agency operation," including research along with rules.11 Instead, Bernbach maximized the freedom of creative workers and eliminated much of the hierarchy and bureaucracy that was customary at large agencies in the 1950s, aiming several years before the publication of Douglas McGregor's book on Theory X and Theory Y to create a less inhibited environment where creative inspiration could be translated more directly into finished advertising. Pointing out in a 1969 interview that excessive supervision was "part and parcel of the big agency curse," DDB copywriter Bob Levenson noted that the agency "isn't highly disciplined, supervised, committed, raked over, mulled over."12 Bernbach's second great organizational innovation was to rationalize the creative operation. Artist and writer would work together on a project rather than somewhere down a chain from top executives. DDB represented a shift in management style that would have vast consequences for the way ads were made, for the way ads appeared, and, ultimately, for the way American capitalism understood itself: Theory X hierarchy came to an end here, and Theory Y management arrived with great financial success.13 So great was the contrast between the organizational style of corporate agencies and that of DDB that, in her early days at the agency, star copywriter Phyllis Robinson told a Japanese publication that "we just felt very free, as if we had broken our shackles, had gotten out of jail, and were free to work the way we wanted to work."14 In 1968, Robinson recalled how DDB's less hierarchical organization proceeded to revolutionize the industry:
In the early days of DDB, everybody on the outside was very hot to know how it was on the inside. How did we do it? So we told them. Bill told them. And told them. And told them. And what happened? Whole agencies introduced their copywriters to their art directors. They'd never met before. The way I understand it, the writers used to put the copy in those pneumatic tubes they used to use in department stores, and it would scoot over to the art director to be "laid out." So—the agencies introduced them, and left them alone. Together. And they gave them freedom. They said, make, do, create! Break rules! And you know what? A lot of very fine stuff started to come out. Some not so fine. But a lot that was.15

For Bernbach's anti-organization to work, though, he had to dramatically alter the traditional relationship between agency and clients in order to convince those who paid for advertising that, even though art had dethroned science in the offices of DDB, his assortment of scribblers was every bit as expert as the "scientists" of Rosser Reeves, and their opinions must be respected. Admen—even of the creative sort—were advertising specialists, he argued. DDB would produce no campaigns like Waksman's repetitive "Love That Soap" because it refused to accede to clients' tastes, however strong-willed they were. As Bernbach told Martin Mayer, "I feel that if the agency makes an ad and the client doesn't like it, the client ought to run it anyway." "Factual error and a violation of corporate policy are the only reasons we'll accept for correction," added DDB account executive Joe Daly.16 Charlie Moss, who began his advertising career at DDB before moving on to Wells, Rich, Greene, one of the era's "hottest" and most successful creative agencies (he ultimately became WRG's president), tells this story about the seriousness of Bernbach's attitude toward a client:

Doyle Dane had a major client, a big advertiser. They had been used to having their own way of advertising for years and years, very specialized product category. They had a brand from this client, and they had been trying to come up with a campaign the client would accept for months and months and months, and they kept getting rejected. Every time they'd go to the client, marketing people, advertising people, they'd say, "no, we don't like that, we want to do it this way, and this and that." And Doyle Dane, the people were outraged, because this was not the normal for Doyle Dane, they were normally used to getting their way. So they went to Bill Bernbach, and they said, "Look, you've got to come to this next meeting, we're going to have it with the chairman of the client company...you've got to convince the chairman to tell his people to let us have our way, we know what we're doing." So...they all went, they're sitting across the table in this big board room. Bernbach says to this guy, "you know, we're working with your people for six months now, we can't get anything through, you have to tell them that we are advertising experts, we know what we're doing, and we demand some respect in this area." And the chairman says to Bernbach, "Well, I'm sorry, Mr. Bernbach, but we've been selling our products for years and years and years, and we've been extremely successful as you know, we think we know something about how to market them. And I'm sorry, but our people will have to have final say over what the advertising's going to be." At which point Bernbach, who was prepared for this, turned to him and said, "well, then in that case, Doyle Dane Bernbach will have to resign your business." And the chairman of the client company looked at his marketing director and said, "Are they allowed to do that?" 17

Even as it was overturning the pseudo-science of Reeves and Ogilvy in favor of the intangibles of aesthetic inspiration, the Creative Revolution greatly advanced those men's efforts to professionalize advertising. In Waksman's day, admen had been glorified "hucksters," cringing yes-men without independent will or access to any knowledge at all that might contradict the client's authority, but in the age of Bernbach they were to be creative geniuses, in touch with a spirit of commerce that resided beyond the mundane world of hierarchy and order. The limitations Bernbach placed on his clients' authority also led directly to the rapidly escalating willingness to violate the conventions of commercial speech that characterized his agency's—and the coming decade's—advertising. A number of DDB's most famous campaigns, like the Volkswagen ads that played on the car's ugliness and the Avis ads that proclaimed "We're Number Two," were extremely distasteful to clients and would surely have been nixed had they not already agreed to defer to the agency's decision.18 Charlie Moss believes that "because it operated that way," DDB vastly increased the latitude within which creative people could operate.

For those talented people, it really gave them the strength of their convictions. It said, "Hey, look, if I really believe this, if I really think this is going to work for that client, I can push it, really, to the point of almost resigning the business." And what happened was, there were big ideas that would have normally been thrown right out, which prevailed. The Avis campaign was a very good example. It tested terribly, they hated the idea when they first saw it. Everything would have dictated these days that campaign would have been history.19

The reign of "groupthink" began to end, at least in the advertising industry, in the early 1960s. Freed to do what the agency thought best, DDB's
creative teams would proceed to smash the advertising conventions built up throughout the age of organization.

alienated by the conformity and hypocrisy of mass society? have we got a car for you!

Bernbach's innovations in agency organization contradicted the prevailing management theories of the 1950s. But if his management style seems to have been designed to avoid the quagmire of "groupthink" and bureaucracy, his approach to advertising itself took mass society on directly, discarding the visual and verbal cliches of Madison Avenue, U.S.A., and saying the unsayable: consumerism has given us a civilization of plastic and conformity, of deceit and falsehoods. Bernbach's style wasn't so much promotion as it was cultural criticism, foreshadowing the postmodern meta-advertising of the 1990s discussed by Randall Rothenberg and James B. Twitchell. And while DDB's less-hierarchical structure was copied in office towers across Manhattan, its characteristic advertising style was, by the end of the decade, pervasive across the sponsored surfaces of American public space.

The advertising that DDB began making for Volkswagen in 1959 is one of the most analyzed, discussed, and admired campaigns in the industry's history, studied in introductory marketing classes and included in advertising retrospectives of all kinds. Not only did it incite critics and incite commentary from every branch of the media, but it is widely believed to have made Volkswagen a competitive brand in America. The campaign's power derived from its blunt transgression of nearly every convention of auto advertising. And its success validated overnight the Bernbach creative philosophy, set a thousand corporations off in search of similar ads for themselves, and precipitated a revolution in ad-making. Within a few years, it had become a revered classic for an age at war with reverence and classicism. Randall Rothenberg enumerates the varieties of transgression that the campaign would unleash:

It changed the rules. Agencies were now no longer punished but rewarded for arguing with clients, for breaking the guidelines of art direction, for clowning around in the copy, for using ethnic locations and academic references and a myriad of other once-forbidden formulae. Seemingly overnight, a great wave of originality engulfed the advertising profession, transforming agencies and agency-client relationships and, in turn, the impressions made on millions of Americans.

The history of consumer society is largely the history of the automobile, of the prosperity it brought to blue-collar workers, of the mobility and sexual freedom it permitted, and of the myriad consumer fantasies with which it was associated in the years after World War II. In the 1950s, the advertising of the three big Detroit automakers (which are always among the ten largest advertisers in the country) was the stuff of technocratic fantasy. Cars were designed and advertised to resemble the exciting hardware of the Cold War: streamlined, finned like airplanes, fitted with elaborate-looking controls, decorated with flashing chrome and abstract representations of rockets or airplanes. In ads, cars were posed next to jet fighters and radar dishes; Buick put holes in the side of its hoods to resemble airplane exhausts and named one model "B-58"; Oldsmobile offered "rocket action," built both an "F-85" and a "Starfire" (the actual name for the Air Force F-94); a 1958 Dodge advertisement invited readers to "take off" in a new model and declared that "the new Swept-Wing look for '59 is set off by thrusting Jet-Trail Tail Lamps." Cars were markers of managerial efficiency in the worst Organization Man way. While the 1958 Edsel merely "says you're going places," ads for the 1961 Buick marked a pinnacle of other-directed boorishness:

What a wonderful sense of well-being just being seen behind its wheel. No showing off. Just that Clean Look of Action which unmistakably tells your success.

Auto advertising of the 1950s redounded with empty phrases and meaningless neologisms, announcing cars with "radical new Turbo-Thrust" engines, "QuadrabPower Roadability," and "Finger-tip TorqueFlite." The cars so trumpeted were always populated with idealized white nuclear families, manly husbands, fawning wives, and playful children. In television commercials, cars were objects of worship mounted on rotating platforms and, in one famous 1963 Chevrolet commercial, perched atop an insurmountable mesa and photographed from an orbiting airplane. And every year cars' designs would change, the new models trumpeted in advertising ("All new all over again!" exclaimed those for the 1959 Chevrolet) as the epitome of modernity, the old models and all their fine adjectives forgotten and discarded as surely as the cars themselves would be by the time they traveled 100,000 miles.

And each of these aspects of the car culture was, by the early 1960s, a point of considerable popular annoyance and even disaffection. Cars and their advertising, which brought together so many objectionable features of the era, were the aspect of the mass society most vulnerable
to criticism, pounded with particular effectiveness in popular books by Vance Packard, John Kenneth Galbraith, and John Keats (The Insolent Chariots). Americans learned that the big three automakers changed styles every year in order to intentionally obsolete their earlier products and that their cars were designed to break down and fall apart after a certain amount of time. The car culture—and perhaps consumer culture in general—was a gigantic fraud. In his 1964 book One Dimensional Man, Herbert Marcuse describes the conflicted thinking of American car buyers of those years:

I ride in a new automobile. I experience its beauty, thinness, power, convenience—but then I become aware of the fact that in a relatively short time it will deteriorate and need repair; that its beauty and surface are cheap, its power unnecessary, its size idiotic; and that I will not find a parking place. I come to think of my car as a product of one of the Big Three automobile corporations. The latter determine the appearance of my car and make its beauty as well as its cheapness, its power as well as its shakiness, its working as well as its obscenity. In a way, I feel cheated. I believe that the car is not what it could be, that better cars could be made for less money. But the other guy has to live, too. Wages and taxes are too high; turnover is necessary; we have it much better than before. The tension between appearance and reality melts away and both merge in one rather pleasant feeling.27

With the exception of the final three sentences, Marcuse might well have been writing copy for a Volkswagen ad. Although Volkswagen, no doubt, wanted consumers to experience a “rather pleasant feeling,” their ads aimed to push the “tension between appearance and reality” to the point of breaking the bond between Americans and the Big Three, steering consumers toward what they repeatedly described as a “better car . . . made for less money.”

Doyle Dane Bernbach’s debunking campaign for Volkswagen began in 1959, puncturing the mythos of the American automobile in the very year of maximum tailfins on the GM cars. The ads, as a veritable army of advertising writers has noted over the years, defied the auto-advertising conventions of the 1950s in just about every way they could. While the American automakers used photographic tricks to elongate cars,28 DDB graphically foreshortened the Volkswagen. The early ads were in black and white and were startlingly minimalist: the cars appeared on a featureless background without people or passengers; copy was confined to three small columns on the bottom of the page. The ads were always organized around a pun or joke, an extremely rare thing at the time, especially since the pun or joke usually seemed to mock the car’s distinct low shape or its no-tailfin, little-chrome ugliness. Instead of boasting with Technicolor glint, the artwork for the Volkswagen campaign committed such bizarre heresies as including only a tiny picture in the upper left-hand corner of an almost blank page, depicting the car floating in water, drawn onto an egg, drawn onto a graph, dented in an accident, crossed out, crushed by a car-scraping machine, or absent altogether except for a pair of tracks in the snow.

Aside from the Volkswagen ads’ graphic distinctiveness, the “honesty” of their copy is their most often-remarked feature, and it is certainly the most striking characteristic when viewed in context, alongside conventional advertising from the 1950s. Gone is the empty claptrap Americans had learned to associate with advertising; gone are the usual buzzwords, the heavily retouched photographs, the idealized drawings. In their place is a new tone of plain talk, of unadorned simplicity without fancy color pictures and beautiful typefaces.29 But what really distinguishes the Volkswagen ads is their attitude toward the reader. The advertising style of the 1950s had been profoundly contemptuous of the consumer’s intelligence, and consumers knew it: in the wake of The Hucksters, The Hidden Persuaders, the quiz show scandals, and the various FTC lawsuits against fraudulent advertisers, consumer skepticism toward advertising was at an all-time high. The genius of the Volkswagen campaign—and many of DDB’s other campaigns—is that they took this skepticism into account and made it part of their ads’ discursive apparatus. They spoke to consumers as canny beings capable of seeing through the great heaps of puffery cranked out by Madison Avenue. As Jerry Della Femina admiringly observed, the Volkswagen campaign was “the first time the advertiser ever talked to the consumer as though he was a grownup instead of a baby.”30

What made the Volkswagen ads seem “honest” are the curious admissions of (what appear to be) errors with which the ads are peppered. The sedan is “ugly” and “looks like a beetle”; the Volkswagen station wagon is “a monster” that “looked like a shoe box” with “a flat face and square shape”; an experimental model that never saw production was “something awful. Take our word for it.” To make such admissions, even counterbalanced as they were with humor (“Could it be that ours aren’t the funny looking cars, after all?”) was a violation of fundamental principles of salesmanship. So were the campaign’s occasional admissions that Volkswagen was, like everyone else, a profit-driven corporation; “since we have this burning desire to stay in business,” etc.31 This species of
commercial "honesty" was a strategy DDB used to great effect in a number of other campaigns as well: Avis forthrightly declaring itself the "Number Two" auto-renter, Lowrey Piano confessing in 1965 that 1923 was "the year to be in the piano business," or Utica Beer admitting that "our beer is 50 years behind the times." Within a few years, the technique was copied widely: creative superstars Wells, Rich, Greene's Benson & Hedges advertising focused on "The Disadvantages" of long cigarettes; J. Walter Thompson's ads for Listerine admitted the product's terrible flavor, exclaiming "I Hate It, But I Love It."32

But by far the most powerful feature of the Volkswagen ads—and a feature which one can find throughout DDB's oeuvre—is their awareness of and deep sympathy with the mass society critique. Not only do the authors of these ads seem to have been reading The Hidden Persuaders, The Waste Makers and The Insolent Charities, they are actively contributing to the discourse, composing cutting jibes against the chrome-plated monsters from Detroit and proffering up Volkswagen as badges of alienation from the ways of a society whose most prominent emblems were the tailfin and the tract home with a two-car garage.

The foolishness of planned obsolescence was a particular target of DDB's Volkswagen campaign. Ads from the early sixties emphasized the car's lack of highly visible change and mocked Detroit's annual restyling sprees. Below one picture of the car, spotlighted as if at an auto show (a favorite Volkswagen target), runs the caption "The '51 '52 '53 '54 '55 '56 '57 '58 '59 '60 '61 Volkswagen." In another, headlined "How to tell the year of a Volkswagen," close-up photographs point out the minute changes the manufacturer has in fact made over the years (the picture for 1957 is blank: "No visible change"), each of them done not "to make it look different" but "only to make it work better." The ads appealed, as did the works of popular criticism which informed them, to a preconsumerist thriftiness and a suspicion of ornament and fashion. The Volkswagen boasted "no fancy gadgets, run by push buttons"; instead, ads spoke of the car's reliability, its solid construction, its ease of repair, and its efficiency.33

Later ads extended the attack to other aspects of the car culture. A 1964 ad took on the questionable and tasteless practices of car dealers, dressing up the anti-car in ludicrous sale decorations, wondering "why they run clearance sales on brand new cars," and faux-confessing, "Maybe it's because we don't quite understand the system." A 1966 ad assailed the vanity of cars as status symbols, comparing the efficiency of the "ugly little bug" to the fleeting looks of "a big beautiful chariot, drawn by 300 horses!" and quietly reversing the old Edsel slogan: "If you want to show you've gotten somewhere, get a big beautiful chariot. But if you simply want to get somewhere, get a bug." Another 1966 ad heaped scorn on "frivulous" automotive faddishness by asking, "Has the Volkswagen fad died out?" and confessing that, since it is so "completely sensible," "as afad, the car was a flop."34

On occasion, DDB even encouraged readers to demystify the techniques of admaking. Volkswagen advertisements called attention to themselves as advertisements, and to the admaking philosophy that informed them. As one from 1964 put it rather disingenuously, "Just because we sell cars doesn't put selling at the top of our agenda." Another asked, "How much longer can we hand you this line?" (the "line" being the car's peculiar silhouette). So similar in format were the various Volkswagen print ads, and so familiar to readers, that in 1963 the company ran an ad with no picture, no headline, three blank columns, and instructions on "How to do a Volkswagen ad." But the ad's Volkswagen message was overshadowed by its pitch for DDB and the new style of advertising that acknowledged the audience's intelligence:

4. Call a spade a spade. And a suspension a suspension. Not something like "orbital cushioning."
5. Speak to the reader. Don't shout. He can hear you. Especially if you talk sense.35

The ad knocks Detroit's standard puffery in a way that Detroit could not possibly refute given its standard admaking style of the 1950s. In pretending to teach the reader to read ads critically, it naturally overlooks the new style invented by DDB: advertisers are liars, except, of course, this one. Conventional ad campaigns were incapable of responding in kind, since their appeal rested not on empowered readers but the fraudulent appeal of retouched photographs, dream-world imagery, and empty celebrity testimonials. For one of the Big Three's ads to admit to its ad-ness would be to undermine the various tricks that gave them whatever appeal they still had.

The Volkswagen critique was easily extended to the other objectionable features of consumer society. Even though it varied only little over the years, DDB cast it as a car for people who thought for themselves and were worried about conformity. A 1965 print ad confronts the issue directly, incorporating one of the standard icons of postwar order: a suburban street lined with look- alike houses, no trees, and tiny shrubs. But parked in the driveway of each house is a Volkswagen station wagon. "If
the world looked like this, and you wanted to buy a car that sticks out a little,” the copy advised,

you probably wouldn’t buy a Volkswagen Station Wagon.

But in case you haven’t noticed, the world doesn’t look like this.

So if you’ve wanted to buy a car that sticks out a little, you know just what to do.36

Volkswagen’s television commercials went out of their way to lampoon various sacred rituals of the consumer culture. A 1967 spot mocks game shows, the glittering dream factories of daytime television whose charm has been undermined by a congressional investigation ten years before. “Gino Milano,” a “little shoemaker” in awkward-looking glasses and bushy hair, answers questions about cars on a parody program called “The Big Plateau” while an audience of dowdy-looking women in pearls and cats-eye glasses watches anxiously. This quintessential middle American is eventually “done in by [questions about] the 1968 Volkswagen,” failing to appreciate the nuances of the company’s anti-obsolescence policy.37

Volkswagen’s most incisive critique of American consumer frivolity came in a 1969 television commercial that lampooned the “1949 Auto Show,” one of the great promotional fairs held in the year Volkswagen was introduced to America. Filmed in black and white to establish the setting, the spot focuses on the elaborate displays and misguided decorative designs of several defunct automakers. The Hudson display features three women singing, in the style of the Andrews Sisters, a little ditty that features the line, “Longer, lower, wider.” A spokeswoman for Studebaker compares her car’s peculiar styling to “Long skirts,” which she assured her audience to “be the next look on the fashion scene.” A DeSoto dazzles from a revolving platform. And a man in a white smock gestures toward his model (a Buick, although its brand name is not given) with a pointer and says, “So there’s no doubt about it. Next year, every car in America will have [pause] holes in its side.” Meanwhile, in an unadorned corner, without benefit of microphone, revolving pedestal, or audience, the Volkswagen spokesman delivers his simple talk about “constantly . . . changing, improving, and refining this car. Not necessarily to keep it in style with the times, but to make a better car.” Not only is the industry’s puffery transparently ridiculous in retrospect, but a number of its practitioners have actually gone out of business.

“1949 Auto Show” was a celebration of victory in two distinct ways. First, it trumpeted Volkswagen’s spectacular sales success since 1949, the year in which, according to a 1960 ad, it had sold only two cars in America. Second, it signaled the victory of the Creative Revolution, of the DDB techniques over the empty puffery of the recent past. As the camera pans over the “1949 Auto Show,” many of the standard postwar advertising clichés are represented: the glamorous singing girls, the Reevesian authority figure in spectacles and white smock, the handsome pitchman with a microphone, the car on the revolving platform. As a result of DDB’s campaigns for Volkswagen, which first brought national attention to the new creativity, all of these selling methods are as obsolete as the tailfins, chrome, and portholes for which they were once employed. By 1969, none of the major automakers would dare to use such techniques: in just a few years, the DDB approach had made them stilted and old-fashioned, awkward emblems of a laughably outmoded past, so ancient that they had to be filmed in black and white to be properly distanced from the present.38

from nazi car to love bug

The Volkswagen campaign also marks a strange episode in the history of co-optation. Accounts of the counterculture generally agree on the Volkswagen (either “bug” or “microbus”) as the auto of choice among the dropped-out. For many countercultural participants, the Volkswagen seemed an antithesis to the tailfinned monsters from Detroit, a symbolic rebuke of the product that had become a symbol both of the mass society’s triumph and of its grotesque excesses. The Volkswagen was the anti-car, the automotive signifier of the uprising against the cultural establishment.

But “anti-car” was hardly a natural or normal signifier for the brand. In fact, at one time Volkswagen bore the ugly stigma of the mass society to an extent that American cars could never touch: in the fifties, the Volkswagen was known as nothing less than a Nazi product. George Lois, who worked on the Volkswagen account when it first went to Doyle Dane Bernbach in 1959, recalled some years later that

It was hard to forget that Hitler himself was directly involved in designing the Volkswagen. Even though the Fuchsler was helped along by the Austrian car engineer Dr. Ferdinand Porsche, the cute Volkswagen in 1959 reminded lots of people about the ovens. Julian [Koenig, who wrote the first round of copy for the campaign] was Jewish and wouldn’t forget it.39
Bernbach himself was Jewish as well, and it is one of the great ironies of the decade that his agency, which also produced celebrated advertising for El Al airlines and Levy's Jewish Rye Bread, was responsible for humanizing what Lois calls "the Nazi car."

That by the end of the decade the Volkswagen had acquired an image that was more hip than Nazi must be regarded as one of the great triumphs of American marketing. The irony that several of the creators of this image were Jewish was trumped by the irony implicit in that Volkswagen's hipness was a product of advertising, the institution of mass society against which hip had declared itself most vehemently at odds. The Volkswagen story, in other words, is the co-optation theory turned upside down, a clear and simple example of a product marketed as an emblem of good-humored alienation and largely accepted as such by the alienated.

DDB's ads for Volkswagen simultaneously attacked obsolescence in the world of automobiles and contributed to it mightily in the world of advertising, rendering ancient overnight the Madison Avenue dreams of the fifties. As a form of anti-advertising that worked by distancing a product from consumerism, the Volkswagen ads introduced Americans to a new aesthetic of consuming. No longer would advertising labor to construct an idealized but self-evidently false vision of consumer perfection; instead it would offer itself as an antidote to the patent absurdities of affluence. This, then, was the great innovation of the Creative Revolution, the principle to which Bernbach referred when he spoke so enthusiastically of "difference": the magic cultural formula by which the life of consumerism could be extended indefinitely, running forever on the discontent that it itself had produced. Hip was indeed the solution to the problems of the mass society, although not in the way its ideologues had intended. What distinguishes the advertising of the Creative Revolution is that, following Volkswagen's lead, it takes into account—and offers to solve—the problems that consumerism had created. In the hands of a newly enlightened man in gray flannel, hip would become the dynamic principle of the 1960s, a cultural perpetual motion machine transforming disgust with consumerism into fuel for the ever-accelerating consumer society.

Thanks to the agency's signature visual style (simple photographs, minimalist layout, large, clever headlines), DDB advertising of the early sixties is generally easy to distinguish from the other ads in the glossy magazines where it appeared. Even more remarkable, though, is the consistency with which the agency referred to the mass society critique. Remarks about the fraudulence of consumerism and expressions of disgust with the system's masters run as a sort of guiding theme through virtually everything DDB did. Disgust with the consumer society was both the agency's aesthetic forte and its best product pitch, applicable to virtually anything: Buy this to escape consumerism.

The DDB critique is visible in such out-of-the-way places as a 1961 ad for "The remarkable Parker 61" fountain pen, which declares that "In this age of mass production and slickness (and sometimes, shoddiness), it's good to look upon a truly fine thing." Or it can be seen, more openly, in a 1967 ad for El Al that cast the Israeli airline as a place free of the affected manners of the technocracy. Above a rather alarming photograph of a stewardess with a clownlike smile painted on her face is the declaration, "Maybe You Don't Want to Look at a Painted-on Smile All the Way to Europe." People are not robots or laboratory animals, and El Al knows it: "we feel our engines should turn on and off with a flick of a switch; not our stewardesses." Ads for American Tourister mocked, in typically self-effacing DDB style, virtually any aspect of the consumer culture that could be brought into contact with suitcases. Since the point was to demonstrate the product's resistance to clumsiness, accidents, and malicious misbehavior, the campaign provided ample opportunity for more "realistic" renderings of consumer life. People foolishly run over American Touristers in cars; they drop American Touristers from airplanes. American Tourists (like Volkswagens) are too durable to serve as status symbols: "The trouble with an American Tourister is nobody knows you've been around," a 1968 ad faux-confessed. Even the jolly mentals of the consumer world who were always romanticized in older advertising (the admiring butler, the compliant porter, the beloved Philip Morris bellboy) are lampooned in one 1970 American Tourister television commercial: a suitcase is tossed into a zoo cage, snapped up by a particularly violent ape who snorts and growls and smashes it about. Meanwhile, a placid announcer speaks of "savage bagagemasters," "clumsy bellboys," "brutal cab drivers," and "all butter-fingered luggage handlers all over the world." While in earlier spots such humble figures would have been rendered in friendly terms, here they are compared to apes.

The most mockable institution of the consumer society was, of course, the deeply mistrusted practice of the advertising industry, and DDB took to the task with gusto. Many of their ads commented on previous advertising and knocked the deceptive legs out from under the older style. DDB played on the reader's cognizance of clutter, his boredom and disgust with advertising discourse. Before the 1960s, most ads ap
proached the reader as a neutral element of the "editorial" text that surrounds it: its intent to sell is rarely mentioned openly, the assumptions and processes by which it is created remain concealed. But the works of DDB would occasionally admit themselves to be and even discuss themselves as ads, aware of the medium by which they are presented and of the discourse into which they have been inserted. A 1964 ad for Chivas Regal whiskey typifies the agency's pseudo-hostility toward advertising: under the headline, "Don't bother to read this ad," the full page of copy below is crossed out.*

The agency's ads for Calvert Whiskey, which it dubbed "The Soft Whiskey," made a point of mocking more conventional whiskey advertising. After having come up with what may well be the most slickly meaningless product claim for a whiskey of all time ("soft" whiskey was supposed to be somehow "easier to swallow," a double-entendre of which the ads made much), the agency proceeded to denounce liquor advertising in general for its slick meaninglessness. "Is it just another slogan?" asked one of the campaign's 1966 headlines. Of course not: It required far more than "some sharp talk on Madison Avenue" to make the brand so popular.**

DDB's Calvert ads contained a streak of consumer populism as profound as those for Volkswagen. "It just so happens, you can't fool all the people all the time," one insisted, in the course of explaining why the advertising industry's tricks would be insufficient to sell the stuff. "One sip and you can write your own Soft Whiskey ad," proclaimed another, over a layout of product photos and blank lines. One 1964 installment actually depicted a consumer defacing one of the brand's special Christmas decanters by removing its label under running water, encouraging this anti-consumer practice on the grounds that "The people who drink it will know it's Soft Whiskey anyhow."*

Sometimes the DDB strategy of identifying products with public suspicion of advertising was more overt than others. As a 1966 print ad in the Avis rent-a-car campaign put it,

People in this country don't believe anything they read in ads anymore.
And with good reason.
Most advertising these days is long on the big promise—a promise that the product doesn't always deliver.**

As a rule, advertising never acknowledges authorship or any other factors which would make clear its status as artifice; yet an Avis ad from 1965 openly proclaims itself to have been fabricated by a professional adman. "I write Avis ads for a living," the copy maintains. "But that doesn't make me a paid liar." The writer goes on to complain about an Avis car he rented which did not meet one of Avis's minor promises. Again the sponsor admits to a minor shortcoming, and again the end result is not the destruction of Avis's reputation, but its burnishing. Avis confesses—it's human, too—and its credibility is thus increased, as it is when the company forthrightly admits itself to be "Number Two." The anonymous ad writer even declares his professional reputation (that quality mocked by Victor Norman in *The Hucksters*) to have been threatened so severely by Avis's tiny oversight that it must never be allowed to happen again: "So if I'm going to continue writing these ads, Avis had better live up to them. Or they can get themselves a new boy." The ad concludes with a trick that seems to "prove" Avis's honesty by challenging them to "confess" their wrongdoing. "They'll probably never run this ad." And yet there it is, being run.***

The familiar spokesman models of the fifties, in their suits or lab coats, were a particular target of the DDB critique. In the Rosser Reeves era, the product pitchman had been a pretty predictable figure: a deep-voiced male whose authority was often augmented by spectacles and books, smiling when appropriate and always speaking earnestly and glibly of the product in question. Boring and respectable, he was a stock image of postwar order, an obvious symptom of the corporate world's problems with creativity and bureaucracy. And he was the target of several humiliating Doyle Dane Bernbach commercials. In a 1965 television spot for Campbell's Pork and Beans, the product's flavorfulness is demonstrated by a male spokesman, accompanied by his female assistant, who tastes the product while seated in a convertible with the top down and headed into a car wash. The spokesman carries on gaily through the soap and brushes, talking up the beans even as he is thoroughly soaked; his assistant insists, in the best product-demonstrator fashion, that despite the deluge "You can still taste the sauce!" At the spot's conclusion the car is filled to the brim with water, and the discomfited male is now unable to start the motor. "D'you think it's flooded?" asks his assistant, laughing uncontrollably. A famous 1968 commercial demonstrated the nonsagging qualities of Burlington Mid-Length Socks by showing them in action on the legs of a balding businessman in horn-rimmed glasses, white shirt, and narrow tie sitting in a minimalist modern chair. Everything about him is respectable, even distinguished-looking, except for the fact that he wears no trousers, only underwear and one of the socks in question. "We've
asked you to put on a short sock the length most men wear,” an announcer says, “and Burlington’s new mid-length sock.” The man is challenged to “make it fall down,” and accordingly he begins to leap about the set, gritting his teeth, whirling around and waving his arms. Naturally, all his activity is for nought, the sock refuses to sag, and he abandons the struggle in exhaustion. The pant-less patriarch’s humiliation is complete.50

Then there is the DDB commercial that won all the prizes—and still does, whenever a trade group or publication decides to designate the “top ads of all time.” It is a 1970 spot for Alka-Seltzer that dramatizes the product by depicting, of all things, the making of a television commercial in which an actor is required to eat from a plate of spaghetti and exclaim, “Mama mia! That’s a spicy meatball!” Unfortunately, the actor fumbles his lines again and again, and we hear a director’s voice saying things like “cut” and “take fifty-nine.” The viewer suffers through each attempt with short clips that appear to be actual outtakes from a filming session. The commercial was a masterpiece of the agency’s long effort to turn public skepticism into brand loyalty: it recognizes advertising as artifice, and as a particularly ridiculous—and transparent—form of artifice as well. The actor is plugging an absurd product, a brand of ready-made meatballs that come in an enormous jar; he is filmed on an absurdly contrived set, with a smiling Italian mother type standing over him as he essays the dish; and when delivering his lines he adopts a grotesque Italian accent, which, of course, he drops when pleading with the director. Advertising itself—especially the prerevolutionary variety with its stock figures, its stereotypes, its contrivances, its fakery—is ridiculous stuff. Only Alka-Seltzer, which intervenes to rescue the long-suffering actor’s tormented digestion, stands above the mockery. Consumerism, like Alka-Seltzer, now promised to relieve Americans from their consuming excesses.51

But the agency’s best-remembered achievement was its 1964 election-year effort to sell none other than President Johnson as a symbol of opposition to mass society’s greatest horror—the specter of nuclear war. Without giving Barry Goldwater’s name, the commercial managed to portray the 1964 contest as a choice between automated holocaust and preconsumer innocence: a child playing with a daisy fades into a mechanical-sounding adult voice counting down to a nuclear explosion. Over the years, the commercial has been criticized as an unfair portrayal of Goldwater’s views, and it is certainly true that Goldwater was not, strictly speaking, in favor of nuclear destruction. But the commercial’s power has nothing to do with Goldwater, or with Johnson, for that matter. It aimed,
Before you buy any low-priced car, drive the new
F-85
It's every inch an OLDSMOBILE!

Take a seat in the massive interior ... and you'll find the difference a half mile of smooth road makes.

The Olds 385 engine is the most powerful, smoothest, most economical engine in its price class. More than 80,000 people have driven it for miles and miles.

BUILT FOR THE RIVER WHO HANTS
SOMETHING BETTER IN A SMALLER CAR.

the utopian imagination of the Detroit automakers,
Oldsmobile, 1961. This is an idea of consensus order as one will find anywhere in American culture: Norman Rockwell landscapes, patriotic colonial architecture, confident man, jaunty wife, mirthful children, jolly firemen, and reassuring reminders of the jet-age military. Five years later an ad like this would appear to be from a different country.
CLEAR HEADS AGREE Calvert IS BETTER

so banal it's surreal.

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

The '51 '52 '53 '54 '55 '56 '57 '58 '59 '60 '61 Volkswagen.

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

Yes.

A car can be expensive without being expensive. Volkswagen. It's not only more practical, it's less practical. You'd have to drive a hundred miles to get it to work. And you'd have to drive two hundred miles to make the car run. So it's not practical. But it is expensive. It's not only more expensive, it's less expensive. You'd have to drive a hundred miles to get it to work. And you'd have to drive two hundred miles to make the car run. So it's not practical. But it is expensive.

It is a practical car. It is not practical. It is more practical. It is less practical. You'd have to drive a hundred miles to get it to work. And you'd have to drive two hundred miles to make the car run. So it's not practical. But it is expensive. It's not only more expensive, it's less expensive. You'd have to drive a hundred miles to get it to work. And you'd have to drive two hundred miles to make the car run. So it's not practical. But it is expensive.

Volkswagen versus mass society.

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

Soft Whiskey.
Is it just another slogan?

If something is true, we'd be in big trouble by now. But just so happens, you can't sell the people all the time. And the people who taste Soft Whiskey and come back again aren't telling a slogan. You see, it took more than some ad talk on Madison Avenue to make Soft Whiskey soft.

The time, money and thousands of experiments that failed miserably before we had it:

Tippecanoe and Tyler, too!

A whiskey that went down as easy as... well, Soft Whiskey.

But take heed:
That softness goes just so far.
After that, Soft Whiskey is 86 proof. Doing what any other respectable 86 proof whiskey can do.
(And just that getting there is a whole lot easier.)

Naming Soft Whiskey was almost as easy as swallowing it.
One sip and you could have done it yourself.

the anticommercial whiskey.

Calvert Whiskey. 1966. Eight years later, with the giant glove nowhere to be found, DDB is selling Calvert whiskey as the antithesis of empty. "Madison Avenue" promises. After having come up with what may well have been the most slickly meaningless product claim for liquor of all time ("soft whiskey"), DDB proceeded to denounce liquor advertising in general for its slick meaninglessness.
MAYBE
YOU DON'T WANT
TO LOOK AT
A PAINTED-ON SMILE
ALL THE WAY
TO EUROPE.

the airline of authenticity.

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

I hate conformity because

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

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

Dodge, 1965. You say you've had it with Detroit-style consumerism? Then so has Detroit. Salvation is as easy as stepping out of everyday life.

Like the Dodge Rebellion, Mustang's promise to deliver consumers from ordinary life was exact. Front-wheel drive, McPherson suspension, and low instrument panel beckoned. As did its storage compartment, which was huge enough for a bowling ball, two pairs of skis, and your winter clothes. But the most important feature was the Mustang air filter. It was a great improvement over the standard Ford air cleaner. Mustang was the best car ever made.
Today, millions of Life readers are getting young ideas. The '68 "youngmobiles" from Oldsmobile are here.

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

1968 Buick. Now we're talking your language.

The engine is now, too. A 230-hp V-8 powerhouse, it's standard on all Skylark Custom models.

We also refused to limit your choices. Skylark Custom comes in four models, 12 colors and 32 trim combinations. So talk to the man who talks your language, your Buick dealer.

All Buicks have the full line of General Motors safety features as standard equipment. For example, seat back latch with padded side impact energy absorption. Wouldn't you really rather have a Buick?
Facts. Figures. Data. Reel after reel after reel. Wouldn't it be nice to have an Escape Machine?

It's here! 1970 Olds Cutlass Supreme, a totally new idea in elegance.

-的文章, the 250 HP, full-size Rocket V-8 performance.

- Exclusive new Positive Value Rotators. Check. What do they do for you? They raise the valve consistency—providing better valve sealing and perfect sealing for longer, more efficient engine operation. Check. And a price that will easily fit your budget.

Oldsmobile: Escape from the ordinary.

"organization man" mutiny,

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

creativity yes, youth culture no.

There are some men a hat won't help. A flippant, self-conscious ad in the DDB style, but distinctly crowned toward the masters of mass society ("They may be right, or they may be wrong, but there's no denying that they're in charge") and hostile to rebel youth culture. The Beatnik pictured here is so dressed for failure that he even has a black eye. The hat industry started the decade skating all the wrong notes; by the end of the sixties it had been badly damaged.
the uncola,

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

Note here the blurring of management theory and product pitch: by offering reproductions of its billboards, 7-Up is permitting "unrestricted creative freedom." (© 7-Up and UNCOLA are marks identifying products of Dr Pepper/Seven Up, Inc. 1997. Courtesy of the John W. Hartman Center for Sales, Advertising, and Marketing History, Duke University Special Collections Library.)
Your car is out of style. Again.

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

With every pair of Mr. Stanley's Hot Pants goes a free pack of short-short filter cigarettes. Now everybody will be wearing hot pants and smoking short-short filter cigarettes...almost everybody.

Camel Filters.
They're not for everybody.
(But then, they don't try to be.)

backlash, 1966.

backlash, 1972.

Camel cigarettes. The sixties are over and now it's the pseudo-liberating, youth-screaming styles of the Peacock Revolution that are the true markers of conformity—and of a particularly effeminate conformity as well. The real rugged individualists are...average guys.
He sat on his inflatable plastic sofa, his beard curling over his turtleneck sweater, beads and Nehru jacket. Sitar music played over the loud speaker. He and the copywriter in the transparent blouse had just told the client what he could do.

— FRANCHELLIE CADDWELL AND HAL DAVIS, 1968

In the early years of the advertising revolution, creativity meant minimalism. After the successes achieved with the simple layouts of Volkswagen and the no-background blankness used by George Lois, minimalism was an obvious choice for speaking to consumers made skeptical by years of stretched autos and glittering appliances. But in the mid-1960s, the look and language of creativity changed dramatically. The shift is plainly visible in the progression of the *Annuals of Advertising Art* published through the 1960s by the Art Directors' Club of New York. These volumes were yearbooks of the Creative Revolution, showplaces dominated by DDB, PKL, and their ever-expanding phalanx of followers. Until mid-decade they were also showplaces of clean, corporate minimalism, dominated by sans-serif typefaces and simple, uncluttered layouts. But with the volume covering 1966 (published in 1967), creativity finds a strikingly different graphic voice: the symbol for the 1966 Art Directors' show is a color photograph of a woman nude and supine for the camera, her body painted from head to toe with elaborate dayglow flowers and rainbows and the words, “46th Annual NY Art Directors' Show.” Creativity had merged with counterculture.²

Virtually anyone who lived through the 1960s in America remembers advertising's strange and sudden infatuation with countercultural imagery, its overnight conversion to rock music and scenes of teenagers dancing their strange, indecipherable dances. Models in photographs and
on television commercials became younger, gave up their clean-cut appearances for long hair and rebel garb, traded ingratiating smiles for serious stares at the camera. Typefaces and graphic design reflected new hallucinogenic styles as quickly as they could be invented. The fault lines of advertising discourse changed as well, seismically and suddenly. In conference after conference and article after article, admen counseled their colleagues in the fine points of hip slang, the varieties of rock music, the usefulness of psychedelic graphic effects. One day in 1967 Madison Avenue Man shed his gray flannel suit and leaped headlong into youth culture.

For countercultural participants and their admirers, advertising's change was co-option, pure and simple, an effort to dilute a meaningful, even menacing uprising and sway a large body of consumers at the same time. But the appeal of hip to Madison Avenue derived as much from its kinship to the new understanding of consumer culture embodied in the Creative Revolution as it did from its demographic appeal. Counterculture, it seemed, was an ideal expression of the new vision of consuming that Theory-Y capitalism, with all its glorious flexibility, instant communication, and rapid obsolescence, was bringing into existence.

**groovy**

Looking back at the Creative Revolution in 1977, Bill Pitts, copywriter and co-author of the various George Lois books, characterized it as the development and eventual victory of a "counterculture [that] began to find expression on Madison Avenue," an insurgent movement with the same attitudes and enemies as the youth rebellion that overturned so many tired, conformist values in the 1960s and 1970s, a "new creative generation, a rebellious coterie of art directors and copywriters who understood that verbal and visual expressiveness were indivisible, who bridled under the old rules that consigned them to secondary roles in the admaking process under the dominion of noncreative technocrats."

Similarly, creative superstar of the 1990s Jeff Goodby recently hailed the work of Howard Gossage as an affirmation of the lifestyle revolution being conducted "just a couple of big hills away" from his San Francisco firehouse office. "Howard never seemed to judge or even acknowledge the hippies themselves, Goodby remembers. "Yet looking back, he seems more like them than unlike them, a tiny, laughing, downtown outpost of it all." The analogy between creativity and counterculture seems to be a natural one for those who participated in the corporate convulsions of those years. Youth culture became the industry's dominant fantasy almost overnight, converting not only the public appearance of advertising, but the trade discourse as well.

It was an odd symbiosis. Hip young people famously despised Madison Avenue and the plastic civilization for which it stood, and yet admen could never seem to get enough of their criticism, their music, or the excellent trappings of their liberated ways. A symptomatic document is *The Gap*, a book penned jointly during the summer of 1967 by a New York adman of the creative variety and his pot-smoking, Columbia-attending nephew. Each makes an effort to enter the world of the other: the adman smokes dope, the college student attends a martini-soaked client lunch at the Four Seasons. What astounds a contemporary reader is the inversion of generational roles that takes place. Ernest Fladell, the adman, is strangely candid and seems genuinely interested in the life of the mysterious young. He compares marijuana, with unmodulated admiration, to the alcohol he usually consumes:

The kids are on entirely different kick. Sex isn't the object, nor is the ability to let go. They have both in reasonably good supply. Their groove is to feel more, see, taste, hear, enjoy more. The kids are hedonistic; we're puritanical.

But Richard Lorber, the hip twenty-year-old, is scornful and condescending and impossible pretentious, recommending "experiments in expanded consciousness" to strangers and declaring that his uncle can't really have enjoyed marijuana (which "Many of my friends consider ... to be an experience of sacred depth") properly after one try because "Pot is a learning experience and each time one turns on the effect is amazingly cumulative."

But the scorn of Richard and his friends was for nought. Admen, especially of the new creative breed, could not come up with enough positive things to say and write about rebellious youth—some of them appearing even before the counterculture first came to the attention of the glossy mass-circulation magazines in 1967. In 1966, DDB published a study of youth whose conclusions anticipated Roszak and Reich by "predict[ing] a new image of and for American youth ... based on nobility, virtue, romanticism, and high purpose." For all of the superlatives, these were actually fairly commonplace sentiments in the advertising trade literature of the time. According to adman and youth specialist Merle Steir in 1967, "The Now People" were perfect consumers for the age of cre-
ative rule-smashing, far out in front of their backward-looking elders: “Youth wants to see it and tell it like it is. Then People want to see it like it was.”¹⁷ Even Leo Burnett, the Chicago-based celebrator of middle-American values, applauded in 1967 what he called the “Critical Generation’s” skepticism toward established values as potentially “one of the healthiest things that ever happened to the human race.”⁸ By 1969, Advertising Age was capable of publishing an all-out manifesto by creative leader Hanley Norins (who had gone from being a creative advisor to a countercultural enthusiast on the scale of Ralph Gleason) for the “individual revolution . . . for which the young people are the spearhead.” Inviting his audience to marvel with him at the “wiggy words [rock lyrics] that feed your mind,” the wild names of new rock bands, the endless variety of the new fashion in which “everyone [is] vying to be different,” Norins celebrated the youth-led smashing of “the bondage of mass conformity.” Admen should not be concerned with suppressing the youth revolution—which was impossible anyway—but with claiming a position in its vanguard:

The Individual Revolution is in full cry. It’s not only coming. It’s here. So why does anybody resist it at all? Above all, why don’t we advertising men lead the revolution and help to make it a viable, positive one?¹⁹

It’s not that admen like Norins or Burnett were unaware of the counterculture’s mistrust of advertising or its hostility toward the consumerism of the World War II generation. Indeed, they saw in the counterculture a social embodiment of the mass society critique, complete with healthy skepticism toward Madison Avenue, that had done so much to define the advertising of the Creative Revolution in the first place. The counterculture allowed creative revolutionaries to say, “See, I told you so.” E. B. Weiss, an Advertising Age columnist and a prominent celebrator of youth culture, recognized that “never has a young generation been so critical, and so mature in its criticism of advertising.” Youth was, as he put it, “Junk[ing] the junk culture,” that same junk culture junked in the Vance Packard books and the Volkswagen ads.¹⁰ Even young people’s most negative pronouncements could be transformed into a pitch for the more realistic style of the creative revolution. Referring to a Weatherman communiqué that accompanied a corporate bombing attack, Leo Bogart of the American Newspaper Publishers’ Association was able to read the “skepticism of advertising messages” that youngsters expressed as just an-

other demand that the straightforward style of creativity replace the jackhammer puffery of yore.¹¹

The standard explanation for Madison Avenue’s almost embarrassing idealism about the counterculture is the size of the youth demographic in the 1960s. And it is undeniable that virtually all articles and speeches lauding the rebel young contain some reference to the giant youth market and insist that one must grant legitimacy to youth culture in order to speak the language of this mysterious but powerful new consumer. Almost every one of the countless articles or speeches on the subject of the youth culture mentions, in some form, the decade’s favorite statistic: that half of the nation’s population, or would soon be, under the age of twenty-five; and its corollary, that young people had control of some $13 billion in discretionary spending dollars—$25 billion if the entire age span from thirteen to twenty-two was counted.¹² In addition, young people were widely regarded as economically powerful beyond their immediate means. They had become the decade’s arbiters of taste, and advertising could target adults through appeals to their children. Articles and conferences and workshops offering advice on reaching this lucrative market proliferated wildly. A firm called Youth Concepts, which promised to unlock the mysteries of youth culture for the advertising world, put on a proto-counterculture exhibition for its clients in 1966 which featured a number of apparent demonstrators carrying signs that read, “We spend $12 billion a year” and “48% of the population is under 25.”¹³ And, as the firm’s leader Merle Steir noted, “You can’t communicate to people you are ‘against.’”¹⁴ Admen would have to make an effort to enjoy youth culture if they were to address its fans.

But the argument from demographics can only account for a part of the frenzy for hip that overtook advertising in the mid-1960s. First, it cannot explain why advertising completely ignored young people who did not take part in the counterculture. That admen were aware of this vast market of “silent majority” frat boys and football players is obvious from Leo Burnett’s comments on the “Critical Generation,” which, although it had captured the camera’s attention at Berkeley and elsewhere, was clearly a minority among young people. Advertisers simply weren’t as keen to appropriate the symbols of the crew-cut market segment. Second, the size of the youth market cannot explain why the symbols of rebel culture were applied to all sorts of products, even those aimed at older Americans. Car advertising was a particular anomaly, undergoing a youth-oriented image transformation in the mid-1960s despite contem-
temporary statistics that put youthful car buyers at only 9 percent.¹³ And, above all, the argument from demographics does not explain admen's glaring failure to successfully "speak to" the young consumer. Certainly the iconography of youth became the almost hegemonically dominant motif in the advertising of the period, and advertisers did everything they could to incorporate the new attitudes of the young into their works. But in the end, few among the counterculture's true believers were convinced. Trade journals repeatedly warned admen selling to the young against attempting to speak in youth's idiosyncratic idioms: older people could never get it quite right and would only end up arousing sneers and suspicion.

The size of the youth market is only a relatively small part of the explanation for Madison Avenue's curious infatuation with the counterculture. Viewed from a more encompassing perspective, the conversion of ads and the advertising industry as a whole to the look and language of youth culture only makes sense in the context of the Creative Revolution, its new understanding of consumer culture, and of the larger changes underway in capitalism as a whole. Admen equated creativity with counterculture; its language, its suspicion of advertising, its disdain for mass culture all seemed to reinforce the lessons of Bill Bernbach. As it would in the menswear industry, the counterculture provided advertising leaders with a language and a palette of symbols with which to express a new consuming vision that they had been espousing for a number of years already. It was no coincidence that Advertising Age's most vociferous followers of youth culture were also its most extreme partisans of creativity: in their minds, the lessons of the new revolutionary youth culture were the same as the revolutionary tenets of creativity. "Think young," the advertising cliche of the day, did not simply mean to remember the youth market. It meant to think creatively, to embrace difference and nonconformity and, ultimately, to think like a consumer. Point number one of twenty that defined "The New Creativity" in 1968 for J. Walter Thompson employees was to adopt "a new tone of voice" that was "attuned to the idiom of today's affluent, hedonistic, youth-oriented society."¹⁶ When Newsweek finally ran a cover story on "Advertising's Creative Explosion" in 1969, it openly equated creativity with Madison Avenue's new fascination with youth culture. Concentrating on the youthful faces then entering the business, the "bizarre modes of dress" favored by the creative types, and creativity's hostility toward the "establishment," the magazine constructed a portrait of the revolution that its readers were sure to recognize from its resemblance to the counterculture.¹⁷

And creativity certainly appeared to be countercultural, at least to judge by the look of younger admen in the later 1960s. Like counterculture, creativity seemed to be the province of young people, rebels who were identified with nonconformity and innovative thinking. In the industry as a whole, the stodgy middle-aged Organization Men of the fifties began to be overshadowed and replaced by a vast influx of younger copywriters and art directors in unmistakably with-it garb. Advertising had, of course, always been a profession in which people with bottomless energy, either still idealistic or nondissuasionable, had excelled.¹⁸ But in the sixties, the prevalence of youth became so lopsided that it inspired concerned commentary in the industry press.¹⁹ By 1968, the notion that only rebellious young people could make good copywriters and art directors was so prevalent that E. B. Weiss, whose Ad Age columns oscillated between the decade's two burning topics of creativity and youth culture, entitled one effort "Is Creative Advertising a Young Business?"—a query which he answered in the affirmative: "I fully agree that the creative advertising function should be, indeed must be, monopolized by young people—not exclusively, but practically so."²⁰ But the question predated the countercultural explosion of 1967. In 1965, adman Jerry Fields had wondered, "Why are the creative Golden Boys . . . always young men in their twenties and early thirties?" and had asked what older admen could do to compete. He had concluded that the secret was less physical youth and more a matter of attitude:

Our solution to this problem is a very simple one—don't grow old. Think young. That's a pretty square and corny statement, but we mean it. We see old men of 35 walking into our office and we see young men of 50 coming in. It all seems to be based on a state of mind—a healthy enthusiastic approach to life in which you never seem to run out of élan vital.²¹

The refrain was a common one: creativity was a matter of young-mindedness, if not outright youthfulness. Even the soft-spoken, 59-year-old Bill Bernbach could be described by E. B. Weiss in 1970 as an "angry young man."²² By 1967, the countercultural overtones of creativity were undeniable as a thousand hip lifestyles flowered on Madison Avenue. Longer hair, beards, loud colors, and wide ties replaced the infamous "gray flannel suit."
Art director Stephen Baker noted that in 1967 “beards, whiskers, goatees, Van Dykes, manes became status symbols of the creative breed, symbolizing its schism from the business side of advertising, which is the Establishment.” Unusual clothing was sometimes taken by itself as a creativity index. Stephen Fox points out that at some agencies “clients were taken on pointed tours of the creative departments to see the miniskirts and jeans, to smell the incense and other suspicious odors, as though to prove how danging and au courant the shop was." In 1968, Marketing/Communications published a “Chat with an ad-man head” in which the creativity-enhancing powers of marijuana were thoroughly discussed.

Hair was an important signifier of creativity. The locks of Tinker group creative superstar Gene Case were noted in the late sixties by one magazine to be long “even by Madison Avenue ‘creative man’ standards.” A profile of Larry Dunst, the 28-year-old president of the very creative Daniel & Charles agency, was incomplete without commentary on his hair, which is duly noted to have “crept down over ears, eyes and neck, but it’s styled”:

“A hair intimidates people, you know. You meet someone and they look you over; they figure this guy’s got balls to let his hair grow that long. I wonder how long I’ll let it grow before I chicken out.” (For the record: A supervisor at Daniel & Charles, Jeff Metzner, has the Madison Avenue record. He shows only a nose-tip and has a pony tail.)

A cartoon by a copywriter at McCann-Erickson that was printed in Madison Avenue in February, 1967, depicted the “Evolution of the Art Director” from square to hip. At the beginning, he is a simple “Mat Room Boy,” with short hair, wide eyes, and a narrow tie. But as he works his way up the corporate ladder from “Paste-Up Man” to “Senior Art Director,” new features appear: his hair lengthens, he grows a moustache and a beard, he begins to wear boots and loudly patterned clothes. As a “Senior Art Director,” he is shown with glasses, a scowl, and a beard, his middle finger raised in defiance (or in command!). As an Executive Art Director, he is entirely overtaken by his hair and hairy poncho, and his face and body are no longer visible.

Charlie Moss, copywriter, creative director, and finally president of Wells, Rich, Greene, surely the “hottest” creative agency during the late 1960s, recalls the businesslike way his penchant for unusual clothing was received in those years.

Admen in the 1960s loved rock ‘n’ roll, or at least claimed they did. Throughout the literature of the period, one finds dozens of references to the music of the counterculture dropped by agency executives as though to demonstrate their cognizance of the hip underground. One magazine profile of the various brash young creative leaders written at the height of the revolution opens with assertions of the hipness of the “new rulers”: “They dig rock and understand how it touches and turns-on a whole subculture.” Jerry Della Femina “always listens to the record player going, loud and lusty rock music, in the office and at home.” Larry Dunst is alleged to be a “fearless sort; sat near the stage at a Jimi Hendrix-Buddy Miles Express concert in Madison Square Garden.” Others claimed to be so intensely hip that they had been “into” the new music even before the rest of the world appreciated it. Andrew Kershaw, the president of Ogilvy & Mather, told Madison Avenue in January of 1970 that he had been “a Beatles fan... since before the time they became famous.” Consequently, he suffered “no generation gap in my own family...” Years later, Alex Kroll, chairman of Young & Rubicam, made almost exactly the same claim—premature Beatles fan; generation-gap immunity—for Hanley Notins, his firm’s outspoken partisan of counterculture and creativity.

So rapidly did the rage for youth culture conquer Madison Avenue that it seems to have taken a number of “establishment” figures by surprise. One famous story that made the rounds in the sixties had the head of a large, institutional agency, now at a disadvantage and under pressure to produce “creative” work, calling a pep rally for its employees. There, the agency chairman gave a rousing speech encouraging his employees to broaden themselves creatively by attending the theater, going to movies, and listening to rock music like that of Bobby Dylan, mispronouncing the star’s name (“Dile-in”) egregiously.

One of stranger victories of the Creative Revolution was the conversion to the countercultural style of none other than Dr. Ernest Dichter of the Institute for Motivational Research, the sinister “depth-probing"
villain of *The Hidden Persuaders*. In the sixties, it seems, Dichter moved on to something else even more illuminating than statistics. In 1967, he issued a report which suggested that admen learn from (those who had learned from) LSD, undertake “mind expansion,” use “animation with psychedelic colors and motion,” and “bring the product alive with new, more exciting meaning.” Nor was Dichter alone in his semi-enthusiasm for psychedelics. A September, 1967, article in *Madison Avenue* agreed on the advertising value of psychedelics. The authors, two creative people from the stodgy Campbell-Ewald agency, did not encourage their fellow writers to indulge in the drug specifically, but its effects, then being widely discussed in the media, could provide “psychedelic advice for the creative adman.” LSD, it seems, approximates the sensitivity the copywriter or art director must have in order to provide maximum dramatization of an otherwise mundane product, and the authors compare various statements made by tripping people to high-literary prose. Even though he may or may not take acid, “a great writer is on one long trip from the beginning of his life to the end of it.” The secret to the “heightened sense perception” that is the province of “great writers” and LSD users is, again, the willingness to violate the conventions of perception. And, as violating conventions was the central premise of the Creative Revolution, any good adman should have been able to summon up drug-induced delirium at will, even without actually consuming acid:

Will you go through a day looking for yellow . . . on Madison Avenue, in the office, at home? Will you feel yellow, will you count how many yellows, will you try to imagine what yellow should smell like or sound or taste like? . . .

You don’t need LSD for this; you just need the guts to live. To shake the embalming fluid out of your thinking.

This was sensitivity training for the former architects of commercialism, a rudimentary version of the sort of phony spiritualism that would soon sweep the bourgeoisie of California in a flurry of chanted “Oms” and beads and bubbling hot tubs. Just as the adman of the 1960s was expected to be hostile to “rules” generally, the exercises the givers of “psychedelic advice” prescribe for developing a great creative talent are a matter of simple transgression of everyday routine, a rebellion for its own sake against whatever variety of conformity to which the reader happened to belong.33

The adman was fast being saddled with a new image: no longer was he the other-directed technocrat, the most craven species of American businessman, but the coolest guy on the commuter train, turned on to the latest in youth culture, rock music, and drug-influenced graphic effects. It was a stereotype used by creativity’s enemies as well. “The lunatics began to take over the asylum,” is how Rosser Reeves described the sixties in 1970 from his new position as head of the appropriately named Starch research organization. “A new type of copywriter appeared—with . . . shoulder-length hair, bell-bottom trousers, chains, medallions and sandals,” wrote this quintessential man of the fifties with obvious disgust. “And to my amazement, a group of otherwise sane, senior advertising marketing men began to believe that this group is ‘with it.’”34 The Creative Revolution in general, he believed, was a symptom of the industry’s precipitous decline.

The most sophisticated partisans of the revolution might well have agreed with Reeves’s condemnation. Heavy reliance on overt youth-culture references were but a “creativity-substitute,” as Jack Tinker star copywriter Gene Case put it in 1967. The best way to appeal to the young and young-thinking was to adopt the same techniques and values of agency organization that had, a few years before, been touted as the techniques and values of creativity. Even when they were writing specifically on the youth market, the advice admen proffered each other was shaped as suggestions on improving admaking generally, on updating agency operations to reflect that the old ways were fatuous, unconvincing, and dull. Steir’s praise for “The Now People,” for example, hailed their “redoing and reconsidering” the various stultifying institutions of society as a way of praising his colleagues’ efforts to overthrow the creativity-restricting constraints of the large agencies. In order to deal with the rewarding youth market, Steir wrote in 1967, advertising would have to adopt certain attitudes that had already been the bywords of creativity since the late 1950s. “Businessmen will have to be outrageous,” he insisted. “Being in step today is to be out of step tomorrow. The initial premise for the search might be: We must be doing something wrong. . . . The business climate is now so stultified and rigid that any innovation and meaningful contact with the youth market will be rewarded.” Even though stultification and rigidity had already been blasted for a number of years in favor of outrage and difference, Steir still phrased his 1967 article on “The Now People” in terms of a battle between the noble youngsters who were bringing “revolution” and “the Then Generation [which] attempts to retard change in order to enjoy material satisfaction
in the old way..." Just as big agency bureaucrats and account men were pilloried for resisting the new, oldsters were cautioned against hostility to youth culture. Steir even described the victory of "the Now People" as a lesson in the basic fact of marketing: "Youth has won. Youth must always win. The new naturally replaces the old."

Not coincidentally, the techniques of admaking said to be useful in the age of the hip were the same as those pioneered by Bernbach ten years before. Hanley Norins's 1969 recommendations for getting out in front of the "individual revolution" were substantially the same as the ones he had trumpeted during an earlier phase of the Creative Revolution: His model advertisement was a 1959 Volkswagen ad. "Some of us oldtimers might call this 'soft-selling advertising,'" Norins wrote, using the term which had once been used to describe (and disparage) the works of Bernbach and others, "but that's the message of the Individual Revolution, and the kids call it 'cool.'" Counterculture and creativity were essentially one and the same, with identical heroes and villains. John A. Adams, Detroit manager of the (large, "establishment") Grey agency, repeated the argument in 1971 when he was reported to have insisted that "the old bombastic, pound-it-home-again approach does not reach them [the young]." Instead, the advertiser's voice was said to be the most critical factor in commercial persuasion, a realization which, again, pointed directly to the very features that had distinguished Doyle Dane's advertising since the late 1950s: "Humor—the product is not a matter of life or death; candor—the company admits some imperfections; simplicity—the company does not try to list the most product points in a single ad."

A most remarkable exposition on this subject, written by businessman Lee Adler and published in the quasi-academic journal Business Horizons in February, 1970, posited a "new consumer" arising whose "moral, social, and cultural values," regardless of his age, were defined by the new worldview associated with the counterculture. The values of this new American may be different, but his consuming potential was just as great, perhaps even greater, than that of his parents. The "Implications for Advertising" that Adler perceived arising from the development of the "new consumer" were each features that had been emphasized by DDB and its imitators since the late 1950s; only one was new. Since "The under-30 generation loathes sham and hypocrisy" and "Tell it like it is" is the touchstone," Adler suggests that admen take the more "honest" tone associated with creativity. Adler went on to list all of the various "new approaches in copy and art" that allowed business to speak "memorably and persuasively with the new consumer," including "low-key appeals," experimental, "nonlinear presentations of information," "more wit, honesty, verve, self-deprecation, [and] irreverence," and "cautious use of the more ephemeral elements of today's under-thirties subculture." All except the last were standard features of the Creative Revolution, and that single exception would be quickly adopted in the mid-1960s. The ads with which Adler illustrated his theories naturally came from certain much-lauded creative campaigns: Jack Tinker's spots for Alka-Seltzer, Wells, Rich, Greene's work for Benson & Hedges, McCann-Erickson's ads for Opal and Coca-Cola.

If the wonderment of Ernest Fladell is any indication, many mature admen regarded sixties' youth culture with bewilderment. And, as one would expect, a number of firms took advantage of the situation by setting themselves up as youth-culture specialists. Merle Steir's group was called "Youth Concepts" and produced "now shows" for a variety of establishment advertisers interested in rejuvenating their image. The humorously named Spade and Archer agency, founded in 1966 as youth market specialists, produced ads designed to persuade this problematic group of consumers. It received attention in trade publications and general magazines like Newsweek as both an intensely creative shop and as a countercultural stronghold. Spade and Archer was given to dazzling potential clients and industry rivals with demonstrations of its countercultural cognizance, like the elaborate one Advertising Age covered in April, 1968, which featured "A rock group, the Group Image, plus dancing girls and strobe lights, a body-painted model, a consumer panel of young housewives 'who were weaned on the Beatles' and an assortment of mini-skirted and Nehru-jacketed associates." The advice the agency's principals offered on admaking, unsurprisingly, reaffirmed the critical style of the Creative Revolution. Above all, the kids were exactly the sort of consumers Bill Bernbach had been positing since the late fifties: smart and extremely skeptical toward conventional advertising. "Honest" and its inevitable Bernbachian corollary, a sense of humor about the product, were what was required in order to sell the young.

For some, the counterculture represented a sort of creative epiphany, a culminating vindication of the revolution in which Madison Avenue had immersed itself. Hanley Norins believed that creativity and counterculture were both part of a larger historical insurgency: the "Revolt of the Individual," a vast uprising "expressed most openly by the young people, but [which] is really deep down inside all of us."
It's the revolt of the individual against the very systems which we have been so influential in devising—the American systems of mass education, mass communication and mass conformity.

... It's the problem of mass conformity that's mostly getting us down. And that's what the revolution is going to destroy.

Fortunately, the revolution against conformity was most definitely not a revolt against consumerism or the institution of advertising. In fact, according to Noring, the best ads—like the Volkswagen campaign—do not just react to the new revolution to convention; they provoke and even "anticipate it." Mass society was now the target of a generalized revolt and hip was becoming a widespread cultural style, but, provided it stayed on its toes and embraced the mass society critique, Madison Avenue could ride the waves of unrest to new heights of prosperity. The counter-culture was, ultimately, just a branch of the same revolution that had swept the critical-creative style to prominence and that many believed was demolishing Theory X hierarchy everywhere, from Vietnam to the boardroom.

counterculture / consumer culture

The use of youth culture and youth imagery in advertising was not, of course, an entirely new thing in the 1960s. It had appeared extensively, if sporadically, since the 1920s. But "youth" marketing has always been a little confusing. Much of it has indeed been designed to speak to young people. But even more frequently, "youth" has served as a marketing symbol, an abstraction of commercial speech, a consuming vision for Americans of all ages. Obviously, the actual "youth market," the vast number of consumers under thirty, or twenty-five, or twenty-one, or nineteen (depending on the definition at hand) was important to admen in the sixties, and the demographic significance of the baby boom has been amply recognized by cultural historians. What is less frequently recognized is the basic marketing fact that "youth" had a meaning and an appeal that extended far beyond the youth market proper. This point is driven home again and again in the trade press of the era: The imagery and language of youth can be applied effectively to all sorts of products marketed to all varieties of people, because youth is an attractive consuming attitude, not an age—an attitude that was preeminently defined by the values of the counterculture. By "youth," Madison Avenue meant hip, often expressed with psychedelic references, talk of rebellion, and intimations of free love.

Youth markets come and youth markets go; so do youth styles and youth movements, and sometimes without ever drawing the attention of a single adman. But this was different—and not merely in terms of its size. When creative admen looked at the counterculture, they saw what they chose to see. The industry's privileging of the anti-materiolist youth over their conformist brethren—of the hip over the square—marked a crucial step in the development of a new ideology of consumption that arose with the Creative Revolution. With simple black-and-white photographs, gentle humor, and straightforward-sounding copy, DDB had sold Volkwagens as a solution to the ills of mass society; now admen were discovering a ready-made symbol for the cultural operation Bill Bernbach had taught them to perform. In the eyes of the American ad industry, the counterculture was special—it appeared to be a broad social affirmation of the very values that had launched the admen themselves into the new era. The counterculture seemed to have it all: the unconnectedness which would allow consumers to indulge transitory whims; the irreverence that would allow them to defy moral puritanism; and the contempt for established social rules that would free them from the slow-moving, buttoned-down conformity of their abstemious ancestors. In the counterculture, admen believed they had found both a perfect model for consumer subjectivity, intelligent and at war with the conformist past, and a cultural machine for turning disgust with consumerism into the very fuel by which consumerism might be accelerated.

"Youth" was a posture available to all in the sixties. Admen clearly believed that the marketing potential of youth culture far transcended the handful of people who were actively involved in the counterculture: as Mary Wells Lawrence recalls, "It didn't matter what age you were—you had to think young." Youth was the paramount symbol of the age, whether in movies, literature, fashion, or television. For admen "youth" was a sort of consumer fantasy they would make available to older Americans. Jerry Fields noted in a Madison Avenue article entitled "Think Young" that appeared in February, 1965, that "the maintenance of a young, fresh appearance has become a primary concern of our population which looks back wistfully at their thirty-fifth birthday." In 1967, the magazine quoted an adman who noted that "the youth market has become the American market. It now includes not only everyone under 35, but most
people over 35.” Edward Gorman, sales and merchandise manager of J. C. Penney, was reported in Advertising Age in 1966 to have said that the youth market not only encompasses teens, but everyone up to 35 and “most of the people older than that.” He explained that the appeal to the young is heard by many who are in their 30s and 40s. They even buy the cars that were designed for the young. “Like the Pontiac GTO,” Mr. Gorman said.

The name given by admen to the market thus targeted was the “young thinking,” a rubric under which advertising people could classify almost everybody. “To be young is to be with it,” ruminated Martin R. Miller in a 1968 editorial in Merchandising Week, the journal of the electronic appliance industry. “ Everywhere, our mass media push psychedelia with all its clothing fads, so-called ‘way-out’ ideas, etc. Youth is getting the hard sell.” And the benefits from this were clear to his readers: “the fountain of youth has spilled over into new areas and is revitalizing the buying habits of some older, more affluent customers.” A 1970 Business Week article reached similar conclusions. Noting the cross-the-board effectiveness of the young-thinking theme, the magazine predicted that “The 1970s promise to become the decade when youth becomes a state of mind and outflows all traditional age boundaries.” And “whether they are marketing to youth or to youthfulness, businessmen find the prospects exhilarating.”

Madison Avenue’s vision of the counterculture was notoriously unconvincing to many who actually took part in the movement—and for a very simple reason: they were not necessarily the primary target of such campaigns. If youth was an attitude rather than an actual age, it would have to be expressed in a manner understandable to much older people. Thus, through the proliferation of psychedelia, Milton Glaser imitations and “yellow submarine art”; all the photographs of self-assured young iconoclasts and body-painted women, advertisers were careful to speak a language that sounded hip but got a message across to young and old alike. The size of the “young-in-spirit” market, art director and Advertising Age columnist Stephen Baker counseled, made it “important that youth language is made to be understood not only by the under-age chaps and chicks but also those who want to stop the clock and can afford to do so.” A 1966 study conducted by BBDO (the “establishment” agency responsible for the Pepsi Generation) stated the facts even more directly. Images of youth were simply not appropriate for the youth market, it found: these consumers already knew they were young. Youthfulness was best used as an appeal to older consumers:

Since the need of a “younger” image appears quite suddenly (at about 25), it should probably be kept in mind that in selling to people under 25, the “youthful” appeal may not be effective. A proper appeal to [the] youth [market] might actually emphasize a topical appeal.

Again, the slogan “Think Young” is illustrative: consumers could not all be young, but they could all be encouraged to think as though they were, to assume the attitudes of the young revolutionaries. The function of “youth” in advertising was symbolic, an easy metaphor for a complex new consumer value-system. The really remarkable fact about co-optation isn’t that Columbia records ran pseudo-hip ads in “underground” publications; it’s that a vast multitude of corporations ran pseudo-hip ads in Life, Look, and Ladies Home Journal. Madison Avenue was more interested in speaking like the rebel young than in speaking to them.

There were, of course, other symbols for the new antinomian consumerism available during the 1960s—both spies and jaded jet-setters were common before 1967. Admen settled on the counterculture as the signifier of choice for hip consumerism at least partially because they believed, contrary to the assertions of countercultural theorists like Roszak and Reich, that the hip young were good potential consumers. Despite their suspicion of advertising and material accumulation, and despite the standard claims that the movement’s privileging of nonconformity and heterogeneity opposed it automatically to consumer capitalism, admen used the external markings of their culture to represent new consuming values because, admen believed, it had already internalized those consuming values. Like Christopher Lasch and Irving Howe, Madison Avenue found in the ideas of people like Jerry Rubin a continuing—even a heightened—commitment to the values and mores of the consumer society. Caught up in the frenzies of the Creative Revolution, admen looked at the counterculture and saw . . . themselves.

Madison Avenue’s favorite term for the counterculture was “the new Generation,” a phrase that implied absolute up-to-dateness in every case. It also intimated what admen felt was the young’s most important characteristic as consumers: their desire for immediate gratification, their yearning for the new, their intolerance for the slow-moving, the penurious, the chintzy. Admen believed they had found an entire generation given
over to self-fulfillment by whatever means necessary—which would, of course, ultimately mean by shopping. Grey’s John Adams made what is perhaps the bluntest statement of this perception, having been reported by Advertising Age in 1971 to have said

There is nothing to support the contention that the youth are anti-materialistic. “They are in the peak acquisitive years,” he said, “and their relative affluence enables them to consume goods and services at a rate unheard of for their age level.”

In 1968, creative partisan Bob Fearon penned an impressionistic appreciation of the young for Madison Avenue. Written in a curious colloquial style that was probably meant to demonstrate his familiarity with the intricacies of youth culture, the article aims to enlighten advertising men about the tastes and anti-advertising predilections of the inescapable young (“They talk to him. They tell him things like that. And he listens. He doesn’t condemn. . . . And he ends up knowing.”) Perhaps the most important feature of the young people Fearon discusses, despitetheir hotly professed antimatricularism and their suspicion of consumerism, is their heightened appetite for the new. Unlike their parents, the hip new youth are far more receptive to obsolescence; buying goods for the moment, discarding them quickly, and moving on to the next:

“When the new generation buys they want it for now. They’re not interested in how long it will last.”

These young people have a different idea about thrift. They have a new definition of value. They accept obsolescence. They want the new, improved version tomorrow. Very important words. New, improved. More than ever before. Everything is instant. Now. Everything is faster.

Not surprisingly, the same texts that praised the counterculture for its questioning of conventional ways usually came around to the counterculture’s single worthiest point: its revolutionizing of America’s consuming ways. Older Americans had been reluctant to spend, had guarded their money jealously, would only spend on the basis of a hard, demonstrable product superiority—and sometimes not even then. It was for overturning this antiquated, depression-induced, even puritanical attitude that youth culture received its greatest plaudits. Merle Steir wrote:

The Then Generation didn’t know where its next dollar was coming from, so it paid attention to getting lots of dollars stashed away. But if you realize you are always able to make a living you begin to wonder what else you might want to do. This is particularly true if you noticed that for all the money around older people don’t appear very satisfied. . . . So the Now Generation says: “If I have choices, I want to be satisfied as well as housed and fed.”

This was consumerism for a new age, consumerism that began where the old variety left off—the anomy, conformity, and meaningless of plastic mass society. It was to escape these qualities, to be fully “satisfied,” that the “Now Generation” would do its consuming.

The craving for deeper satisfaction, wrote E. B. Weiss, would lead inevitably to accelerated lifestyle experimentation, something admen—and businessmen generally—were anxious to encourage rather than to suppress.

In 1971 these youngsters spent more on travel than the entire older generation spent on travel ten years ago. They spend more on stereo than their parents spent on phonographs. They may furnish their first home more simply than was true decades ago, but they will replace their initial home furnishings much sooner and much more often. Disposables—not “forevers”—are their thing. . . . True—their lifestyles will differ on a larger scale, but isn’t changing lifestyles what marketing is all about?

American advertising took the side it did during the cultural revolution of the 1960s not simply because it wanted to sell a particular demographic, but because it found great promise in the new values of the counterculture. Conformity, other-direction, contempt for audiences, and Reevonian repetition were good neither as management styles nor as consuming models, the creative revolutionaries had proclaimed; now, it seemed, there was a broad cultural upheaval validating their vision of hip consumerism. Thus did the consumer revolt against mass society, which had begun with the selling of a sturdy car that defied obsolescence, come into its own as a movement of accelerated obsolescence.

the now agency and the end of the plain

Wells, Rich, Greene (WRG) was the agency whose history most clearly traced this trajectory from creativity to hip, from criticism to outright rejection from the boring everyday of mass society. Founded in 1966 by three prodigious creative talents who had worked on ads for Braniff and Alka-Seltzer at Jack Tinker Partners, WRG was the instant beneficiary of
a deluge of blue-chip accounts looking for the selling magic that the new hip advertising seemed to promise. By December, 1967, Madison Avenue was able to claim that "no agency in history has grown so big so fast. Now acquired such an array of talent in the process." The firm proceeded to skyrocket to $100,000,000 in billings in a mere five years, a feat duly noted by Advertising Age in 1971 to have been "undoubtedly, the most astonishing growth record in advertising history." For products like Benson & Hedges, Braniff airlines, and Love Cosmetics, the agency seemed to work commercial magic. Articles in the industry press treated Wells, Rich, Greene like a hip, updated version of Doyle Dane Bernbach that managed to achieve the same prosperity in just a few years that DDB spent a decade acquiring. The agency's president, former DDB copywriter Mary Wells, quickly established herself as the industry's most glamorous figure as well, marrying the head of one of her client companies and attracting the attention of society columnists nationwide as she jetted between the hangouts of the world's wealthy.

No company in America was hipper than Wells, Rich, Greene. It brought together in a dynamic, explosive combination the two great themes of advertising in the 1960s: creativity and the new system of values being ushered in by the youth culture. In campaign after campaign, WRG produced memorable, often hilarious ads that combined hip sensibilities with uncompromising sales messages and high production values. The agency's work at its best was as characteristic of the late 1960s as DDB's had been for the late 1950s and early 1960s: introducing differently colored airplanes for Braniff ("The end of the plain plane"); the "Try It, You'll Like It" and "I Can't Believe I Ate the Whole Thing" ads for Alka-Seltzer; the astonishingly successful campaign for Benson & Hedges that focused on fanciful disadvantages of longer cigarettes: "This is our moment," said Mary Wells in 1966. "In every era, some agencies come along to set new trends, to illuminate the industry in some way. In our case, we are completely geared to our time. We are terribly aware of the current sounds and fears and smells and attitudes. We are the agency of today."

Looking back in 1990 on the period she once claimed to personify, Mary Wells Lawrence (she was married in 1967 to Harding Lawrence, the president of Braniff) describes the ethos of WRG as a strain of creativity supercharged by the omnipresent rebel spirit of youth. The title of her Advertising Age retrospective, "Baby Boom, Creative Boom" draws connections between the two great forces, and throughout it she links youth insurgency with creative insurgency. "I think in the '60s, it [the advertising business] was a very adolescent thing," she recalls.

Adolescence is pulling away, doing things in a new way. It's revolutionary, and the '60s were revolutionary, in every way.

... And the advertising that stands out, that you remember, was very revolutionary. It was like a bomb dropping into what had been a very stilted, limited kind of world.

Youth was also critical to the creative attitude at WRG. When Advertising Age accused the agency of having entered the "agency world 'establishment'" in 1971, Wells Lawrence replied that WRG intended to retain a youthful attitude that put creative performance above organizational stability:

I don't think they [WRG employees] feel very 'establishment.' They feel they're sitting on a hot seat all the time. It's the responsibility of an agency's management to stay very young and very hot. The minute you get smug you're dead.

And to at least some outside observers, WRG had the look and feel of a countercultural outpost. Scripps-Howard writer Robert Dietrich visited the new agency in 1967 to take in all of the big-city weirdness for his readers back in the provinces. The new, creative agencies, he explained, "are managed and directed by far-out people, not the traditional marketing and research-oriented conservatives." He was particularly taken with the shop's decoration and the sartorial tastes of its employees:

There is a psychedelic "LOVE" poster in the foyer. The guest chairs are rattan or bamboo and they have baby blue pillows which sink you down deep. The receptionist is from Haiti with just the right amount of accent and chocolate thigh.

It follows that les girls beyond the white foyer wall are mini-minded, but a couple are wearing pants. Their eyeglasses are four inches across and cigarette holders are "in."

Naturally, early accounts of WRG also emphasize its use of the stripped-down principles of agency organization that had spread over the decade outward from DDB. Talent, not organization, was the key to the advertising business, Mary Wells insisted, and the less organization the less interference there was in the truly important creative work. "Agencies should
be sleek," she wrote in Newsweek in 1967. "Fat agencies tend to move slowly and dully. They waddle through confusions caused by their complex organizations." At WRG, "we don't want to be cluttered with lots of mediocre people. We don't want lots of underlings around, hired to take our clients to lunch." William Whyte couldn't have put it better: the ethos of the Organization necessarily militated against the brilliant.

The key to WRG's zeitgeist-mastery was a slightly updated version of the model consumer posited earlier in the decade by Bill Bernbach. The consumer was no longer merely skeptical of mass society, but positively hip, young-minded, wise to television's tricks, drawn to the alienated filmmaking of the era, and only reachable through the coolest of advertising agencies. "He's a very hip, aware character," executive vice president Herb Fisher said in 1968:

spearheading an attitude, an awareness, that is more open, more expansive and more inquisitive at all age levels.

A second key fact: He is bombarded on all sides with news, sensation, art and all manner of stimuli that are explosive and exciting. . . . Exposure to the bombardment produces skepticism. Today's consumer. . . . has developed a sophistication about, an imperviousness to, the "big sell" . . .

One of the most difficult problems facing the ad industry in the late 1960s, then, was identical to one that it faces today: consumer cynicism toward the clutter of mass society. As Wells herself put it in 1966, "People have seen so many promotions and big ideas and new products and new advertising campaigns and new packaging gimmicks, and they've heard so many lies and so many meaningless slogans and so many commercialized holy truths that it's getting harder and harder to get their attention, let alone their trust." But, as Bill Bernbach had realized, public jadedness also provided advertising with unprecedented opportunities.

WRG simply upped the ante on the decade's violence against advertising convention: it would discover whatever was the usual way of pitching a given product category and then seek to do just the opposite. In order to come up with ideas for a campaign, Wells writes, the agency would ask, "Consider what you can't do, then do it."

Like with cigarettes, you could never mutilate them, they were touched by God. So we broke them in the Benson & Hedges campaign.

We took Alka-Seltzer, which was then used strictly in the bathroom, in the dark, by people ashamed of themselves, and we made it the current, the hip thing to do to need an Alka-Seltzer. If you didn't need an Alka-Seltzer, you weren't alive; it meant you weren't eating good food, you weren't drinking wine, you couldn't afford good things.

Instead of men in lab coats repeating transparently insignificant USPs, cars on rotating platforms, or animated characters singing cigarette jingles, commercials made by WRG often used bizarre vignettes of things going horribly wrong to dramatize a product's characteristics. A famous Alka-Seltzer spot that the WRG principals had done while still working for Jack Tinker established the genre, picturing a series of human bellies being terribly mistreated: those of workmen hanging over jackhammers, those of boxers being pummeled, those of obese office workers in conversation.

In 1966, WRG used the formula to promote Benson & Hedges, a new brand of cigarettes. Somehow the agency settled on the astonishing slogan, "Oh, the disadvantages" as the best way of drawing attention to the cigarette's then-unusual length. The best-known commercial from their campaign for that cigarette (and one that is still referred to frequently today in the industry's all-time best-of lists) was made up of a number of humorous, three- or four-second shots of the faintly ridiculous problems encountered by smokers of longer cigarettes: a man's cigarette is caught in elevator doors; another is bent on a telephone; a third burns a man's beard during a conversation; and an exasperated hand is shown holding a cigarette case from which the unwieldy product protrudes sloppily. The campaign must have been the first to actually make a product seem attractive by depicting the ways in which it put one at odds with the conventional world. WRG steered Benson & Hedges directly into the teeth of the old "personal efficiency" pitch, promising not to make the consumer more successful but actually to saddle him with "disadvantages" and make him less efficient—and it is remembered as one of the most successful cigarette campaigns ever. A print ad from 1968 brought the idea full circle by proclaiming that their length also made them difficult to advertise—they wouldn't fit onto a standard-size magazine page. So antithetical was this cigarette to mass society that it even short-circuited advertising.

The theme of hilarious social dysfunction could be applied to almost anything, it seemed. In one 1968 spot for the American Motors Rebel, WRG dramatized the car's durability by showing the terrifying experiences of a driving instructor whose pupils come from every class of bad driver. The car is driven over a fire-hydrant and through a construction
site; student drivers grind its gears and steer it recklessly through traffic. In a famous late-sixties spot for Alka-Seltzer, a sophisticated fellow is victimized by a waiter at a quaint ethnic restaurant of some kind who has reassured him about an unfamiliar item, saying, "Try it, you'll like it"; the diner uses Alka-Seltzer to recover from the nasty dish that is foisted upon him. A commercial for the 1968 American Motors Javelin muscle car impresses upon the audience the car's power and sportiness by depicting a day in the life of a Javelin owner who is not interested in power and sportiness. For all of his well-demonstrated timidity and carefulness (at one point he declines to race another driver, saying "I've got a bowl of goldfish in the seat") though, the man cannot suppress his car's anarchic destiny: eventually he turns it over to a parking lot attendant who promptly races away, tires screeching.66

One of the most visible markers of youth culture's progress on Madison Avenue was Mary Wells's adoption of the slogan, "love power" in 1967 as a description of her agency's amusing style.67 By conceiving of the consumer with affection rather than the contempt that seemed to emanate from so many of the ads of the fifties, WRG aimed to produce enjoyable, entertaining commercials that it believed consumers were happy to watch. Charlie Moss explains how Wells's "love" philosophy worked in the actual creative sense:

What Mary always used to talk about was, "Get them to like you, get them to like your product." Be sympathetic, be "buyer friendly," I suppose. At the time...this philosophy was in the middle of a bunch of advertising from the old days that was basically pretty hard sell...Her point of view and philosophy was, we've got to entertain people, we've got to make them like us, we can't bore them to death with our advertising, we don't want them looking at the screen, saying "Oh, that commercial again, yech," and getting up and leaving the room.68

"Love" was a strategy that transformed cynicism into consumer responsiveness. Here, as in so many other places in this story, business theory spilled over into actual advertising. As it turned out, "Love" also had a very concrete meaning for Wells, Rich, Greene. In 1969, pharmaceutical manufacturer Menley & James hired the agency to devise a name, packaging, and a marketing strategy as well as advertising for a line of cosmetics, and the agency promptly came up with "Love." Love Cosmetics was thus a product created in its entirety by the advertising climate of the late 1960s. Another instant success story (Love sales finally fell off and the brand all but vanished in the mid- to late-1970s), the Love campaign was celebrated both in the industry and the popular press as a shining example of the power of countercultural, "hippie-looking" advertising, with packaging and store displays that used psychedelic designs and rendered the word "Love" in birds and flowers.69 Many hip campaigns during the sixties, of course, made use of such psychedelia. But the ads WRG prepared for Love cosmetics went much farther, actually striking a strangely authentic-sounding note.

Love cosmetics were anti-cosmetics, makeup for a time—and a generation—at war with the pretense and falsehood of makeup. "This is the way Love is in 1969," the premier ad's headline announced: "freer, more natural, more honest—more out in the open." Nonetheless, "most cosmetic companies" remained ignorant of the new ways and "are laboring under the delusion that love and girls are the same as ever." It was a strange, even paradoxical claim for a brand of cosmetics to be making, but it seemed to work: while older brands were said to mask and conceal the user's selfhood, Love enhanced her individuality, allowed her real nature to come to the surface: "You've got a complexion worth seeing. You don't need make-ups that blank you out. Ours won't. Ours can't."

Love was transparent, and so was the company that was selling it. The makers of Love had, they announced, moved beyond the huckster's trickery of the past. They had the reader's best interests at heart. "We're not going to sell you a lot of goo you don't need," as do the square cosmetics companies, no doubt, "or ideas and formulas as ancient as the hills." The products themselves came in radically simplified packages, basic cylinders rather than the elaborate faux-crystal decanters of other brands. They bore whimsical instructions printed on the bottles in earnest, sans-serif typefaces. The ads, furthermore, asked readers to question advertisers—and then to find this particular advertiser to be their generational ally rather than another arm of the establishment. "What gives us the audacity to tell you what you do and don't need?" the ads asked.

We're young too.
And we're on your side.
We know it's a rough race.
And we want you to win.

The Love ads appeared to be concerned with young people as exclusively as anything that appeared in the decade: they were illustrated with photos of youngsters in long hair and peppered with lines like, "You're young. You've got healthy skin oils. You don't need a grease job." But the
youth appeal was clearly only skin-deep. The ads ran in mainstream journals like *Life* and *Harper's Bazaar*. They referred to martinis as a beverage that readers were familiar with. And the party in Paris that WRG threw to launch the brand featured superannuated luminaries like the Duke of Windsor, Gloria Swanson, and Diana Vreeland.\textsuperscript{50} As Mary Wells Lawrence said soon afterwards, “The products are created for a woman with a specific attitude about herself rather than of a specific age.”\textsuperscript{71} “Youth” was primarily being used here as shorthand for the new, anti-technocracy consumer ideal, the pictures of hip young people filling the same space once occupied by distant aristocratic beauties.\textsuperscript{72}
Ads, not only in the 1960s, but also in the 1970s and 1980s, were characterized by their focus on individuality and personal expression. The ideals of "be yourself" and "escape" were common themes, and advertisers often portrayed their products as a means to achieve these goals. The shift from mass-produced, homogenized products to more personalized and individualized goods was a reflection of the larger cultural changes taking place during this period. The 1960s, in particular, saw a rise in anti-establishment sentiments, which were captured in advertising through non-conformist appeals and alternative lifestyles. The 1970s introduced a more pragmatic approach, with ads emphasizing the practical benefits of their products. However, the core message of encouraging self-expression and individuality remained consistent throughout the decade.
for clients that manufactured almost every sort of product for every demographic. Hip was, in a very real sense, the new consuming paradigm, and its rise to preeminence in advertising was one of the most important changes in the visual landscape of the American 1960s.

To understand the omnipresence of the hip new advertising, though, it’s important to stay away from blatantly countercultural ads like the famous “Man Can’t Bust Our Music,” and to examine instead the representations of hip that so filled the pages of mainstream publications and the commercial time of the three networks. On most such occasions, countercultural references were strictly superficial, with little relation to the product or a larger marketing strategy. This was the case when the formerly cute Campbell kids were decked out in Nehru jackets, beads, and day-glo colors in 1968; when S & H Green Stamps announced that “With this little square you swing”; when a collection of Raleigh bicycles was photographed in front of a family whose members are wearing oversized headbands; when Buick announced its 1970 models as cars that “Light your fire”; and when the staid retailer to middle America, Montgomery Ward, declared in 1969 that Wards was now “unexpected” and offering non-middle-American products. When ads for women’s clothing patterns made by the Simplicity company, pictured female protesters and shouted, “Lower the sewing age; sew your own thing” and “You don’t let the Establishment make your world; don’t let it make your clothes,” they were merely utilizing opportune, ready-made slogans; no deeper relationship between the company and the counterculture was envisioned. Similar examples can be tallied up endlessly. The St. Regis Paper Company, makers of all manner of packaging, ran a Peter Max-style drawing of a rock group in Forbes magazine in 1969 under the headline, “Stodgy old paper company wraps it up for ‘The New Colony Six.’” Vaco products, makers of a variety of hardware, chose to dramatize themselves in 1969 with the slogan, “Join the Tool Revolution!” and with such lines as “Vaco says down with dull tools,” “Wrench free,” and “Riveters arise.”

In 1967, Clairol cosmetics announced what it called “The Great Beige-In!” to commemorate the launch of 3 psychedelic beige frosted for lips and nails,” which it described in terms that confused counterculture with protest (“Redheads! It’s Your Right to be Different”). Talk of youth culture, rule-breaking, and the hip uprising was even deemed appropriate in as mundane a field as cleaning products. In 1967, Dash laundry detergent began to use as its slogan, “Somebody had to break the rules,” seeking to associate Dash’s “breakthrough” qualities with those of a series of models dressed in the more outré styles of the period (miniskirt, “geometric haircut”). Top Job kitchen cleaner aired a commercial in which a woman decked out in an overdone hip costume rolls around on her kitchen floor and speaks in an indeterminate European (stage) accent. She wears a loud print pantsuit, uncomfortably heavy makeup (including white lipstick and heavy eye shadow), and sports a painted or tattooed floral design on one bare foot. Her dialogue reveals her to be a member of the hippest cognoscenti:

For a woman, the look is in. But for your kitchen floor, the look is passe. Now there’s a wild new way to tell if your kitchen floor is really clean—you feel it. ... And Top Job gets your kitchen floor so clean you can feel it. Wild!

As adman Ernest Fladell could testify, alcohol was not only not the preferred drug of the counterculture but a basic market (martinis especially) of the generation gap. Despite this fact—perhaps because of it—a number of liquor campaigns got aggressively hip in the latter part of the decade. Gordon’s gin got off to an early start by comparing itself in 1967 to “The Liverpool Sound,” which it illustrated with a photo of a rock band, “vibrant and rollicking.” Ads for one brand of premixed cocktails spoke of “the new free spirit in liquor” and of “uninhibited drinks from Heinlein” while Gilbey’s gin offered hints on how to “make” the “martini scene.” Meanwhile Wolschmidt vodka (post-George Lois) invited readers to “turn on, tune in.” In 1970, Smirnoff vodka inaugurated a curious (curious because its longstanding “Leaves You Breathless” campaign had been so successful) countercultural approach that seemed to equate the beverage with LSD. In the place of businessmen and cocktail parties the brand shows a gathering of young people in liberated clothing who seem to be doing nothing but simply contemplating flowers, staring into a pool of water, or playing guitar. “Leaves you breathless” had been aimed at businessmen who drank during lunchtime; now the ads burst with pseudo-profundity and play up the drink’s appropriateness for “change” and for the whims of individual expression:

Only Smirnoff is subtle enough to go wherever your soul moves you. If you change your mind. Just change your mix. Smirnoff can get together with just about anything.

Again the drink was flavorless but now that quality bore more profound virtues than simple lack of smell: “Joyful. Gentle. Honest.”
conformity, artists, being yourself, and the problem of crowds

The point here isn't simply to catalog ads and commercials that used countercultural imagery—a task which would be almost endless—but to demonstrate how normal that imagery was given the tasks of sixties advertising, how it fit the decade's existing commercial themes. Thanks to the Creative Revolution, hip consumerism had been firmly established on Madison Avenue well before the counterculture presented itself to the nation. The countercultural ads of the late sixties, so easily condemned as shallow co-optation, were in fact a continuation of the new hip consumerism that had dawned with Volkswagen. The central theme that gives coherence to American advertising of both the early and late sixties is this: Consumer culture is a gigantic fraud. It demands that you act like everyone else, that you restrain yourself, that you fit in with the crowd, when you are in fact an individual. Consumer culture lies and seeks to sell you shoddy products that will fall apart or be out of style in a few years; but you crave authenticity and are too smart to fall for that Madison Avenue stuff (your neighbors may not be). Above all, consumer culture fosters conventions that are repressive and unfulfilling; but with the help of hip trends you can smash through those, create a new world in which people can be themselves, pretense has vanished, and healthy appetites are liberated from the stultifying mores of the past. Conformity may have been a bulwark of the mass society, but in the 1960s it was usurped by difference, by an endless succession of appeals to defy conformity, to rebel, to stand out, to be one's self. Advertising in the 1960s taught that the advertising of the 1950s had been terribly mistaken, that people should not consume in order to maximize their efficiency or fit in or impress their neighbors. Instead, consuming was to derive its validity from the impulse to be oneself, to do one's own thing. The appeal of hip consumerism, with its reverence of the outsider, is obvious on the simplest commercial level: The vast majority of brands are not "number one" in their respective markets, are not pleased with the status quo, and they quite naturally came to adopt nonconformity as a central element of their corporate vocabularies.

Inflections of nonconformity appeared in a variety of forms in advertising during the 1960s. In many cases it was simply stated, straight out, that the users of a particular brand were individuals. While advertising had once been a running graphic testimonial to the happy consensus world of the fifties, in sixties advertising virtually nothing is "normal." In 1967, Oldsmobile introduced the Toronado by confessing, "Frankly, Toronado is not for the average man." Alternatively, ads suggested that particular products or retail outlets would empower individuality. A Chicago-area furniture chain called Colby's suggested that "The real you is alive and hiding out at Colby's," that "you might find you" in one of their many decorating styles.

A 1974 commercial for Barney's Men's Store done by the creative firm Scali, McCabe, Sloves demonstrates how this theme, combined with the individualist impulses of the Peacock Revolution in menswear, persisted long past the date usually believed to mark the end of the counterculture and the Creative Revolution. The spot depicts moments in the life of an other-directed man who suffers through the years of conformity, forced to wear the clothes that others have dictated he wear. Brief vignettes detail the various "people [who] have been dressing you": his mother, the big kids at school, an angry sergeant in the army, the salesman at a clothing store that only stocks black or dark gray suits. But at Barney's, this hapless character is finally able to determine his own personality by choosing his own clothes, by going to a store where they think you're big enough to dress yourself. Clairol and Reebok, Barney's took as its slogan, "We let you be you," echoing DDB's 1971 slogan for Clairol Nice 'n Easy hair coloring ("It lets me be me") and anticipating Chiat/Day's famous slogan for Reebok of the late 1980s ("U.B.U."). And in the final vignette, the man, this time with longer hair and sideburns, tries on a wide-lapel jacket at Barney's. When he asks the Barney's salesman, "What do you think?" the man replies, "What do you think?" thus transforming him into his own man.

Suzuki, manufacturer of no less a symbol of defiance than motorcycles, had a fairly obvious and unproblematic interest in the credos of hip consumerism. The company's 1969 print campaign promoted the brand as a means to "Express Yourself." "Freedom," announced a one-word headline from that year. The copy continued this theme in hip prose:

To move. To grab at the wind. To get out of the "where-it's-at" bag.... Suzuki has the power to free you.

Suzuki motorbikes were countercultural machines, enabling resistance and permitting individuality. "Suzuki takes on the country," the slogan
the company began using in 1970, implicitly set the bike off against the mass society, but their gigantic headlines could hardly have left any doubt: "Suzuki expands life"; "Suzuki conquers boredom." 11

The nonconformist theme was often expressed by referring to the masses from which the individual consumer was distinguishing himself. In 1970, Bell & Howell engaged the political spirit of the age by encouraging consumers to "Break away from the silent majority" (with a home movie camera that recorded sound). Old Gold cigarettes used the direct line, "Get away from the crowd." And Van Heusen shirts were dramatized in the late 1960s with a photograph of a lone Van Heusen wearer, usually attired in one of the loud colors then fashionable, standing amid a group of lifeless, colorless papier-mâché statues (who were often wearing hats). The company's slogan promised to differentiate the consumer from the square herd, confiding that "When you come on in a Van Heusen shirt the rest come off like a bunch of stiffs." 12

Since artists were preeminent exponents of the orthodoxy of transgression and the cult of the new, they became suddenly visible in the advertising of the creative revolution. Andy Warhol appeared in George Lois's famous commercials for Braniff and directed some ads of his own; the aging Salvador Dalí appeared for both Braniff and Datsun. A television commercial from 1973 pictures the latter product in a Dalí-esque landscape; the master himself loads his canvases into the rear of the Datsun and appears odd with his long hair. As the commercial closes, he pronounces the car "Absolutely original, different, sensational" in his halting, heavily accented English—characteristics that Dalí, if anyone, should be authorized to recognize. 13 Again, management theory had spilled over into the advertisements themselves: art figures became appropriate pitchmen as Madison Avenue veered away from the rigorous certainties of "science" and toward the unrestrictedness of "art."

More numerous were campaigns for brands that permitted consumers to become self-expressing artists themselves. For products like the Polaroid Land Camera, such a strategy was obvious. The self-developing film, as a 1964 ad put it, allows the consumer to "express yourself," to try again and again until he or she creates "a masterpiece." For something like Tappan gas ranges, the "revolutionary new . . . art" pitch was more of a stretch, but it was made nonetheless in 1968. "Suddenly you're not just cooking," ran the ad's copy, "You're creating!" 14

A hilarious variation on the nonconformity theme appeared in the 1965 campaign for Booth's House of Lords Gin, "The non-conformist gin from England," whose ads were made by the creative Daniel & Charles

agency. One ad consisted of a large headline reading, "I hate conformity because _____" and a photograph of a tie (emblem of conformity) with the legend "Protest Against the Rising Tide of Conformity" painted on it in whimsical, nineteenth-century poster-style lettering. Advertising being well known as one of the primary engines of conformity, the copy naturally mocks conventional advertising premium offers and the "competitive pressure" that was believed to drive consumerism:

fill in the blank spaces and we won't send you this Booth's House of Lords "Protest" tie. Anyone can give you a premium offer. Booth's House of Lords gives you a really fine gin and a chance to shoot off your mouth with absolutely no risk. All comments will be totally ignored. Not a chance of winning anything. Now that the competitive pressure is off, why not take advantage of this great opportunity? Do it today. Or next year. It really doesn't matter. There's no time limit on taking a stand against conformity.

Appropriately, the ad appeared in a variety of trade magazines where it was read by businessmen and professionals, the subjects of the "gray flannel suit" critique. So popular did the Booth's "nonconformist" campaign become that the company eventually sold posters of the ad to private individuals. 15

By 1970, the idea of such a nonconformist mail-in contest was no longer an in-joke among businessmen. Smirnoff Vodka actually encouraged general readers that year to write to the company about their personal strategies of flouting social convention. The brand's "Break a Silly Rule" contest was avowedly not about politics, but aside from that, entrants were supposed to come up with "the silliest rule of social behavior" they could think of and describe how it should be smashed. Smirnoff explained its hostility toward the rules that "stop people from having fun" as a matter of liberating the individual and his or her tastes:

We're talking about the silly conventions that cramp your style. The who-knows-where-they-came-from customs standing between you and a more entertaining, rewarding life.

Like the rule that says you've got to squeeze into your most uncomfortable clothes to attend the dullest party of the year. Or the rule that says white wine goes with fish and red with meat.

Smirnoff was striking a blow for fun, enjoyed by people "at their own pace. In their own way." At war with those troublesome conventions that
kept people from consuming at their best, Smirnoff counted itself an enemy, not a beneficiary, of social conformity. And if the great struggle of the sixties was that of the individual against the tyranny of social convention, Smirnoff wanted the people to know which side it was on."

A favorite mode of dramatizing the contrast between the age of bureaucratic self-restraint and the uninhibited present was to depict consumers behaving madly for (or because of) particular brands, tossing decorum to the winds—and then sometimes assuming a voice of pseudo-authority and pretending to counsel readers against such impropriety. In the mid-1960s, Lucky Strike smokers wore hats, from which they had somehow been forced to take a bite; Tareyton smokers, famously, "would rather fight than switch" and appeared in ads beginning in 1964 with black eyes. A 1964 ad for Nabisco Shredded Wheat confided that it's perfectly all right to eat eighteen Nabisco Shredded Wheat biscuits, but consuming nineteen is extremely dangerous and is likely to send the consumer, like the man pictured in the ad, rocketing from his chair: "Exercise self-control." Similarly, in a 1967 ad placed by National Steel to encourage readers to buy American cars, a "quite, conservative, feet-on-the-ground solid citizen" is shown leaping in the air, the markers of his respectability (hat, spectacles, tie, shoes) flung from his body because he has bought a new car.

A variation on this theme imagined consumers to be so enamored of a given brand that they were driven to violate restrictive rules and social mores in order to consume it. In 1969, Teacher's scotch faux-scolored drinkers in humorous legalale for consuming the brand on "days other than Tuesday" after the company has duly settled, "in strictest point of fact... on Tuesday as the official, approved day for drinking Teacher's." Consumption on any other day must be technically considered unauthorized. A television commercial for Heinz spaghetti sauce made by the Grey agency pictured a variety of people driven to commit the grave faux pas of dippin their bread into other people's spaghetti sauce. "Man," the announcer says, "Heinz spaghetti sauce is so thick and rich, you just gotta dip your bread in it." An award-winning 1967 Doyle Dane spot for Gillette razor blades dramatized the embarrassment of a Soviet diplomat retuming to his repressive homeland after a tour of duty in the United States. A Communist superior enters the diplomat's hotel room unex-

pectedly while he is packing and proceeds to scrutinize the contents of his luggage, chiding him for the various luxuries he is transporting back with him: ties, pornographic magazines, and Gillette razor blades. The diplomat has an excuse for each one ("I want to show the people how decadent the Americans have become"), and for the razor blades he delivers a product pitch. But then the superior discovers an enormous quantity of the blades in the diplomat's suitcase, and the small man, now facing disgrace for his capitulation to the temptations of consumerism, confesses: "Comrade Boobinsky, so I've gotten a little spoiled." Communists are favorite advertising foils because of their supposed hostility toward pleasure and the lockstep totalitarianism they are said to endure. Here their inability to obey their own strict regulations serves to reinforce a central sixties advertising lesson of the final demise of hyperorganized puritanism."

During the Creative Revolution, the stock spokesperson of the 1950s was replaced by a variety of unconventional and unusual product representatives, rule-breakers instead of besuited men of order, deviants instead of conformists. This was the era in which the "Frito Bandito," moved by his love of corn chips, pilfered bags of the snacks from their rightful owners; and in which "Zoltan, the Gypsy Chief," demonstrated his fondness for L & M cigarettes by offering to swap livestock for them. An otherwise unremarkable 1965 print ad for Kellogg's Corn Flakes designated as a "Kellogg's Corn Flaker" a small boy eating his cereal seated at a piano while an old man in suit and bow tie—the long-suffering piano teacher—holds his forehead in despair next to him, all in a quaint Norman Rockwell-style rendering.

George Lois was the master of choosing peculiar figures to represent products, which he did (and does) in order to heighten the "seemingly outrageous." His 1962 television commercial for Xerox showed a chimp using a photocopier; for the brokers Edwards & Hanly, he used children; for Braniff, he paired art figures with heroes of popular culture like Andy Warhol and Sonny Liston, Whitey Ford and Salvador Dali, Mickey Spillane and Marianne Moore. Commercials of the late 1960s for Wheatena hot cereal featured a number of odd sixties figures endorsing this most conventional of products. A surfer balances his surfboard on his head and says, "I'm not sure of many things in this world, but I'm sure I feel better
on days when I eat Wheatena.” In another, a scowling young woman delivers a particularly strange (feminist?) variation on this theme, “I know I feel meaner when I eat my Wheatena.” Lois’s ads for a similar product, Maypo oatmeal, featured weeping superstar athletes pouting, “I want my Maypo.” An early 1970s spot for Lestoil household cleaner that Lois executed reminds one of nothing so much as a Monty Python ad parody. It pits “Mr. America,” a bodybuilder who flexes his muscles and rotates for the camera, armed “with an ammoniated household cleaner,” in a stain-removal contest against “Barbara Brenner,” an ordinary person, who uses Lestoil. An excited announcer narrates the contest as “the extraordinary Mr. America works with his cleaner” and Barbara Brenner with hers. Despite Mr. America’s glamorous fabulosity, the humble homemaker with her Lestoil quickly prevails.20

Criminals and criminal behavior were another sixties advertising staple, from the ubiquitous ads for Foster Grant sunglasses, which encouraged consumers to imagine themselves as all manner of stylish lawbreakers, to the 1966 ad which alerted readers that the chief communists in the Kremlin were readers of the Wall Street Journal, to a 1969 campaign that promoted Scripto pens with a graffiti contest. The theme can be detected as early as 1963, when Howard Gossage promoted Land Rovers by noting “the growing popularity of the Land-Rover in the commission of grand theft.” Land Rovers make good escape cars, not only from the police but from mass society. A mail-in coupon that accompanied the ad is headlined, “Bored with your present life?” It can also be seen in a mundane a commercial as a 1967 Canada Dry spot in which the soda is promoted by a host of women dressed up as Prohibition-era gangsters, miming stilted working-class accents (“Da ginger ale wit da jolt!”) and posing with machine guns in traditional gangster attire.21

anti-status, anti-obsolescence

The quest for status, another oft-criticized characteristic of fifties consumer culture, was another target of sixties consumer culture as products promoted themselves for their authentic qualities (“It’s the Real Thing”) rather than for the impression they would permit consumers to make on others. House of Stuart, a lower-priced brand of scotch whiskey, advertised itself in 1967 as “the Scotch for people who don’t have to prove anything to anybody.” Curiously, by insisting that people only bought House of Stuart because of its taste, the ads were able to revive the im-pressiveness pitch from the rear, as it were: the photograph of the “people who don’t have to prove anything” leaves little doubt that they are extremely wealthy people, wandering about on the lawn of their estate.22

Planned obsolescence was a particularly noxious element of the car-based consumerism of the past, and a number of brands sought to establish their praiseworthy distance from the superficial styling that permitted the practice. Whirlpool humorously dramatized the longevity of its washing machines in 1967 by trumpeting in national magazines the infinitesimal fact that a nondescript and insignificant replacement part from its 1928 model year was being discontinued. That the manufacturer was only beginning to obsolete its 1928 line was, of course, said to be evidence of the best sort for the durability of Whirlpool’s products. The makers of Westclox alarm clocks made a similar appeal in 1969 by pseudo-confessing that “sixty years ago we made a clock that lasted too long,” and that “we’re still making the same mistake.” Even dishwashers could get in a few jabs at the auto industry and its notorious practice: a 1966 ad for the Kitchen Aid “convertible” dishwasher announced that “you won’t trade this convertible in every three years.”23

hidden persuaders exposed

A favorite tactic of the sixties was to draw attention to an ad with headlines that seemed to be confessing some sort of error, a strategy learned from the success of DDB’s Volkswagen and Avis ads. It functioned both to mark a sort of commercial honesty—we’re not just using superlatives automatically—and to build readership with startling words. Renault, joining a list of foreign carmakers that already included Volkswagen, Volvo, and Fiat, used a particularly aggressive version of this tactic in its 1966 ad campaign. One headline for the French brand admitted nothing less than that “our customers are dissatisfied!” As it turns out, they’re only dissatisfied because they think Renault hasn’t been advertising enough. But maybe the scare headline had been used because Renault had some actual confessing to do: a few months later, the company began admitting to some more serious-sounding flaws. Under the interesting headline, “The Renault for people who swore they would never buy another one,” copy written in a humorous poorly-translated-from-the-French style confesses to having actually sold lousy cars a few years before, but assures the public that Renaults are now very fine vehicles indeed.24

Before long, the scare-headline technique was in such widespread use...
that whatever honesty points it had once earned were no doubt dissipating fast. In 1966, Chiquita bananas had used the strategy to draw attention to their quality-control capabilities, with photos of misshapen bananas and headlines reading, "Mistakes we make. But we don't label them Chiquita." Similarly, the 1967 headline, "You miss a lot when you take Contact," referred to the fact that, with the cold remedy's help, you "missed" sneezing and various other symptoms. Philco televisions, which came with a "fancy cabinet," were promoted with the line, "A fancy cabinet doesn't do a single thing to improve color TV viewing"; GE dishwashers offered to "treat your dishes like dirt." Pontiac also got into the shock-headline business in 1967. One ad used the line, "It's a great car to get rid of," under a picture of that current year's model, a strategy that must have been truly disheartening for some Pontiac buyers but by which the company simply meant that Pontiac's resale values were high. Toward the end of the year, the company even indulged in the headline "Widetrack leaves a lot to be desired," then quickly made clear that what was "desired" was, in fact, a brand new wide-track Pontiac.25

A close relative of the faux-confessional style was the denunciation of the advertising industry, a strategy widely used in ads for foreign cars, like Volkswagen, Volvo, and Fiat's 1964 ad, which equated American car advertising with "brainwashing." It is surprising, though, how widely the suspicion of advertising and selling generally spread from these origins. "Be suspicious" of salesmen was the message of a 1967 ad for Sanforized products: "Don't let the smile blind you," it advised, or "the watch hypnotize you." And be sure the salesman, that conniving trickster, doesn't somehow prevent you from being sure of the "Sanforized" label. The 1967 campaign for Fisher stereos actually carried the slogan, "No ad man can do it justice." One installment was particularly hard on "the 77 manufacturers of hi-fi and stereo" and their "ad men." The ad encourages readers to "ignore the ad man when you buy stereo" by trusting no ads and only their cars and the advice of experts. "After that," it concludes, "you'll read the stereo ads strictly as pop culture."26

Scali, McCabe, Sloves (both creative firms in the forefront of the revolution), closely resembled those of Volkswagen. Featuring minimalist black-and-white photographs of the car, they did without fantasy backgrounds, close-ups, and photographic stretching techniques, and remarked on the product's durability, efficiency, lack of changes, and even its odd appearance. But Volvo replaced Doyle Dane's humor with a darker, more despairing vision of American life. Volkswagen had used mirthful ridicule; Volvo used acid cynicism, describing America's dream culture as a landscape of absurdity and futility. Gone was the idealized vision of a happy family in their "merry Oldsmobile": the car culture from which Americans hoped to derive such joy was empty and meaningless, the product of malicious robber barons and their unscrupulous Madison Avenue minions, all of whom were endlessly scheming to bilk the public. More than any other campaign of the decade, Volvo's ads spoke to consumers who were aware of the discourse of advertising, of the marketing strategies of the Big Three, and, most important, of the mass society critique and its understanding of consumer culture as a vast fraud.

A 1963 Volvo ad set the tone: this was not going to be a campaign about the wonders of Volvo per se but about escaping from the clutches of the American automakers and embracing a brand that connoted (as they would put it years later) "an honest car at an honest price." Four headlines from other campaigns (Valiant, Rambler, Corvair, and Falcon) have been torn from their respective ads and displayed next to one another on a black background, so that their slogans, each blustering and fatuous ("The New Shape of Quality"; "It's Exciting!") are reduced to empty puffyery. Below, the Volvo's various qualities are listed in minute type, concluding with the line, "Now if we could just come up with a slogan... " Volvo offers everything but the superficial.27

Volvo ads never tired of portraying the American car culture as de- ranged and the Detroit manufacturers as malevolent and deceitful beings. Buying new cars every few years was an unhealthy and illogical "habit," Volvo suggested in one 1964 ad, "How often do you buy a new car?" asked another. "That's too often," Volvo also repeatedly recalled readers' attention to the failed fads of the past. "Remember compact cars?" asked one ad in 1967. They were briefly popular; "then Detroit got the idea that more is better and came out with 'super-sized' versions that weren't popular with anybody." Another ad alerted readers that Detroit was up to no good again: "Now those compacts are being souped up with big engines, slicked up with fast-back roofs, daubed up with chrome, and the carmakers are advertising them as high-performance rally-type cars..." Not
could the Big Three, hamstrung by bureaucratic ineptitude, as every reader of My Years with General Motors or Organization Man knew, include one standard Volvo feature because they “were still having committee meetings on the idea.”

Exposing the perfidy of the American automotive establishment continued in the brand’s television commercials. A 1967 spot opens with a close-up of a car door being slammed, voices speaking disparagingly of its inadequate sound, and an announcer’s voice-over explaining how, “over the years, smart car buyers” have come to judge cars by the sound of the door being slammed. Gradually the camera pulls back to reveal the owners of the critical voices, three men in authority figures’ white smocks slamming the door—which is not attached to any automobile—and studying its sound. “So naturally, smart car makers, being even smarter than smart car buyers,” the announcer continues, “spend a lot of time perfecting just that.” One of the men produces a hammer and gives the door a sudden blow. This alters its sound when slammed, causing one of his colleagues to comment, “Now that sounds like a quality car.” The scientists who had been so beneficent in the Rosser Reeves style of the 1950s were now defrauding the consumer rather than protecting him, using their technological know-how to investigate his car-culture folk beliefs and perfecting a deceptive, disembodied door.

Planned obsolescence, though, was Detroit’s worst transgression of public confidence, and for deflating it Volvo reserved special wit. A particularly cruel ad that ran in 1967 included beautiful publicity pictures of the 1957 Plymouth, Chevrolet, and Ford Fairlane, over the headline, “The exciting new cars of 11 years ago. Where, oh where, are they now?” But Volvos “don’t change much,” they aren’t “new and exciting for 1968. So [they] won’t be old and funny-looking for 1969.” Even more savage in its deflating of consumer culture was an ad that ran the next month suggesting that Americans might as well buy “paper cars”: it’s “a logical next step in a continuing program of planned obsolescence.” Logical, that is, if the madness of consumer culture is overlooked:

You think the idea is crazy? Sure it is. But trading cars every couple of years is a little crazy, too. And what difference does it make if you’re a little crazy or a lot crazy?

The paper car referred to is depicted, complete with foot-high taillights and beautiful model, the car’s hood sagging under her weight. So sinister was the American car culture that one Volvo ad from 1966 dared to suggest a sort of consumer death-wish. Out of a single illuminated window in a row of dark townhouses, a man looks at his chromed, finned American car. This is not pride of ownership, however: he is “hoping someone will steal [his] car.” But, as the copy continues, “Forget it.” Not even a thief would want such a “big pain in the pocket.”

Volvo buyers, on the other hand, were said to be people who didn’t really care much about the frou-frous, the chrome, and the souped-up engines that the Big Three made for Americans. “This car is for people who don’t like cars,” read the headline of a 1964 ad. Another addressed itself to “those of you who couldn’t care less” about cars that won various races. “Bring up the subject of cars to a lot of people and they’ll tell you cars are a pain in the neck,” began another ad’s attack on the car culture.

They’ll say you have to tinker with them; lay out money for repairs; buy gas, gas, gas; trade every two or three years, lose money on the deal and make payment after payment, year after year after year.

A Volvo television spot of the late 1960s took this hatred of cars to a gritty, depressing conclusion. A thirty-second, wordless vision of automotive hell, it depicts with grinding close-ups and through an oily rain the daily work of the man who runs the crane at the car crushing plant, the end of the line for the foppish vehicles in which Americans psychically and financially invest so much. Volkswagen had boasted of the snowplow driver who got to work in a VW; here Volvo shows us the man who destroys cars for a living and drives home in a Volvo.

cultural dopes

On occasion, Volvo would extend its critique of consumerism to consumers themselves: the people who have bought American cars are colossal suckers; a monstrous fraud has been perpetrated on a gullible people. The consumer who actually fell for the tricks of the “hidden persuaders” and Detroit’s planned-obsolescence strategy was the target of a particularly poisonous 1971 Volvo commercial. The spot presents itself as a testimonial of some kind for a large, unspecified American car; not until several seconds into it does the viewer realize that the qualities of which it boasts are hardly desirable ones. A man speaks to the camera as he washes his
car in the driveway of a typical suburban house. "I've been driving nineteen years," he avers,

and I've had twelve of these! Why, as soon as this one's paid for, I'm gonna get another one! Just in time for the '72s! Yes sir, I'm hooked. I wouldn't drive anything else. Look at that color—peacock blue! If it wasn't such a great car, why would I buy so many of them?

The man is self-evidently ridiculous, a consumer out of the most pessimistic pages of Vance Packard. But not everyone is such a sucker, of course. As the man looks uncomfortably around, his own gullibility perhaps beginning to dawn on him, his neighbor drives up in a Volvo, and a voice-over announces that "if the logic of this argument escapes you, you're ready for a Volvo."33

Given the preponderance of ads, especially in the automobile categories, that made youth-culture appeals, it should hardly be surprising that Volvo eventually ran an ad concerned with the hapless folks who fell for all of the campaigns and promises of liberation discussed here. A slump-shouldered man on a dark street stares into a brightly lit automotive showroom in one 1966 Volvo ad; only his pathetic silhouette is visible. Over his head are posted a variety of new-car encomiums, lettered in standard car-dealer script and larded with the language of rebel youth, then being used by all the American automakers: "The New Fun Look of Youth," "Join the New Rebellion Now!" "Get Out Front with the Long Lean Low Forward Look for '67," and "More Pizzazz for '67." The man's dejection is summarized by the ad's powerful headline: "Your Car is Obsolete. Again." Hip is not a form of resistance to Detroit's annual march of style but the very force that has victimized this hapless consumer. "And the irony of it is," the copy reads, "a big chunk of the money that you paid for your obsolete car was used to bring out the very cars that made it obsolete."34

The Creative Revolution had made all aspects of fifties-style consumerism fair game for mockery. But as youth culture increasingly became the metaphor of choice in advertising, as hip slang shouted from a thousand billboards, it was inevitable that the values of creativity would conflict, if rarely, with the less corrosive values of the counterculture. On most of the occasions when consumerism was to be mocked, of course, it was consumerism as understood by the critics of the mass society: a regime of unthinking conformity and look-alike suburbia. But in certain extraordinary instances admen mocked consumerism by going after its new imagery of rebel youth rather than the lonely crowd. Madison Avenue was acutely conscious of its own developing understanding of youth culture, so when the "Madison Avenue" worldview was to be knocked, on rare occasions it was youth culture that stood in as whipping boy.

Public service ads for the Peace Corps made in the late sixties by creative giant Young & Rubicam were biting hostile to youth culture. Seeking to encourage selflessness rather than the purchase of products and thus actually aiming to mock consumer values, these spots used the imagery of the hippie as a negative, rather than a positive, model. One memorable Peace Corps commercial that ran in 1968–69 barely makes any point at all about the Peace Corps: its intention seems to be simply to deride the counterculture, to cast its pursuit of enlightenment as idle, hedonistic frivolity. The commercial opens with a disembodied head of a long-haired young man looking about at a superimposed background of stars to the strains of the anthem from Hair, "Age of Aquarius." As the song mentions that "the moon is in the seventh house" a poorly animated moon swims across the screen; but as if to emphasize the tawdriness of hippie spiritualism, the moon is surprisingly similar to the Procter & Gamble logo. The rest of the song's references are also illustrated with noticeably shabby special effects: Jupiter and Mars align clumsily, asteroids emit squeaks and blip about the screen. The man's head develops a multicolored halo as he watches the proceedings; eventually, his face takes on the psychedelic multicolored appearance familiar from posters for the musical from which the song is taken. But the man's transformation is a false enlightenment. His head is literally in the stars; he marvels at special effects that appear laughably poor to the viewer. As the voice-over at the end declares, "It's one thing to predict the future [as the song's lyrics do]; it's another to help make it." Hipness is idleness, a part of the Procter & Gamble consuming universe, while the Peace Corps accomplishes real-world tasks.35

The message was made more explicitly in a 1968 radio spot that Young & Rubicam developed for the same Peace Corps campaign. The ad features two voices, that of a down-to-earth but idealistic young man and his shrill, trendy mother. But instead of the stereotypical activist child admonishing his complacent parents, the listener hears the opposite: the mother berates her son for refusing to demonstrate, even denounces him in new-leftist style. Protesting, the ad implies, is not only conformist but is tainted by stylishness as well, by the participation of
fashionable oldsters busily “thinking young.” “Look, Marvin, why can’t you demonstrate for peace like everybody else?” she demands; the child responds that he “doesn’t like crowds.” The ad world’s usual calculus is here inverted: protesting is not an act of rebellion but of conformity to the ways of parents and “crowds.” “Your father, with his flat feet, marched thirty-seven blocks last weekend,” the mother continues, “and he was carrying a sign and chanting!” And when the son announces that he would rather join the Peace Corps because “I wanna do something—something that counts,” the mother responds that a commitment to peace is a matter of correct appearances, not substance:

The Peace Corps! What kind of a crazy way is that to demonstrate for peace? You’ve gotta carry signs, and chant slogans, and wear sandals! [singing] “We shall overcome….”

This last, which is sung in a ridiculous falsetto, further demonstrates the depthlessness of what many Americans probably believed was the counterculture’s favorite pastime. The spot ends with the mother saying to her son, “You’re a troublemaker, Marvin, you know that? Anybody that would join the Peace Corps is a troublemaker.” As usual, the parents represent consumer foolishness, conformity, and superficiality, but this time they have fallen for nothing less than the think-young promises of the Creative Revolution.

By 1972, the triumph of commercialized hip was so complete that when Camel cigarettes organized a campaign around the theme of individualism, they were careful to assert that hip was merely another implement of faddishness and the real rebels distanced themselves from the now-mainstream ways of the pseudo-hipster. While Camel’s new slogan, “They’re not for everybody,” would certainly have been illustrated a few years before with a defiant hipster rising up against mass society, now he is contrasted against figures whose commitment to the revolutions of the sixties make them appear distinctly buffoonish. In one ad, a balding, middle-aged man in a polka-dot shirt is shown being measured for a pair of velvet shorts, an imaginary product of the Peacock Revolution. Far from being a genuine rebel, though, this man is a conformist of the worst kind:

With every pair of Mr. Stanley’s Hot Pants goes a free pack of short-short filter cigarettes.

Now everybody will be wearing hot pants and smoking short-short filter cigarettes.

Meanwhile the true individualist, the smoker of Camels, avoids the preposterous trends the sixties have unleashed on the land. Creativity has come full circle: to resist mass society one must dress unerringly and smoke the most mainstream of cigarettes.36

power to the people

If the consumerism of the past had been a fraud conducted by malevolent industrialists, the consumerism of the sixties was an expression of the popular will (a fundamental tenet of free market theory as well as sixties advertising). Now products had the characteristics they did not, not because of somebody’s depth research, but because that is the way the people demanded it. The Lark cigarette slogan of 1965 was typical, appealing to public approval as validation of its superiority: “You decide for yourself… and for me there is nothing like a Lark.” While the other GM lines were declaring themselves for escape or youthful excitement, Buick took a different strategy against the auto pitches of the past. Buick was, it decided in 1967, a practitioner of corporate populism, a philosophy it explained under the slogan, “Now we’re talking your language.” Rather than dictating to the consumer, this year Buick decided to give the people what they truly wanted. “We changed the Skylark from front to rear, we gave it a whole new look,” one ad pointed out, “simply because we believe you want a car like this.” The generous people at Buick “also refuse to limit your choices,” permitting all manner of variety in details and color schemes. Later Buick campaigns extended the theme, announcing that the 1970 models were “the cars you’ve been asking us to make.”37

A curious variation on this theme envisioned products as the subject of protest, the contested terrain of revolution, and the objects of, literally, popular demand. The makers of Coronet Brandy appealed to the democratic temper of the times by announcing in 1969 that “Brandy surrenders,” that they were abandoning “aristocratic snobishness” to sell liquor to “the people.” In another ad from the same year, a mother and her three children stare angrily at the camera under the headline, “We demand equal air,” a reference to the brand of air-conditioner being
pitched. And George Lois’s early-1970s campaign for Olivetti typewriters semfacetiously encourages “Olivetti girls” to “form a sort of Olivetti underground. And convert your friends to the Olivetti cause.”

women’s liberation

The advertising of the sixties was, by and large, astonishingly sexist stuff, from the hapless Dodge “rebel girl” discussed below to the clinging females who populated the ads of cigarette brand Silva Thins. While it may have questioned and criticized other aspects of the mass society, sexism was one arena in which advertising made virtually no advances until the end of the decade: the stereotypes of femininity in which it dealt were, for the most part, forthrightly repellent, without subtlety or regard for female tastes. But then everything changed, and quite suddenly, in 1969 and 1970. Faced with an articulate popular uprising that looked to be as widespread and as powerful as the revulsion against the mass society, industry leaders quickly changed course. Liberation was their stock-in-trade, and they scrambled to align the Creative Revolution with this latest wave of cultural dissidence.

This was hardly the first time that advertising had superficially allied itself with feminism. Through an elaborate and much-studied campaign in the 1920s, Lucky Strike cigarettes had managed to make itself a badge of female emancipation. Madison Avenue recapitulated the standard industry interpretation of the event in 1969: “This campaign turned Luckies from a loser into a winner and helped make smokers of American womanhood. You might say that this was another plank in the platform of women’s emancipation or entrance into the American male’s world.”

So remarkable was the Lucky Strike windfall that it continued to mold the industry’s understanding of feminism many years later.

During the late sixties, there was such a rush among advertising writers to hail women’s liberation as a freeing of consuming potential that it became an almost monotonous theme in industry commentary. The abandonment of certain ideas of feminine restraint, one reads again and again, will make women into much better consumers than had been their mothers. Laurel Cutler, a senior vice president at McCann-Erickson, described the revolution for readers of Madison Avenue as a shift from the age of the “understated” woman of the 1950s—who was reluctant to use certain products (“Rouge was out. If she colored her hair she was embar-

rassed about it.”)—to the “age of options,” when “the American woman is free to look like a lady or a tramp” or “like herself or anybody else.” This freedom promised, among other things, vastly increased consumption of certain goods:

Does anyone care anymore whether only her hairdresser knows for sure? Not if she can have more fun as a blonde. Forget color. Much of the time the hair we’re wearing is not our own. And we wear more jewelry at once than our mothers wore in their whole lifetimes.

Transgression of outdated social convention was directly linked to increased consumption; the liberated woman was to be welcomed because she was a “heavy user.” Cutler laid out the basic cultural operation of hip consumerism for her readers in no uncertain terms:

Many women like many writers and movie directors are romping in the ruins of the old censorship. They are throwing out the old forms. They are challenging every institution in our society. At the least, they are questioning all the traditional values. At the most, they are rebelling against the old authorities. Not only Church. State. Family. But also Fashion. Propriety. Modesty. And that great establishment Lady.

Isn’t this new woman, this free and loving-every-minute-of-it woman, the heavy user every industry must find and cultivate and multiply?

Feminism, as it was understood by the industry in the late sixties and early seventies, was an almost perfect product pitch, and toward the end of the decade the ads of a great number of products specifically marketed to women took on overtly liberationist themes, even when the product had clearly been developed according to less liberated notions of femininity. A particularly counterintuitive example was the array of new vaginal deodorants introduced in the late 1960s. Ad campaigns for virtually every single one, regardless of its manufacturer or agency, touted the product as an accoutrement of women’s liberation. A 1970 advertisement for FDS, “the first feminine hygiene deodorant spray,” declared in mock-liberated fashion, “The age of FDS began with understanding. Understanding you . . . today’s young woman . . . committed to total femininity . . . entitled to total confidence.”

Massengill Feminine Hygiene Deodorant Spray advertised itself as “the freedom spray” and pictured the product’s container next to a political button reading “freedom
They're a whole new genre of unfettered, free-spirited, savvy women who know how to cut through the phony baloney of the beauty business and get right down to basics.

The woman chosen to illustrate this "unfettered, free-spirited" individual is laden down with hip markers like a pantsuit, a derby hat, and rings on every finger. Other ads depicted the new female consumer as a creator of modern art rather than a churner of butter, a breaker of rules rather than a compliant traditionalist. Pond's feminist campaign juxtaposed derisive comments about the orderly, repressive past with fantasies of the present-day American female as a skilled but rule-breaking craftsman (much like the creative admen themselves). In one ad she was a mechanic, working on her motorcycle (eternal symbol of hip rebellion), with copy that sneered, "You need another pale, white, virtuous hand lotion like you need another apron." In another she was a sculptor with a blowtorch, accompanied by copy that emphasized her defiance with these words: "You need another pious, lily-white, Lady Jane hand lotion like you need a whale-boned girdle." In each, the notion of "dishpan hands" as women's great scourge was ridiculed, as were the advertisements that continued to cater to such a "housewife" female. Whiteness was now a mark of shame in the corporate canon, not virtue (the new Pond's lotion was pink), and the "prim" and "prissy" female of the 1950s had been banished forever.

The best-known feminist campaign of the 1960s was crafted by the all-American firm Leo Burnett (the company responsible for the Marlboro cowboy, the Jolly Green Giant, and the Pillsbury Doughboy) for Virginia Slims cigarettes, a new Philip Morris product that had been specifically invented to appeal to the new attitudes of women. These new cigarettes were longer ("you've come a long way") and narrower than usual, but their real difference, as with all cigarette brands, was an image defined by advertising. This image was concocted of varying quantities of militant feminist rhetoric mixed with some less radical aspects of American femininity (like makeup and fashionable clothes). It incorporated a great many of the aforementioned themes: the oppressive cigarette establishment, nonconformity, self-determination, and the liberating power of the youth counterculture. One of the campaign's first television spots opens on a woman dressed in an overdetermined, old-fashioned costume standing alone in the middle of an uncluttered set. A male voice addresses the viewer while restrained flute music is played:
1966 model year as an implement of nonconformity, of instant youthfulness, of mockery toward traditional Detroit-suckers, or of distinction from the mass society herd. There was, of course, the Mustang, the decade's great automobile success story, which was promoted with ads facetiously claiming to have transformed ordinary people—"born losers"—into owners of exotic, daring lifestyles: bullfighters, socialites, gamblers, star musicians. There was also Rambler's "Rogue" and "Rebel"; the "big, new-generation Comets" from Mercury; the Plymouth Fury, which was evidently "for getting off the beaten path. And making your own"; and the Corvair, "a most unusual car for people who enjoy the unusual."48

The critique of mass society leveled by the American automakers, was noticeably different from that of Volkswagen and Volvo. The ads of the Big Three automakers were not concerned with evading planned obsolescence, but with discovering for annual style changes a more compelling meaning. Where Volkswagen and Volvo emphasized authenticity and durability, Detroit stressed escape, excitement, carnival, nonconformity, and individualism. It is a cleavage that goes to the heart of the commercial revolution of the sixties: every brand claimed to be bored, disgusted, and alienated, but for some these meant the never-changing Volkswagen and blue jeans; they steered others toward the Pontiac Breakaway and the Peacock Revolution.

The transformation of Oldsmobile advertising from the 1950s through to the adoption of the "Youngmobiles" slogan in 1968 is illustrative of the industry's change. Oldsmobile television commercials during the 1950s featured all of the standard devices of prerevolutionary car advertising: cars and disembodied engines on revolving platforms; smiling male announcers with deep, authoritative voices; meaningless descriptions like "futuramic," "the linear look," and "rocket" engines; graphs with no notation on either axis; an unchanging jingle about "merry Oldsmobile" that dated from the prewar period.49

By 1964, Oldsmobile commercials had begun to invent a more distinct, brand image for the line and to speak to particular—and decidedly unyouthful—market segments rather than simply specify the cars' features. A man with gray hair who plays polo finds "high-spirited high-fashion in this Olds 98." He is a "man of action and discernment" and Oldsmobile is, quite simply, "Where the action is!" Throughout the mid-1960s, the line's commercials emphasized the action, adventure, and daring that Oldsmobile made available to such affluent consumers. In 1965, Oldsmobile enlisted the announcing services of John "Shorty"
Powers, whose well-demonstrated familiarity with the exciting world of jet aircraft reinforced the car's daring image. Then in 1966 Oldsmobile began to go from Cold War cool to counterculture (from the first sixties cultural obsession to the next, as it were). Commercials from that year used a guitar and tambourine soundtrack in place of the earlier jazz orchestra. Psychedelic graphics appeared: whirling flowers and fields of daisy color moved rapidly about the screen as Shorty Powers drove around in his 442 convertible, the features of its suspension demonstrated with animation.50

Then in 1967 the Oldsmobile company turned openly to youth culture. To make the comparison especially clear, the cars were now referred to as “Youngmobiles,” their features repetitively described with the words “young ideas.”49 “Youngmobiles” were to be implements of resistance to the conformity and sameness that mass society apparently demanded: “Call it different. Call it individualistic. Call it yours,” read Toronado ads. They were also cars with a distinctly countercultural air. One commercial mixed footage of surfing, waves washing over the camera, and a distorted electric guitar soundtrack to establish the correct atmosphere. “1968 is happening,” says the announcer. Something young is happening.”51 The “young” theme, though, was not meant for actual young people. In another commercial, a married couple discuss cars in bed at night. “Harry,” says the wife, “I just dreamed we bought a 1968 Youngmobile from Oldsmobile.” In her dream, she and her husband, who wears a business suit, examine the car in question at a dealer's showroom. “The styling, the lines,” she says.

So fresh. So young. . . . So young inside, too. Young ideas everywhere you look. . . . The way it performs—so young. . . . And such a young spirit.

Naturally, she dreams of driving the car to the beach, where a number of attractive young surfers are in attendance.52

For all of their references to youth and their libidinal engagement of youth culture, the first “Youngmobiles” ads exhibited little comprehension of the counterculture's social critique. Later advertisements, though, more fully embraced the new values. Oldsmobiles were not only “young,” they were hip: emblems of nonconformity, agents of distinction from and rebellion against the dull sameness of mass society. The company's 1968 slogan promised an “Escape from the ordinary.” One ad appealed to consumers' feelings of hostility toward everyday routine by asking, “Run-of-the-mill cars got you feeling grounded?” and “Want to really send the ordinary into a tailspin?”53

Oldsmobile's 1969 campaign was a truly extraordinary effort to link the mass society critique to a brand identity. The “Youngmobiles” line had been dropped, replaced by classic and more familiar (for Oldsmobile buyers) images of anonymity and bureaucratic malaise derived from the world of white-collar work. In the background of the company's print ads, people toil away at a line of identical desks or tend to ranks of sixties-era computers; in the foreground is posed a 1970 Oldsmobile. This was the answer to the monotony of corporate life: “Facts. Figures. Data. Reel after reel after reel. Wouldn't it be nice to have an Escape Machine?” The solution to the meaningless drudgery of mass society was a consumer product.54

Dodge advertising of the mid-1960s, made by BBDO, called on consumers to join the “Dodge Rebellion,” a cheerful revolt against the mass society malaise. Under slogans like “Rise up,” “Break away from the everyday,” and “Move away from the crowd,” the automaker offered its products as a solution for conformity. Dodge was no longer the line of gigantic, meaningless tailfins that it had been a few years before, but a beaver of revolutionary differentness, the liberator of suburbia, “the rambunctious rebel that's leading . . . [the] charge on Dullsville.” A BBDO executive explained the campaign to Victor Navasky in 1966 as “designed to blast the stodginess image.”55 But the company had yet to get its signifiers straight. In these ads, which appeared toward the end of 1965, insurgency was symbolized by a female model that the trade press called the “rebel girl,” who appeared in a hipster's dark tights and turtle-neck and brandished a sword, flintlock, or similarly antique weapon. Not only is the rebellion in which the “rebel girl” is engaged thus whimsically ancient, but her doings are hapless and ineffectual. In one 1966 ad, she points a gun at her own head. In television commercials, she crashes airplanes, accidentally detonates a railroad car full of dynamite on which she is riding, and she is sexually submissive, falling helplessly from on high into the back seat of a moving Dodge convertible. However it promised to deliver consumers from “the herd,” the Dodge rebellion was pretty tame stuff.56

In 1967, BBDO sharpened Dodge’s rebelliousness, reformulating the brand as a more active anti-establishment agent. The new campaign focused on “Dodge Fever,” an imaginary malaise brought on by the sight of Dodge cars which caused square over-forty men to both weighty social
responsible. In one television commercial, a new Dodge causes a jeweler to smash a “two million dollar diamond”; in another a chemist with a German accent frets, “Za Dodge Fever—please, not-now! “I’m so nervous,” the jeweler confides. “What if I got—Dodge Fever?” He is right-fully worried. He is a quintessential Organization Man, the antithesis of Dodge-ness: he wears old-fashioned spectacles, mops his forehead with a handkerchief, uses bowdlerized pre-sixties expressions like “boo-boo,” and is closely supervised by a worried, overweight capitalist. The chemist, who is balding, also wears tiny round glasses and a lab coat. While these figures of precision and order attempt to perform their tasks, a young woman in miniskirt and boots is pictured driving about in a Dodge car, which in one case is called the “Swinger 340,” the automotive equivalent of the counterculture: a “new young compact with a wild new personality.” The appeal of Dodge’s wild youthfulness is irresistible, demanding immediate gratification. As the female model says, “Some things just can’t wait.”

The Dodge compulsion to consume immediately and without moderation comes naturally to the hip young, like the car’s driver. But for repressed, other-directed men like the diamond cutter and the German chemist, the liberating call of the wild Dodge is threatening indeed, a fever which they must not “catch.” Of course, at the moment of greatest importance both men look out their windows and glimpse the woman with the Dodge car. The jeweler shatters his diamond; the chemist causes his laboratory to explode. Order is reduced to rubble by the merest suggestion of consumer freedom. And the pathetic Organization Man is left to ponder his certain punishment: “Oh boy, am I gonna get yelled at,” despairing the luckless diamond cutter.

The upgraded menace of this more subversive tactic in the Dodge rebellion is clearly demonstrated in a 1969 television commercial for the Challenger, a powerful muscle car. Again the car’s desirability is established by a confrontation between a ludicrous and overdetermined square figure and a young, reasonable character whose car offends postwar propriety; again we admire its features because of the degree to which they annoy the Man. This time, though, the square is no less than the counterculture’s great foe—the Pig: an overweight policeman with a pronounced stage-Southern accent. He has pulled over the (young, white, moneysounding) driver of the Challenger and, chewing a cigar, addresses him in the derisive manner supposedly unique to Southern lawyers: “Boy, you’re in a heap of trouble.” The young man is charged with symbolically disrupting the order this unpleasant figure is paid to protect.

by “operatin’ a racing-type vehicle inside the city limits.” Of course, the driver of the Dodge pleads that an injustice is being committed, that the Challenger is a stock consumer product like any other, that its various attractive features (tires, racing stripes, enormous motor, peculiar shift stick) are not illegal. But the stout bearer of authority will not be placated. The car challenges the Establishment, and he even threatens the young man with further charges if he continues to protest: “Careful, boy. I’ll book you for sassin’ a law officer.” A young female announcer appears at the commercial’s conclusion to drive home the ad’s message that the virtue of Dodge cars lay in the ways they discomfit men of order. “If you can handle the way people react to your 1970 Dodge Challenger,” she says happily, “You could be Dodge material.”

This commercial’s challenge to authority did not consist merely of a simple fictional confrontation of youth and the law; it also rebelled dramatically against the conventions of automobile advertising. If policemen appeared at all in earlier commercials for cars, it was as benevolent, admiring figures. Here he is pig, a stock buffoon borrowed from Easy Rider and bent on repressing the very brand of car being advertised. Dodge’s unflattering portrayal of the policeman was no doubt offensive to the “silent majority” then proclaiming its support for local police forces in their running post-Chicago battle with the cadres of the revolution. But evidently Dodge did not care: as for so many business spokesmen in the 1960s and since, the restrained, conformist values of postwar convention were contrary to the consumer attitudes Dodge wished to encourage. In the battle between counterculture and Establishment, Dodge came down solidly on the side of the rebels.

Throughout the early sixties, Pontiac ads had emphasized the car’s wideness (“wide-track Pontiac”) in an attempt to identify the brand as a master of troublesome nature. But when Dodge began to speak for the Rebel, Pontiac aligned itself with another stock sixties character, the Outsider, giving voice to an even deeper sense of dissatisfaction. The automaker did this, however, with only a few overt references to the counterculture, the most forceful exponent of such angst. Instead, commercials used more distant icons of alienation like gangsters. Dodge may have mocked the upholders of law and order, but Pontiac went them one better, identifying their products with actual—not wrongly accused—lawbreakers. A 1968 ad, which appeared soon after the success of Bonnie and Clyde, mimicked the movie closely and signaled corporate America’s approval of what is usually understood to have been a landmark inversion of the traditional Hollywood conception of justice. The spot features a
group of gangsters who emerge from a bank they have robbed in clothes almost identical to those worn by Warren Beaty and Faye Dunaway in the movie, climb into a 1930s Packard, and drive away. Cheerful banjo music plays throughout the commercial, as it did in the film. The group quickly discards its Packard for a new Pontiac Firebird convertible, which is in turn abandoned for a Pontiac station wagon, establishing the simple point that Pontiac is the getaway car of choice for America's outlaws, with whom the viewer was encouraged to identify: "If you're particular about the car you drive," as bank robbers no doubt are, "there's a particular kind of Pontiac for you."

In 1968, Pontiac stated the new theme more openly. "Pontiac announces the great break away!" declared its print ads. The familiar "wide-track" theme was redefined: "wide-tracking" was no longer a matter of mere performance, but an existential operation, acession "from humdrum driving." Pontiac extended its invitation to rebel to everyone: in its television commercials, even golf-playing businessmen were alienated from the civilization of business. One 1968 commercial opens with Jack Nicklaus and two young women proclaiming their hostility toward the world of conformity and denial and averring that Pontiac is the car for their disaffection. "I broke away because I got tooled off," says one woman, looking stern and angry at the camera. "I broke away because I wanted to swing," says the other. But again their alienation is harmless stuff. The trio climb into a Pontiac Firebird and spend the rest of the sixty seconds driving around a golf course.

A 1969 spot for Pontiac's GTO, now known as "The Humbler," was much less benign. If the "Bonnie and Clyde" spot had signaled Pontiac's acceptance of new values exalting the alienated and even violent outsider by focusing on stylized gangsters from a distant, cartoonish past, this later commercial purposefully starred a genuinely threatening character from the present—the juvenile delinquent. The setting is the familiar site of teenage contention, the hamburger stand, crowded with young people in by-now-commonplace long hair. The action is simple wordless drama. Unaccompanied by a female, the anti-hero drives up in his Pontiac GTO and cruises the restaurant's parking lot, which is filled with other muscle cars. He stares menacingly, revs his engine, opens his exhaust, and finally roars away. Despite the other powerful motors sitting around, his Pontiac is the subject of everyone's quiet stares of awe, its superiority universally recognized. In place of the usual announcer, the car's various features are hymned by a surprisingly hard rock band who resemble the once-revolutionary Detroit group MC-5. And the words with which these features are described speak openly to the antisocial sentiments that delinquents are supposed to harbor. "Wheels," they sing, "tough as leather. Big and bad and black. Pipes, open wide, don't hear no one talkin' back." In 1969, "Big and bad and black" must have conjured images of black militancy, and indeed one black couple is shown at the hamburger stand nodding approvingly as the GTO loner drives by. That the "Humbler" is said to be "bad," and that the loudness of its "pipes"—that is, an exhaust system that can be made to circumvent the muffler (and the law)—are an attractive feature reveals how far hip had come by 1969. Ten years before, each of these values would have been considered negative and even dysfunctional. At the commercial's conclusion, the traditional authority, the deep-voiced male announcer, actually endorses the free-floating hostility of the unpenitent Pontiac outsider: "The humbler is here. This is the way it's gonna be, baby."

the uncolas

Another product category that was quite thoroughly given over to hip advertising was soda, a cheap, disposable product bought largely by young people themselves. Even so, the best soda ads stressed the values of the counterculture rather than simple countercultural appearances—footage of long-haired youngsters or rock soundtracks. 7-Up and Dr. Pepper, for instance, both used overtly countercultural messages but less rock music and day-glo illustration than one would expect. Even here, with products specifically targeted to young people, hip consumerism was a more complex phenomenon than "co-optation" would imply, a larger shift in the values of business culture than a momentarily expedient dalliance with the rebel doings of the young.

Campaigns for Dr. Pepper have proclaimed the soda's uniqueness and vaguely subversive "differrentness" since the late 1960s, but without making many overt references to the counterculture's embrace of these same values. When Young & Rubicam took over Dr. Pepper's advertising in 1970, the drink was tagged memorably with the term so frequently applied to errant youth in those years: "misunderstood." Strangely enough, though, the campaign commented mainly on business values, which it addressed in language almost identical to that used by the young cultural insurgents. The most famous commercial from that era is basically a dramatization of the problem faced by Dr. Pepper's ad agency—persuading people to remember what Dr. Pepper was. It depicts a group of Dr. Pepper employees
standing around a loading dock in their Dr. Pepper jackets and pondering the problem. One of their number arises to address them, reflecting the era’s romanticization of popular democracy. "Men," he shouts, arms waving, his accent that of a Southern preacher. "There's people out there that don't understand us... Now what are we going to do about that?" A comrade shouts, with revolutionary fervor, "Make 'em understand us!" At the commercial's conclusion, an announcer says in a distinctly working-class accent, "Dr. Pepper may be America's most misunderstood soft drink, but with guys like we got, it won't be for long." Even without long hair and electric guitars, the struggle to make one's uniqueness "understood" could be easily translated into commercial imagery.64

Later ads for Dr. Pepper enlarged on this corporate-protest theme, moving from "misunderstood" to a more specific, but still-hip adjective: "original." Commercials from this campaign used a variety of situations to illustrate a single metaphor, the transformation of the square through the intervention of Dr. Pepper, the nonconformist soda (what Ford today calls a "serious attitude adjustment"). One television commercial of the early 1970s is particularly illustrative of the brand's ongoing confusion of hip and corporate values. A group of businessmen are shown ordering lunch to eat during a board meeting. The boss asks for "a cola," and in a scene reminiscent of The Hucksters, each of the men seated at the long table call out, "Me too, sir." A lone young person, though, refuses to be a corporate yes-man. In defiance of business protocol and decorum, he leaps up onto the table and sings, "Oh no, not for me, sir. I need originality, sir. Give me innovation, variation, Dr. Pepper!" Soon, of course, the entire group has been won over.65 In another, a number of Dr. Pepper consumers, who are in the majority this time, confront a bookish librarian, quintessential enforcer of lococentric order, coaxing her to "Have some excitement." After tasting "some originality" in the form of Dr. Pepper, she is instantly liberated and begins to cast off her various sartorial restraints; removing jacket, glasses, scarf, letting her hair down and joining in the carnivalesque Dr. Pepper dance.66

The lemon-lime soda 7-Up stayed closer to the actual counterculture, but still managed to produce a fairly serious commercial critique, eroding the tyranny of mass society with the cola-monopoly. During the 1960s, 7-Up had for some time run a distant third in sales to cola giants Coke and Pepsi. Late in that decade its agency, J. Walter Thompson of Chicago, tagged the beverage as the "Uncola" and successfully hitched the product to the rising star of nonconformity. The campaign brought together the ad world's Creative Revolution with the new values sweeping the land: nonconformity in admaking, as it turned out, dovetailed nicely with nonconformity as a brand image. As John Furr, presently Thompson's Worldwide Director of Training, recalls, the sixties saw a changing of the guard at the ad world's most "establishment" agency, a change that was driven by the demands of anxious clients like the people at the 7-Up corporation. At the time when 7-Up asked Thompson for a new and more aggressive campaign, the agency was undergoing a massive reinvention of itself. So it was a very interesting coincidence, that here was a client who was trying to reinvent its brand or challenging what it was, coming to an agency that was very much doing the same thing, in terms of its own... creative persona.67

During the early 1960s, advertising for 7-Up cast it as a good mixer with liquor or as an appropriate accompaniment to certain foods rather than as a beverage in its own right. And although its ads used obligatory soft-drink lines like "It's got the sparkle that swings!" they often paired the drink with people engaged in stilted upper-crust activities like tinkering with a Ferrari or playing with a pet falcon.68 In response to 7-Up's desire to remake its image, in 1966 J. Walter Thompson inaugurated a new campaign around the more hip-sounding slogan, "Wet and Wild." Commercials from 1967 pair avant-garde filmmaking techniques with a new rock 'n' roll jingle: the goal seems to have been to establish the drink's "wildness," to identify 7-Up with the tide of liberation, particularly sexual, that was then beginning to draw the attention of the mass media. But for all its rock music, its graceful camera work, and its suggestively posed female models, this attempt to identify the soda pop with the emerging counterculture was too superficial to be convincing. As John Furr notes, the campaign suffered from one of the perennial problems of the Creative Revolution: artistry obscured message. "Wet and Wild didn't work," he recounts. "It was visually dramatic, it was an art director's dream come true, it was very striking advertising, but it really didn't... reposition the brand."69 The commercials may have used countercultural signifiers, but they had no countercultural content to speak of.

The Uncola campaign, inaugurated in 1968, accomplished the company's goals much more effectively. Discovering through research that consumers only identified brands of cola as "soft drinks," JWT decided to confront the public's basic perceptions of what soda was. 7-Up needed to effectively encourage defiance of established cola tastes, and the idea of "Uncola" suggested itself as a means of dissent. From its inception, the
campaign was cloaked in an aura of transgression, of taboo-smashing and
establishment-challenging activities. As Furr tells the story, an art
director at Thompson “Got a cola glass and poured 7-Up in it. And it was like
heresy! ‘You mean, 7-Up is a cola?’” The first round of Uncola commercials
“was such a violation and departure that the bottlers were furious.”

It was a shocking campaign, the first several commercials that were done. When
it was shown at a bottlers meeting, that I believe took place here in Chicago
[late 1968 or 1969], I’m told, about half the bottlers got up and walked out. They
were so outraged. They were incensed about this advertising.

Unlike soda campaigns of the past, the Uncola effort was organized not
so much around particular product claims as around what Furr calls “an
attitude.” The Uncola was anti-establishment, the outsider beverage, the
negation of America’s traditional tastes in soft drinks. It not only identi-
fied the product with the youth uprising, but it managed to accomplish
the company’s marketing needs by doing so:

We were still struggling to try to get out of Vietnam, and there was this whole anti-
establishment everything. . . . The timing was brilliant, because it allowed the
younger people to, in effect, say, “this is my soft drink,” and it allowed us to violate
tabos that were very much part of the generation that was there. . . . So the adver-
tising didn’t look anything like ordinary soft drink advertising, which was also
fortuitous, because we were being outspent, even then, by Coke and Pepsi by a mea-
sure of probably ten to one.26

7-Up used youth culture both to speak to its largest target market and to
reposition itself against the very-much-established colas.

The Uncola campaign made extensive use of countercultural imagery. 7-Up
billboards and print ads consisted of vibrant and colorful Peter Max-style renderings of the product as an electric guitar or a butterfly
surrounded by the omnipresent rainbows and birds and hearts and flowers
of the psychedelic era. In 1969, the company sponsored Chicago perform-
ances by counterculture favorites like Blind Faith, Creedence Clear
water Revival, and Crosby, Stills, and Nash.27

But the first round of Uncola television commercials, aired in 1968, contained no countercultural or youth imagery at all: here the anti-
establishment “attitude” was conveyed simply through clever attacks on
cola as the drink of unenlightened mass conformity. “Uncola” was more
an attitude about consuming than it was an appeal to a particular market
segment: cola is sameness, dreary homogeneity, while 7-Up is the bever-
age of differentness, daring, and rebellion. Even the announcer’s hesitating
voice—continually interjecting “um” and “uh”—serves to under-
score the Uncola’s distance from the establishment hard sell. Three
brown bags are shown at the opening of one commercial, each with an
unspecified bottle of soda inside. “Uh, these are the three largest-selling
soft drinks,” the announcer says. The first two are identical: “This one’s a
cola too. It’s brown, like a cola; it’s sweet, like a cola.” But the third is
decisively different: “And this one is the uncola. It doesn’t look anything
like a cola, it doesn’t taste anything like a cola.” In another commercial,
the colas’ sameness is damned as an element of oppressive conformity.
After noting, Avis-like, that 7-Up is the number-three-selling soda, the
modest announcer suggests that maybe it would sell better if it addressed
the conformist fears of consumers: “Uh, it could be one of the two largest-
selling soft drinks if only the Uncola looked like a cola.” To address this
imaginary anxiety, the announcer facetiously offers a “Security Kit” con-
sisting of two test-tubes of brown fluid which, when mixed with 7-Up,
give it a cola color. “You see?” he says in a tone of mock reassurance. “If
the uncola makes you feel un-secure, well, there’s your answer.” But then
conformity is undone: a hand brusquely removes the “Security Kit,” re-
places it with a bottle of 7-Up, and the announcer delivers the punch
line. “So now you know, we could make it look just like a cola, if we
wanted to, but we don’t.”28

A later (1973) commercial dramatized this message with classic im-
ages of machinelike monotony disrupted by the beverage of unconfor-
nativity. A succession of empty cola glasses are being filled with ice, seized
by hands, and filled by a machine with a brown fluid. The glasses appear
rhythmically one after another to the accompaniment of generic ma-
chine noises, faster and faster and faster, until the cola assembly line is
brought to a sudden halt by 7-Up. Ice bounces off the top of a glass instead of falling in. The machine noise stops. A hand turns the glass
side-up; its opening is on the other end. Everything moving slowly and
reasonably now, the inverted glass is filled with 7-Up and placed in
front of a row of colas. “For years, the colas had things pretty much their
own way,” the announcer explains. “But then came the Uncola. And
ever since, the fresh, clean taste of 7-Up has been turning the Cola world
side-down.”29 The inversion of values of the 1960s and 1970s was
destined not a threat to 7-Up or its agency, but the opportunity of a lifetime. As
Walter Thompson remade itself along creative lines, its client could
challenge the market leaders on grounds of philosophy, not just image.29
advertising around which the story revolved. Love that soap might indeed have been used by one of the soapers, but it would have required support based on a carefully built and researched selling proposition to back it up, and this was entirely omitted in the novel." Quoted from Fairfax Cone, With All Its Faults: A Candid Account of Forty Years in Advertising (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1969), p. 165.


10. Martin Mayer, Madison Avenue, U.S.A. (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1958). DDB is an exception to both rules; Rosser Reeves and David Ogilvy both continued to write copy as agency heads.

11. Ibid., pp. 29, 76, 280.

12. Ibid., pp. 13, 30. Wakeman himself, Mayer suggests, was part of the "disgruntled" creative legion that have "given the industry the unfortunate part of its reputation."


15. Rosser Reeves, Reality in Advertising (New York: Knopf, 1961). Advertising history is crowded with successful campaigns based on such a strategy: "It's Toasted" for Lucky Strike (all cigarette tobacco is toasted); Schlitz beer bottles were "Washed with live steam," as were all other beer bottles, etc.


17. Reeves describes his strategy for discovering a USP thus: "When an agency turns loose a group of qualified scientists, when broad-scale, open-end research and testing are started, it is astonishing how many radical differences come swimming to the top—differences either in the product, or in the use of the product, which had not been suspected before" (Reeves, Reality in Advertising, p. 54). The summary of the Reeves style is from Advertising Age, February 14, 1966, p. 40.

18. Ted Bates Historical Reel of television commercials at the Museum of Television & Radio (MT&R), New York. Mayer wrote: "Bates's advertising, with its heavy emphasis on medical testimony, vastly irritates creative people at other agencies; the standard objection runs: 'You can always tell a Bates ad by the white coat.' And a high executive of one agency, showing deep disinterest, described the Bates technique as 'the philosophy of the uncheckable claim'" (Mayer, Madison Avenue, U.S.A., p. 50). Reeves quoted in Advertising Age, February 14, 1966, p. 40.

19. Quote from Reeves, Reality in Advertising, p. 72; the anecdote appears in Mayer, Madison Avenue, U.S.A., p. 35.


24. Ibid.


26. Reeves could barely restrain his rage at such contests. "Recently, an advertising magazine asked the creative people of twenty-five top agencies to pick the three worst TV commercials of the past several years," he wrote in Reality in Advertising. "These men and women picked (as the worst!) two of the most dramatically successful commercials of the past twenty years. One had introduced a new product, and in just eighteen months had swept aside all competition. . . . The second commercial, in another field, had done almost the same thing. The reasons given by this panel were almost as odd as their choice: 'No trace of cleverness or brightness,' said one writer. 'Unoriginal,' said a second. 'Dull,' said a third. 'I am glad I did not write them,' said a fourth. And these people are advertising men! And advertising men are supposed to be salesmen!' These were almost certainly Bates ads, made according to Reeves's principles. See Reeves, Reality in Advertising, pp. 114–15.

27. These ads appear in the February, 1951, issue of Fortune, which featured the "Permanent Revolution" articles.

28. John Furr of J. Walter Thompson, Chicago, interviewed by Thomas Frank, July 6, 1993, at his office in Chicago. Mr. Furr is presently Worldwide Director of Training for JWT.


31. Reeves, Reality in Advertising, p. 119.

32. Ogilvy, Confessions, p. 20. Ogilvy's quote is not attributed.

Chapter Three


3. Even Martin Mayer points this out. "Advertising's contribution here is, on
chapte r five

1. “How To Do It Different” was the title of a speech given by Bill Bernbach in 1956 (Mayer, Madison Avenue, U.S.A., p. 66). The paragraph from Bill Bernbach said, “Madison Avenue, 1956, pp. 33, 36.

2. Della Femina, From Those Wonderful Folks Who Gave You Pearl Harbor, p. 29.


4. Ibid., p. 30. There is a paragraph break between these two sentences; they are in the collection of Lois’s ads.


12. Hanley Norins, “Must Science Be a Dirty Word in the Creative Department?” Madison Avenue, December 1966, p. 35, 34. It’s unclear, but I think the second quotation is from someone by the name of Ralph Judson.


chapter six
2. The exact date of this merging is little-discussed in industry histories. Stephen Fox, who characterizes the advertising industry as a cultural laggard rather than a cultural instigator, refers to the change but gets its dates strangely wrong. He erroneously puts the “Summer of Love” in 1966 (the term usually refers to the summer of 1967) and then asserts that Mary Wells’s “Love Power” slogan only came into use in 1968, thereby establishing a gap time of three years. But, in fact, Wells had already made “love” into one of the pillars of her advertising theory by May 1967, at the very beginning of the “Summer of Love.” (See Advertising Age, May 29, 1967, “Present Product with Love: Wells; Don’t Overdo Presentation: Frank to WSAAA”). Fox, The Mirror Makers, p. 271.
7. Merle Steir, “The Now People,” Madison Avenue, June 1967, p. 24. Steir was a partner in a firm called “Youth Concepts,” which specialized in the hip market and was the subject of the Fortune article quoted below.
8. Leo Burnett, “Advertising and the Critical Generation,” Madison Avenue, June 1967, p. 28. In particular, Burnett singled out “their refusal to come limply into line ... their insistence on a reexamination of what someone has called ‘received values’ ... their sharp-eyed scrutiny of ‘hand-me-down’ beliefs, ‘hand-me-down’ ways of doing things.” Ellipses in original.
12. Both statistics vary from place to place. The source at hand is Madison Avenue magazine, which gives the proportion of the youth population to the population as a whole as half of the people being under the age of twenty-five already in 1967 (June 1967, p. 21). On other occasions, the statistic is given as half under twenty-eight or under thirty; sometimes it has not yet happened but will by 1970 or 1975. The $13 billion figure is cited in an article that appeared in Esquire in 1965; the article goes with more than half of the population being under the age of twenty-five by the end of 1965 and also gives $25 billion as an equally correct figure, if one counts the youth market as spanning the ages of thirteen to twenty-two rather than fifteen to nineteen. See Grace and Fred M. Hechinger, “The Time It Takes You to Read These Lines the American Teen-ager Will Have Spent $2,378.22,” Esquire, July 1965, p. 65.
13. Some more precise figures are provided by Sam B. Vitt of the media department of Ted Bates, who defined the youth market as being between the ages of ten and twenty-four, making up 51 million people, or about 26 percent of the U.S. population. We shall also assume this age bracket to represent directly and indirectly from 12 to 100 billion dollars” (Sam B. Vitt, “Media and the Youth Market,” Madison Avenue, June 1967, p. 38).
14. The flexibility gives this seemingly exact marketing premise a certain air of myth, like the announcements of the various figures in the Woodstock film that their gathering is the “third largest city in New York,” and later the “third largest city in the world.” Any way one looks at it, the youth market was massive during the 1960s.
17. E.B. Weiss, “Ad World’s Young Potential Rebels Are Copping Out,” Advertising Age, December 7, 1970, p. 1. It is interesting to note that Maxwell Dane, another of DBB’s principals, was number four on Richard Nixon’s list of “political enemies” to be harassed, apparently because of the agency’s role in the 1964 Johnson campaign. See Advertising Age, July 2, 1973, p. 1.
20. Marketing/Communications, January 1968, pp. 63–65. M/C was the successor magazine to Printer’s Ink.
25. “Besides raw talent, the most precious trait a creative person can have is ‘openness’—being open to ideas, to people, to experience, to change. Hanley is one of the most open, least-judgmental people I know. He’s the kind of man who discovered the Beatles before his kids. In fact, I remember one of our colleagues saying, ‘Can you imagine having Hanley for a father? You’d have nothing to rebel against.’”


65. "The disadvantages of advertising Benson & Hedges 100s." Life magazine, February 16, 1968. The Benson & Hedges campaign was another of the decade's great advertising successes, with a commercial that always makes "best of" lists and an impressive sales record. An early verdict came from a "top Philip Morris" executive: "In all my experience in this business, I have never seen such an immediate sales result from an ad." Quoted in Newsweek, February 16, 1968, p. 64.

66. "Driving school," "Try It, You'll Like It," and "Oh, the Disadvantages" are included in a WRG agency reel; the Javelin spot and the Alka-Seltzer 'tummy commercial' are at the Museum of Television & Radio (MTSR), New York.


69. Della Femina, From Those Wonderful Folks Who Gave You Pearl Harbor, p. 151.

70. This bizarre gathering, held at the briefly fashionable "Drugstore 13" in Paris, probably merits more discussion. The event was covered in the New York Times, January 28, 1969, p. 30; and in the Philadelphia Evening Bulletin, January 30, 1969. Both are in the WRG library, New York City.


72. Ads for Love cosmetics, Life, March 7, 1969; April 18, 1969. The university-library copies of Life magazine where I read these ads had had every picture of rock stars and other countercultural heroes clipped out. Oddly, many of the Love ads had been similarly edited, curious testimony to their appeal.

Chapter Seven


7. Top Job commercial, the Grey Advertising reel, Museum of Television & Radio (MTSR), New York.


10. Commercial for Barney's Men's Store, MT&R. Variations on the "We Let You Be You" slogan have been used by many different companies, most notably a
the Volvo ads was explained in 1967, when the account was transferred from Carl Ally to Scali, McCabe, Sloves. "Marvin Sloves, agency president, told the campaign in an interview," Advertising Age reported, "said the Ally strategy was retained because it was a good one and had aided sales" (Advertising Age, September 18, 1967, p. 12). In 1970, the magazine reported that "the Swedish car manufacturer has been pushing longevity for several years, obviously with success, because the same theme is being used in the 1970 tv and print campaign" (Advertising Age, February 16, 1970, p. 3).

33. Television commercials for Volvo, MT&R.

34. This ad is reproduced in the 45th Annual of Advertising and Editorial Art and Design of the Art Director's Club of New York (New York: Comet Press, 1967), n.p. As it ran in Life magazine (and as it is reproduced here in the gallery) this ad bore a slightly different headline and body copy, substituting "out of style" for "obsolete." Ad for Volvo, Life, September 30, 1965.

35. This commercial and the radio ad that follows are in the collections of the Museum of Television & Radio (MT&R), New York. Everyone in advertising is aware that Procter & Gamble are the single largest advertising spender in the nation; the moon's resemblance to its logo could hardly have been coincidence.


42. Advertisement for Massengill, Good Housekeeping, June 1970.

43. Advertisements for Pristeen, Good Housekeeping, February and June 1970. Pristeen's ads were particularlykinsome to the feminist movement, which singled them out for censure in its various confrontations with the industry (New York Times, August 26, 1970, p. 44).

44. This advertisement is part of the J. Walter Thompson collection, Duke University.

45. Ibid. These ads ran in Life and Look, not Ms.

46. Virginia Sims television commercial (1968), Museum of Broadcast Communications. An interesting account of the development of this campaign is offered by Robert S. Berman, "You've Come a Long Way, Baby," Madison Avenue, February 1969. Needless to say, the campaign (and the brand) were wildly successful, and the slogan and feminist theme are still in use today.

47. See appendix.


71. 7-Up ads in JWT collection, Duke University library. The Uncola billboards were so popular that the company actually sold reproductions of them.
72. 7-Up television commercials in archives of J. Walter Thompson Company, Chicago.
73. Ibid. Promotional “Upside Down” glasses were sold by 7-Up during the 1970s.
74. The Uncola campaign was very successful. JWT claimed that 7-Up sales increased fully 20 percent after the campaign broke in 1968. From 1968 to 1972, 7-Up sales grew 17.6 percent, faster than either Coke or Pepsi. Percentages obtained from intraoffice memoranda dated ca. 1976 at the J. Walter Thompson Company in Chicago; photocopies in collection of author.

chapter eight
1. Phil Dusenberry, who worked on Pepsi advertising in the 1960s for BBDO, explains: “It’s a product that no one really needs. The difference in terms of quality is purely a matter of perception. And creating that perception is difficult. It isn’t like you have a distinct product difference. . . . So it’s very difficult to stake out a position for any soft drink other than an imagery position, which is what we’ve done” (Phil Dusenberry, interviewed by Dr. Scott Ellsworth in New York, December 11, 1984). Recording of the interview is in the collection of the Archives Center, National Museum of American History (NMAH).

In 1980, Advertising Age estimated that Pepsi had spent some $345 million placing their advertising message since the advent of the Pepsi Generation in 1962. See James P. Forkan, “Pepsi Generation Bridges Two Decades,” Advertising Age, May 5, 1980, p. 43.

2. Roger Enrico, president of the Pepsi-Cola Bottling Company, wrote in 1986, “We spend [those millions] so carefully—and agonize so much over the creation of these commercials—that it may seem . . . as if Pepsi is a company that creates advertising, and oh, by the way, we make soft drinks too.” See Roger Enrico and Jesse Kornbluth, The Other Guy Blinded: How Pepsi Won the Cola Wars (New York: Bantam Books, 1986), pp. 15–16.


3. The years of the slogan “The Taste that Beats the Others Cold” (1967–69) and the famous “Pepsi Challenge” (1973–83), in which the product’s superiority to Coke were the focus have been the only major exceptions to this pattern.
5. Enrico does this (The Other Guy Blinded, p. 86), as does Tom Dillon, president of BBDO, in an interview conducted May 23, 1984, by Dr. Scott Ellsworth. Recording in the Archives Center of the National Museum of American History (NMAH).
6. Allen Rosenshine, interviewed by Dr. Scott Ellsworth, New York, December 10, 1984. Recording in collection of Archives Center, NMAH.
7. Pepsi advertisement, c. 1961–63, in the Archives Center, NMAH. My emphasis.
8. Pepsi advertisement for Ebony magazine, c. 1961–63, Archives Center, NMAH.
9. Forkan, “Pepsi Generation Bridges Two Decades,” p. 43. Elsewhere he cites these famous statistics: “To confirm its claim that the ‘Pepsi Generation’ defines an attitude more than an age group, Pepsi execs quote research indicating that 62 percent of men and women aged 13 to 24 identified with the Pepsi generation description—but so did 43 percent of those aged 35 to 49, the youth market of past decades” (p. 43).
10. Rosenn interviewed by Dr. Scott Ellsworth, New York, December 10, 1984. Recording in collection of Archives Center, NMAH.
11. This awareness is such that the two companies’ advertising in fact forms “one integral symbolic network.” See Louis and Yaziyan, The Coca Wars, p. 241.
14. Tedlow, New and Improved.
15. Enrico and Kornbluth, The Other Guy Blanked, p. 16.
16. Transcript of John Bergin interview by Dr. Scott Ellsworth, February 6, 1985, Archives Center, NMAH, n.p.
17. Alan Pottasch, in speech recorded on Pepsi-Cola Co. publicity videotape, “Development of Pepsi Advertising.”
18. Ibid.
19. Forkan, “Pepsi Generation Bridges Two Decades,” p. 41. Enrico explains the 1983 revival of the Pepsi Generation in this way: “(W)e’d put Pepsi on the leading edge of what was happening. And we’d show that leading edge through the eyes of youth. Not just for teenagers—we’d appeal to everyone, using young people as the vehicle. They’re fun; they’re exciting; they’re innovative” (Enrico and Kornbluth, The Other Guy Blanked, p. 86).
20. Tom Anderson, interviewed by Dr. Scott Ellsworth, New York, November 14, 1984. Recording in collections of Archives Center, NMAH.
21. John Bergin, one-time vice president of BBDO (now vice chairman of McCann-Erickson Worldwide), referred to “The Sociables” in 1985 as “a terrifying flop” that “concoct(ed) kind of a caste system ...”; “Every snob in the country was portrayed in that advertising” (John Bergin, transcript of interview by Dr. Scott Ellsworth, February 6, 1985, Archives Center, NMAH, n.p.).
22. “Think Young” ad in the collection of the Archives Center of the NMAH.
23. “Come Alive!” ad in the collection of the Archives Center of the NMAH.
26. Pepsi ads, NMAH.
27. “Rope Swing” and “Surf Football” ads from “Taste That Beats the Others Cold” campaign in the collection of the Archives Center of the NMAH. Others from the Museum of Broadcast Communications, Chicago.
28. This commercial is in the collections of the Museum of Broadcast Communications, Chicago.
29. Transcript of John Bergin interview, NMAH.
30. Ibid.
31. Print ad from the collection of the Archives Center of the NMAH.
33. “Live/Give” commercials in the collection of the Archives Center of the NMAH.
34. Transcript of John Bergin interview.

Chapter Nine
5. GQ, September 1971, p. 16.
8. GQ, February 1965, p. 84.
15. MW, July 12, July 26, 1968. This may have been another Fairchild hype.
17. Cf. MW, February 6 and March 6, 1970.
19. MW, June 25, 1971, pp. 59, 72. These are, of course, only the highest-profile items to be discussed in trade magazines: each publication also carried photographs and descriptions of dozens of even less mainstream clothes.
24. “Certainly the fashion industry might like us to throw away all our clothes each year and buy a whole new wardrobe,” writes Alison Lurie, “but it has never been able to achieve this goal” (Lurie, The Language of Clothes, p. 11). Lurie’s example is the “maxikirt,” a flop that was promoted heavily by none other than the Fairchild company during the late 1960s; Fred Davis’s is the “ midi look,” which was promoted during the same period by the same people. See Davis, Fashion, Culture, and Identity, p. 12n.
25. Mod, for example, was so wildly overpromoted, that, as Jason McCloskey later recounted, “In January and February of 1966, Daily News Record played a daily