[Global Histories]

A student journal

'A New Head—A New Way of Living': The Sixties' New Man
Author: Daniel H. Marshall

JUAN GRIS. PORTRAIT OF PABLO PICASSO. 1912. THE ART INSTITUTE OF CHICAGO.

'A New Head—A New Way of Living': The Sixties' New Man

DANIEL H. MARSHALL

Daniel H. Marshall is an M.A. student at the John F. Kennedy Institute for North American Studies at Freie Universität Berlin. He previously received his BA in History from the University of Sheffield. His main areas of interest include the 1960s—particularly the U.S. Counterculture and the evolution of capitalism in the period—and more recently, having succumbed to the allures of post-structuralism, the philosophy of historical writing (metahistory). He is currently researching for his M.A. Thesis which will be a heady blend of all the above-mentioned interests.

The first half of the twentieth century witnessed mass public mobilisations in the Western world on a scale never seen before or since. As the West, and more specifically the United States, lurched from First World War to economic depression and then back into another global conflict, society was changed irrevocably. This study posits that, in response to the new world forged in the first half of the twentieth century and enabled by the unique post-war socio-political context, young activists developed a new historical agent to negotiate this changing world, a 'new man' for the Sixties. This radical new subjecthood, 'a new head—a new way of living' as U.S. academic Charles Reich put it, was the product of a dialectical process, an acknowledgement and rejection of the past combined with a wholehearted embrace of the future and all its possibilities. This new man, previously unremarked upon in Sixties historiography, is a conceptual tool that allows us to see the different, and at times paradoxically interrelated characteristics of the Counterculture, all of which express its proponents' hunger for newness and their desire to claim agency in a world where the capacity to bring change seemed to have been stifled by those in power. It was a conscious rejection of both the privations previously suffered by their parents, and a rejection of the comfortable lives of conformity that had been preordained for them.

Introduction

'Welcome to the first manifestation of the Brave New World' declared Buddha, former marine drill instructor and now master of ceremonies at 'The First Human Be-In' at Golden Gate Park in January 1967.[1] Buddha's audience was a large gathering of hippies, students, radicals and bohemians, a microcosm of the larger conglomeration of social groups that came to be known as the 1960s Counterculture. Despite the heterogeneity and disparate worldviews of those assembled,

---

[1] Peter Braunstein, "Forever Young: Insurgent Youth and the Sixties Culture of Rejuvenation," in *Imagine Nation: the American Counterculture of the 1960s and '70s*, ed. Peter Braunstein and Michael William Doyle (New York: Routledge, 2002), 251.

what bound them together and allows for their designation under a single moniker was their commitment to change and the shared belief that the old order was in its death throes. But if the Counterculture's various prophets and ideologues had correctly diagnosed the birth pangs of a new world as the Sixties dawned, then who would be its inhabitants? From where would they come? And what would they look like? I propose that, like the fascists and the Soviets and even the great modernists, Marx and Nietzsche, before them, the Counterculturalists articulated what we might call a 'new man' to occupy this 'Brave New World.' Clearly, the new man concept has had a long and, at times, inauspicious history, and yet the Counterculturalists re-animated and reformed the idea of a radical new conscious-ness to envision a new man of their own, an idealized agent that would inhabit the utopia they foresaw. Like the Counterculture itself, which was a patchwork of groups and ideas, their new man incorporated disparate and often paradoxical intellectual traditions and ideologies, drawing inspiration from across time and space.

If we delve into sources from the 1960's, we see that the term 'new man' was actively adopted and applied by contemporary actors. It was perhaps Frantz Fanon that wielded the term most enduringly when in *The Wretched of the Earth* he urged 'comrades, we must turn over a new leaf, we must work out new concepts, and try to set afoot a new man.'[2] Fellow 'Third World' revolutionary, Che Gue-vara, claimed in 1965 that 'in this period… we can see the new man and woman being born.'[3] Seemingly a million miles from Fanon and Guevara, U.S academic Charles Reich was also calling for 'a new head—a new way of living—a new man.'[4] This preoccupation with a new man, a radical new subjecthood, pervades what was known in the U.S. as 'the Movement' (the contemporary term for the Counterculture) but for brevity's sake, rather than simply parading the sheer quan-tity of allusions (for there were many more), we must extrapolate who the Sixties new man was, what were his ideal attributes and what can this reveal to us about the Sixties more generally, both in the U.S. and around the world.

Throughout this study I shall refer to the Counterculture, the Movement or even the Sixties generation, and it should be noted that I use these terms inter-changeably to designate the same loose coalition of groups that rebelled against the norms of mainstream society during this period. I use these terms as umbrella ones to encompass an array of different groups that perhaps would not have been enamoured with the idea of being banded together, from the doctrinaire politi-cos of the New Left to the more culturally exploratory groups that have become known as hippies. My intention is not to offend or distort with this catch-all phi-

---

[2] Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth* (London: Penguin Books, 1990), 255.
[3] Che Guevara, "Socialism and Man in Cuba" (1965), *Marxists International Archive,* accessed September 21, 2017, https://www.marxists.org/archive/guevara/1965/03/man-socialism. htm.
[4] Charles A. Reich, *The Greening of America* (New York: Bantam Books, 1971), 5–6.

losophy, and certainly it is crucial to bear in mind that the Counterculture could encompass a huge spectrum of often contradictory worldviews, but I hope to show that there were certain identifiable characteristics that most or all of these groups displayed, hence the utility of the Sixties new man concept. Patrick Manning has shown how disparate social groups can 'periodically link up with each other so as to create aggregated social movements, occasionally with worldwide impact.' Manning applies his theory to the push for democracy at the end of the twentieth century but the same can be said of the Counterculture of the 1960s: we see an aggregated movement bound together by shared grievances and what Manning calls 'symbolic communication.'[5]

I limit the scope of my study to the American context but proffer the tentative hypothesis that the new man phenomenon is one that can be applied across Western Europe, in the multiple locales where youth led protest erupted, fueled by a shared repository of grievances, from the Vietnam War to the vestiges of authoritarianism, that allow scholars to speak of a transnational 1960s movement. It would, however, take a far larger study to prove such a theory and so I will demonstrate what I perceive to be the pertinent attributes of the new man with recourse only to the U.S. and then rely upon others to ground the theory in diverse locales. Two historians of imperialism, Christoph Kamissek and Jonas Kreienbaum, have recently utilised the metaphor of an 'imperial cloud' to demonstrate how varying imperial powers tapped in to a common repertory of discourse and technique to legitimize and implement colonial rule in vastly different contexts.[6] My suspicion is that a similar phenomenon was at play during the Sixties as actors from around the world took knowledge from the same 'cloud', drawing from this common stock to define a new historical consciousness and defining how to become a new man in the Sixties.

I want to situate this study within a broader historiographical framework and enumerate what the (re)discovery of a new man means for Sixties historiography. There is an increasing tendency and vogue, particularly in the U.S. context, to deprive the Counterculture of its radicalism and view the Movement as merely another way station in the road to neoliberal capitalist hegemony.[7] The Counterculture and consumption were certainly inextricably linked and yet to see the new man and the Sixties more generally as just a generation 'acting out' or simply as rabid consumers is a reductive and dismissive analysis. The Sixties new man was conceived of precisely as a reaction to an all-consuming structuralism that

---

[5] Patrick Manning, "Linking Social Movement Networks, 1989–1992," in *Social Movements and World-System Transformation*, ed. Jackie Smith, Michael Goodhart, Patrick Manning, and John Markoff (New York: Routledge, 2016), 61.

[6] Christoph Kamissek and Jonas Kreienbaum, "An Imperial Cloud? Conceptualising Interimperial Connections and Transimperial Knowledge," *Journal of Modern European History* 14, no. 2 (2016): 164–82.

[7] See, for example: Thomas Frank, *The Conquest of Cool: Business Culture, Counterculture and the Rise of Hip Consumerism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997).

defined the first half of the Twentieth Century: the Baby Boomers had seen the depravations their parents had suffered in Two World Wars and a global economic depression, and how this had rent autonomy from their hands, compelling them to sacrifice all at the altar of public duty. We might commemorate them now as 'the greatest generation,'[8] but in the eyes of those that grew to maturity in the aftermath of the Second World War, their parents and grandparents had been driftwood on the tides of history, overwhelmed and powerless to the greater forces at work; forces like authoritarianism that appeared to have survived the conflagrations of the first half of the twentieth century. The Sixties generation and the new consciousness that I call the Sixties new man was a conscious rejection of this fate, a declaration of right to assert agency within broader political, social and economic structures. It was a new man as subject, 'as a living being capable of response, judgement and action in and on the world'.[9]

To my knowledge there has been no such study conducted to date. There have been innumerable monographs that look backwards from the precipice of the Sixties. My emphasis, however, is on the new, the novelty of the era, the fixation with creating a different way of living. In the sense that this study breaks new ground and gives a name to that which was previously anonymous it will at times frustrate and perhaps even pose more questions than answers; it is something of a heuristic endeavour, intentioned to provoke and be elaborated upon. I see this study as part of what I might term a 'new historiography' of the Sixties, elaborated primarily by a post-Sixties generation of scholars who have moved away from phenomenological accounts of the era, focusing on 'big' events and leaders within a national context, towards a more global, interconnected study of the period.[10]

Part One: Taxonomy and Origins

(Un-)Gendering the New Man

Thus far, the term 'new man' has been blithely used with apparent disregard for its gendered implications, and yet this belies an initial reluctance to employ the term at all within this study, due to the implicit gender bias and assumptions that such a term evokes. The hope at the outset of this project was that perhaps it would be appropriate to speak of a 'new human' rather than a 'new man,' however such hopes were quickly dashed when faced with the reality of a movement that, as Tim Hodgdon puts it 'offers historians' the opportunity to study the foun-

---

[8] A framing that owes much to: Tom Brokaw, *The Greatest Generation* (New York: Random House, 1998).

[9] Marshall Berman, *All That Is Solid Melts into Air: The Experience of Modernity* (London: Verso, 1983), 27.

[10] For a comprehensive account of the development of Sixties historiography, see: Simon Hall, "Framing the American 1960s: A Historiographical Review," *European Journal of American Culture* 31, no. 1 (2012): 5–23.

dational gender assumptions of American society at that time closest to our own when men articulated their sexual politics absent the kind of circumspection that radical-feminist criticism now inspires in some circles.'[11]

It is fitting that Che Guevara should loom so large in the Sixties imagination and perhaps exemplify the new man as it was then conceived, for it is the fantasy of the gun toting rebel that encapsulates the machismo that came to characterise the Movement, along with boyish fantasies of masculine rebellion. Mark Rudd, one of the founders of the Weathermen attested to this, saying 'I wanted to be a hero, like Che. A male, liberating hero, unafraid to die, because in my death I would inspire the people to greater sacrifice and victory…Violence is how men prove themselves.'[12] The Counterculture enshrined an assumptive pre-eminence for men within the Movement and it is evident that gender constructs remained essentialist, heteronormative and hierarchical.[13] While they may have challenged patriarchal power and upset certain gender assumption (e.g. the correct hair length for men), the Counterculture certainly did not challenge patriarchy.

In the context of this study then, contemporary conceptions of who constituted a historical subject were as reactionary as they had ever been: men were seen as the prime movers of history, the ones that could affect change and thus it was assumed that men would be the progenitors of a new consciousness.[14] It soon became clear that due to the contemporary perception that men were the protagonists of history, the clear marginalization of women in the Movement, as well as the contemporary usage of the term, that 'new man' is the appropriate moniker to apply to the phenomenon that I have identified and am describing in this study, as to use a term with which contemporaries would not have been familiar simply feels like too much of an imposition. The problem of course with such an acknowledgement is that this study can simply reproduce the assumptions of the historical subjects on whom it focuses, 'parroting' them by implicitly (if unintentionally) reinforcing the silent assumption of man as universal, for as Judith A. Allen has observed, in relations of dominance, 'the dominant group remains unmarked, transparent, unscrutinized.'[15] There has been much excellent recent scholarship on the history of masculinities but unfortunately, the 1960s has yet to be the recipient of the kind of 'holistic' gender history study that the period requires, a history that builds on twenty years of women's history scholarship, analyzing masculinity as part of

---

[11] Tim Hodgdon, *Manhood in the Age of Aquarius: Masculinity in Two Countercultural Communities, 1965–83* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2008), xxxi.

[12] Mark Rudd, "The Male Cult of Martyrdom: Saying Adios to Che" (2010), War Resisters' League, accessed September 22, 2017, https://www.warresisters.org/win/win-spring-2010/male-cult-martyrdom-saying-adios-che.

[13] Gretchen Lemke-Santangelo, *Daughters of Aquarius: Women of the Sixties Counterculture* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2009), 2.

[14] Sara M. Evans, *Personal Politics: The Roots of Women's Liberation in the Civil Rights Movement and the New Left* (New York: Vintage, 1979).

[15] Judith A. Allen, "Men Interminably in Crisis? Historians on Masculinity, Sexual Boundaries, and Manhood," *Radical History Review* 28 (2002): 192.

larger gender and cultural processes.'[16] At times during this study I will point to moments at which gender has played a particularly crucial role in the formation of the Sixties new man, points at which perceptions of masculinity or femininity have been instrumental in defining what the new man would look like. Unfortunately, however, it is beyond the remit of this study to provide the kind of integrative gender history account that scholars like Gail Bederman have called for, just as it would be impossible within this study to offer a comprehensive analysis of race or class within the formation of the new man.

'Suburbia is where the Sixties Came From': The Roots of the New Man[17]

In the concluding chapter of an edited volume on the protests of 1968, Charles Maier proffers a pithy reworking of the infamous Situationist epithet, proposing that '*sous les pavés la passé,*' translating as 'under the paving stones, the past.'[18] For Maier, only through an understanding of the Fifties can we comprehend the convulsions that would erupt a decade later, and while this seems an obvious point to make it is a particularly relevant observation in the context of this study. For while, as I emphasised earlier, the Counterculture had a futurist orientation, the Sixties new man was very much the product of a dialectical process, a process that was as much an acknowledgement and rejection of the past as it was a wholehearted embrace of the future.

The notion of a new man is by no means new, although it is a uniquely modern phenomenon. Marshall Berman, the Marxist philosopher and humanist, characterised the modern experience as 'to find ourselves in an environment that promises us adventure, power, joy, growth, transformation of ourselves and the world —and, at the same time, that threatens to destroy everything we have, everything we know, everything we are.'[19] From the eighteenth century onwards, thinkers and ideologues have sought to forge a man fit for these times. Writing in the aftermath of the Industrial Revolution, Marx saw a world in which 'all fixed, fast-frozen relations, with their train of ancient and venerable prejudices and opinions are swept away, all new formed ones become antiquated before they can ossify. All that is solid melts into air.'[20] Marx though, never the pessimist that he is perceived to be, prescribed that 'the new-fangled forces of society want only to be mastered by new-fangled men,' the men, of course, of the working class. A quarter of a

[16] Gail Bederman, "Review of Kim Townsend's *Manhood at Harvard* (1996)," *Journal of American History* 84 (1997): 680.

[17] Taken from an interview with: Charles Reich, "The Greening of America turns 40" (2010), *Canadian Broadcasting Corporation*, accessed September 22, 2017, http://www.cbc.ca/news/world/the-greening-of-america-turns-40-1.913853.

[18] In its original form the Situationist slogan went '*Sous les pavés la plage*' translating as 'under the paving stones, the beach.' See: Charles S. Maier, "Conclusion: 1968, Did It Matter?" in *Promises of 1968: Crisis, Illusion, and Utopia*, ed. Vladimir Tismaneanu (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2011), 423.

[19] Berman, *All That Is Solid,* 15.

[20] Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *The Communist Manifesto* (London: Penguin, 2002).

century later, Nietzsche, heir to a Godless world, saw a society bereft of values and morality but, like Marx, saw only an abundance of opportunities, for into this nihilistic abyss would step Nietzsche's *übermensch*, the 'man of tomorrow and the day after tomorrow.'[21]

Fifty years later with Europe in ruins after the Great War, and Marx and Nietzsche's new men conspicuous by their absence, an updated conception of the idealised modern subject was forged. Borrowing heavily from their nineteenth century predecessors but maiming and distorting their concepts to legitimate a hideous new vision, an emergent fascist ideology spread through Europe. It is with this movement, along with their totalitarian counterpoint in the East, the Soviets, that the very notion of a new man shall forever be associated, irrevocably tarnished by the affiliation with ideologies that produced World War II, the *Gulags* and Auschwitz.[22] Under the auspices of totalitarianism, the new man was shorn of Nietzschean individualism and sublimated all to the needs of the collective, yet gone was the benevolence and humanity of Marx's communitarianism. It is under this etymological burden that the very mention of a new man labours and yet like these earlier incarnations, the Sixties new man must be interpreted as another attempt to impose meaning on the modern condition and a world in which 'all that is solid melts into air.' What distinguishes the Sixties new man from earlier manifestations of the concept, however, is the unique combination of '*la passé*' that Maier referred to and the inimitable intellectual and social milieu of the Sixties.

Young Americans were thrust into a world defined by the Cold War binary of 'Free versus Unfree' and the Manichean logic that accompanied such a dichotomy. In the eyes of the Baby Boomers however the delineating line between the two worlds was becoming increasingly indistinguishable: Cold War propaganda proclaimed the suburbs as the apotheosis of American freedom, and yet how did the 'hypnotized consumership' of Fordist society or the social and political repression of McCarthyism represent freedom?[23] Such concerns were also visible in wider society: take for instance a critical discussion of the white collar suburban man in a high-profile *Life* magazine article entitled 'The New American Domesticated Male' or William Whyte's sociological study *The Organization Man,* in which one participant jokes that suburbia is 'a Russia, only with money.'[24]

This fear of the stultifying effect of conformity led to what Timothy Melley has termed 'agency panic,'[25] the belief in Cold War America that powerful yet invis-

---

[21] Friedrich Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil* (London: Penguin, 2003).

[22] Arnd Bauerkämper, "Der Neue Mensch," Docupedia-Zeitgeschichte, accessed September 14, 2017, http://docupedia.de/zg/Bauerkaemper_neue_mensch_v1_de_2017.

[23] Leerom Medovoi, *Rebels: Youth and the Cold War Origins of Identity* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2005), 20.

[24] William H. Whyte, *The Organization Man* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1956), 310.

[25] Timothy Melley, "Agency Panic and the Culture of Conspiracy," in *Conspiracy Nation: The Politics of Paranoia in Postwar America*, ed. Peter Knight (New York: New York University Books, 2002), 57–81.

ible new structures were coming to determine the individual's every action. When considered alongside Soviet ideology, it seemed that each society represented a side of the same coin: ostensibly adversarial and yet paradoxically mutually reinforcing. These were the conditions that facilitated the rise of a new, independent consciousness within the Counterculture, a new way between the grand visions of capitalism and communism. Increasingly, there was as Jean-Francois Lyotard would put it in his 1979 diagnosis of 'The Postmodern Condition,' an 'incredulity towards meta-narratives' amongst the post-war generation, for it was these meta-narratives with their political avatars (nationalism manifested through fascism for instance) that had led to the horrors of two world wars.[26] Now, confronted with two more hegemonic meta-narratives, the Sixties generation sought to forge a new ideal society and new man to inhabit this utopia, one that was neither overtly capitalistic or communistic. Thus conceptualized, the new man can be perceived as a rejection of the world according to Yalta: the neat compartmentalization of the globe into certain spheres of power and influence, and on a human level, the compartmentalization of life into whatever path these respective ideologies preordained.

Here it is worth noting the highly gendered subtexts that undergird these discourses of 'agency panic', embedded cultural scripts that equate social control with femininity, emasculating and violating 'the borders of the autonomous self'.[27] These fears over the feminizing effects of social control are indicative of what has been conceptualized (both contemporaneously and retrospectively) as a broader postwar crisis of masculinity, as evinced by an article by Arthur Schlesinger Jr. (later President Kennedy's court historian) hysterically titled 'The Crisis of American Masculinity.'[28] We would do well to remember what critics of histories of masculinity have rightly observed, that since the inception of this sub discipline of gender history, it seems masculinity has been in a perpetual state of crisis: 'it is a wonder they ever got out of bed in the morning,' as Toby L. Ditz wryly observed.[29]

'Agency panic' and fear of alienation were given form and articulated by contemporary ideologues who became icons of the Movement. The cynicism, detachment and pessimism that would come to characterise Lyotard's postmodern consciousness were a decidedly post-Sixties phenomenon, and by contrast, the Counterculture was saturated in romanticism, optimism and a genuine belief that they could create change; that if first they remade *the self* (the new man) then this would precipitate wider social change. In this epistemological optimism they were very much indebted to the nineteenth century intellectual tradition, from

---

[26] Jean-François Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge* (Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press, 1984).
[27] Melley, "Agency Panic," 32–37.
[28] Arthur Schlesinger Jr., "The Crisis of American Masculinity," *Esquire* 50, no. 5 (1958): 65.
[29] Toby L. Ditz, "The New Men's History and the Peculiar Absence of Gendered Power: Some Remedies from Early American Gender History," *Gender & History* 16, no. 1 (2004): 6.

Marx and Nietzsche, to the likes of Baudelaire and Kierkegaard, who acknowledged modernity's complexities and contradictions but asserted modern man's ability to forge himself anew in this chaos. During the Sixties this didactic, 'self-help' tradition was maintained by the likes of Jean Paul Sartre and, perhaps most famously, Herbert Marcuse, whose theories were both seed and sustenance of the new man. Existentialism, for instance, *en vogue* on U.S college campuses during the Sixties, offered a self-oriented philosophy that resonated with a generation's desire for autonomy and individuality, exemplified by Sartre's assertion that 'in fashioning myself I fashion man'.[30] Marcuse on the other hand provided a surgical analysis of 'advanced industrial society,' re-casting non-integrated radicals and the marginalized as the agents of change, for only they remained immune to the 'stick and carrot' enticements of welfarist capitalism, a coercive mechanism Marcuse termed 'repressive tolerance.'[31]

Having established the existence of a new man, and where he came from, let us now turn our attention to what he looked like or rather, what his defining attributes were.

Part Two: Characteristics

Anti-Authoritarianism

I referred earlier to what Jean-Francois Lyotard called an 'incredulity towards meta-narratives' amongst the post-war generation, a rejection of any attempt to legitimate authority through an appeal to universal truths or values. Lyotard's thesis epitomised the refutation of authoritarianism of any form amongst Counterculturalists, a stance that would become an integral component of the new man's worldview. A blind submission to illegitimate authority had plunged the world into the most devastating war in history, and now, with the world on the brink of a nuclear conflagration, it appeared the same authoritarian structures were responsible. The USSR was an overtly totalitarian state, but young Americans recognised the same structures at work in the technocratic U.S. state, evident in both the draconian repression at home and in the thinly veiled neo-imperialism overseas.

In response, the Counterculturalists rejected any imposition on their individual freedom and any top down attempts at social manipulation, a clear reaction against the mass mobilizations of the previous half century. Take for instance the reluctance to strategize on the future of the Counterculture for fear that such a strategy would amount to little more than 'psychedelic fascism.' In early 1967, a meeting

---

[30] Jean-Paul Sartre, "Existentialism is a Humanism" (1946), accessed September 22, 2017, Marxists International Archive, https://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/sartre/works/exist/sartre.htm.

[31] Herbert Marcuse, "Repressive Tolerance," in *A Critique of Pure Tolerance*, ed. Robert Paul Wolff, Barrington Moore, Jr., and Herbert Marcuse (Boston: Beacon Press, 1969), 95–137.

of various Countercultural luminaries that became known as the Houseboat Summit was convened to consider the direction of the Movement. As a gesture of their impeccable hippie credentials, Allen Ginsberg, Timothy Leary and Alan Watts, who clearly dominated proceedings magnanimously declined to be termed 'leaders,' opting instead for '*foci* of energy.' They quickly decided that the Counterculture must resist any form of institutionalization for, as Watts put it 'whenever the insights one gains from mystical vision become politically active, they always create their own opposite. They create a parody… When we try to force a vision upon the world, and say that everybody ought to have this, and it's good for you, then a parody of it is set up.'[32] They feared that through organizing or adopting any form of hierarchy they would emulate those that they opposed, and in doing so would become the next manipulative power structure.

While such formulations might seem a tad excessive now and perhaps even self-indulgent, it stemmed from a pervasive distrust of any form of authoritarianism. This willingness to discard the culture of authoritarianism even extended to an oedipal like readiness to sacrifice leaders (or '*foci* of energy') that had the temerity to become popular: Stokely Carmichael was dismissed as head of the Student Non-Violent Co-ordinating Committee as his stature surpassed the heights of decency; Herbert Marcuse fell out of favour in the latter part of the Sixties as he too was deemed to have become overly popularised (the Washington Post referred to him as the 'godfather of student revolt');[33] and even Timothy Leary was effectively excommunicated by the Movement in the latter part of the decade.[34]

Clearly, the discrepancy between theory and practice is gaping. In spite of rhetoric to the contrary, the Movement was obsessed by icons from Che Guevara to Bonnie and Clyde, and whether or not one fell victim to their iconoclasm appears entirely indiscriminate. Additionally, the Movement was more than effective in institutionalizing certain hierarchies that suited, for instance in their maintenance of gender hierarchies. Where this pathological anti-authoritarianism proved most counter-productive however, was the fact that without organization the Movement would be forever unable to create the changes it longed for: essentially, without organisation they were condemned to self-imposed inefficacy.

While this idealistic anti-authoritarianism might have been self-destructive for the Movement, it is evident that these ideas had a huge impact on wider society, even influencing the evolution of capitalism, for instance in the way that the anti-hierarchical structure has come to define post-industrial giants like Google and

---

[32] Braunstein, "Forever Young," 258–59.

[33] Marvin Menniken, "Herbert Marcuse: Media and the Making of a Cultural Icon," in *The Global 1960s: Convention, Contest, and Counterculture*, ed. Tamara Chaplin et al. (New York, Routledge, 2017), 274.

[34] See for instance this Diggers' caricature of Leary: "Uncle Tim$ Children" (1967), *The Diggers Archive,* accessed September 23, 2017, http://www.diggers.org/comco/ccpaps2b.html#cc030.

Apple, many of whose founders have their roots in the Counterculture.[35] I shall return to this briefly in the concluding section of this study but what is important to note for now is that the formation of a new man was very much conceived of as a bottom up process, it was a process that started with the self, empowering the individual to change themselves.

'The "Me" Generation; or Individualism

Voltaire famously observed that if society did not have God, then it would be necessary to invent Him. Nietzsche declared over a century later that God was now dead. Who then, could step into the chasm left by God's demise in the modern age? What could modern society 'invent' to fill the void? Communists advocated the deification of the collective—an army of new, obedient men and women governed by an authoritarian, omnipotent and omniscient ruler(s). The Sixties generation though had disavowed any such subjugation to authoritarianism and the collective, and so came to worship at a different altar: the altar of 'me.'

In a characteristically satirical piece written in 1976, Tom Wolfe lampooned what he called the 'Me Generation,' the narcissistic Baby Boomers who had disregarded the social responsibilities of their forebears in favour of an atomised individualism that required 'self-realization' and 'self-fulfilment.'[36] Although written in the mid Seventies, the phenomenon that Wolfe describes had its origins in the Countercultural vanguard, crystallizing a decade later in the U.S. mainstream. This countercultural vanguard were the Sixties new men, those that perceived themselves first and foremost as individuals, each one a Nietzschean *übermensch*, man transcendent almost to the point of deification.

This radical individualism seems unremarkable in our own age, but it really was a dramatic shift in consciousness, a new way of perceiving oneself in relation to the world, and remains one of the most contested legacies bequeathed to us by the Sixties. For the Counterculturalists themselves, it was seen as a conscious cognitive process, one that would create a radical new subject and facilitate a revolution in every sphere of life.

Orthodox Marxism states industrial society is divided into two, the base and the superstructure, with the base, comprised of the means of production, determining the composition of the superstructure. According to this analysis, culture becomes epiphenomenal, directed only by the economic base.[37] In one of their numerous digressions form the beliefs of the Old Left, the Counterculturalists inverted this paradigm and espoused that to change society, including its economic

---

[35] For a study of how capitalism incorporates critiques to evolve, see for instance: Luc Boltanski and Eve Chiapello, *The New Spirit of Capitalism* (London: Verso, 2007).

[36] Tom Wolfe, "The 'Me' Decade and the Third Great Awakening," *New York Magazine*, August 23, 1976, http://nymag.com/news/features/45938/.

[37] Karl Marx, "A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy" (1859), Marxists International Archive, accessed September 23, 2017, https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1859/critique-pol-economy/preface.htm.

mores, they must first change its culture, and that this could only be achieved by first perfecting the self. Thus, reformation of the self becomes the first link in the chain for revolution, concentrating power, responsibility and authority in the individual. There may have been many points of departure between the cultural and political wings of the Counterculture, but even the politicos of the New Left were complicit in this belief that 'men have unrealized potential for self-cultivation, self-direction, self-understanding, and creativity. It is this potential that we regard as crucial and to which we appeal, not to the human potentiality for violence, unreason, and submission to authority.'[38]

Charles Maier, in his pursuit of the underlying causation for the global '68, has argued that the individualism of the Sixties was a reaction to the mass public mobilizations of the period from 1933 to 1963. Maier argues that a generation from the 1930s witnessed 'the approach of war, then the privations of war, then the intense confrontations of the Cold War' and that 'by the 1960's it was time for the young public in both [East and West] camps to press for an agenda of expressiveness and self-realization rather than an agenda of discipline.'[39] The individualism of the new man was then moulded by this desire to assert agency in a world that had for perhaps the last fifty years extracted an incredible price from its citizens. They would not simply be eroded and defined by the tides of history, they would be the rocks upon which the tides broke.

'The Personal is Political'[40]

We might be mistaken for assuming that the rise of the individual and the rejection of any form of collectivism or public mobilization (draft dodging, for instance) would necessarily produce a political apathy amongst the Sixties cohort, a retreat of the new man into splendid isolation. Heavily influenced by the burgeoning feminist movement, what in fact transpired was a radical reimagining of *what* actually constituted politics, and, moreover, *where* one could put these politics into practice. The Countercultural subject explicitly opened up a whole new space for political contestation, as the private sphere was transmogrified into an arena every bit as politicized as the public one. Of course, the 'Separate Spheres' fantasy was long ago debunked by gender historians, and yet we must consider that this reappraisal was only formulated after changes to the historical profession in the late 1960s and beyond. Thus, the notion that the boundaries between private/personal life and public/political were fallacious was radical and seditious, enfranchising a demographic that was previously regarded as irrelevant or apoliti-

---

[38] Students for a Democratic Society, "Port Huron Statement" (1962), The Sixties Project, accessed September 21, 2017, http://www2.iath.virginia.edu/sixties/HTML_docs/Resources/Primary/Manifestos/SDS_Port_Huron.html.

[39] Maier, "Conclusion," 428.

[40] This phrase originated from the Second-Wave Feminist movement, see: Carol Hanisch, "The Personal is Political" (1969), accessed July 29, 2018, http://www.carolhanisch.org/CHwritings/PIP.html.

cal. Suddenly, by this interpretation, communes became sites of a radical political utopianism or the street theatre and soup kitchens of the Diggers represented an attack on the foundational tenets of free market capitalism.

The personal as political was essentially a rejection of 'politics as usual,' a refusal to participate in the state-endorsed modes of protest and political engagement. The Counterculturalists had seen the Civil Rights Movement co-opted and placated by the political establishment, offered legislative placebos that did little to remedy the lives of African-Americans, leading eventually to inner city riots and the rise of the Black Power movement. As Tuli Kupferberg, co-founder of The Fugs, put it in an essay entitled the 'Politics of Love', 'the society corrupts even those who would overthrow it'.[41] Thus, the resolution was to 'turn your backs on it, fuck it,' as Ken Kesey succinctly put it at an anti-Vietnam rally;[42] their lives became their politics, not merely what they did inside the ballot box once every four years. The assumption became that the new man would live out the life for which he was fighting: a kind of 'lifestyle radicalism' as Timothy Brown put it.[43] Hence, we deliberately see the most acutely private areas of life becoming arenas of publicized political ostentation. Consider for instance, the slogan often seen at anti-Vietnam protests, 'Girls Say Yes to Guys Who Say No,' with the explicit linkage between a woman's choice of sexual partner and her political views. The new man was profoundly individualistic but this by no means precluded political engagement; indeed, in many respects it produced a more overtly politicised consciousness by extending engagement to every conscious decision and act.

'Bring the War Home': Transnationalism

Though I limit my focus to the American context in this paper, it is evident that contemporaries were far less myopic in their outlook, preferring instead to think of themselves as transnational actors, explicitly articulating their solidarity with analogous protestors around the globe. In this sense they perceived of themselves as members of a broader network, a transnational 'aggregated social movement,' to refer again to Manning's concept, one in which the local context interplayed with a global one. Throughout the Sixties we see the intertwining of the national with the transnational: students in Germany protesting the visit of the Iranian Shah because of human rights abuses at home; Herbert Humphrey, U.S. Vice President and symbol of American imperialism, subjected to student hostility upon arrival in Tunis; the spontaneous outpouring of grief on every continent when Guevara

---

[41] Tuli Kupferberg, "The Politics of Love," *East Village Other*, May 1967, 4–5.
[42] Tom Wolfe, *The Electric Kool-Aid Acid Test* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1968), 222.
[43] Timothy S. Brown, "'1968' East and West: Divided Germany as a Case Study in Transnational History," *American Historical Review* 114, no. 1 (2009): 80.

was executed in Bolivia.[44] Though events were local in nature, contemporaries saw them as far greater in significance and implication.

Thanks to developments in media and technology, icons of the Movement could transgress national borders with impunity—Carmichael in Havana; Hayden and Fonda in Hanoi; Dutschke in Detroit—and so whether physically or simply rhetorically, the new man became transnational in his outlook, frequently linking his own plight to that of fellow revolutionaries abroad. Jerry Rubin, founder of the Yippes raged that 'cops patrol the hippie areas the way they patrol black communities, the way American soldiers patrol Vietnamese villages.'[45] We might recoil at such equations of 1960s San Francisco with occupied Vietnamese villages, but we would do well to resist moralising and instead note that such allusions illustrate the contemporary perception that each local struggle was part of a wider transnational one. As such this became a powerful mobilizing myth, allowing activists to draw upon a communal repertory of theory, symbolism and methods; a 'cloud', to utilize the metaphor proposed by Christoph Kamissek and Jonas Kreienbaum, into which global actors could contribute to and withdraw from, thereby reinforcing a global imagined community.[46]

'High Styles Come from Low Places': A Marginalized Vanguard[47]

If we were to consider the holiest tenets of Marxism then surely, prominent amongst them would be an irrevocable faith in the revolutionary potential of the working classes. These were the harbingers of change that Marx idolized in his writing and, naturally, it was an idealized, almost preternatural, form of the worker that represented the Soviet new man in the Eastern bloc. By the 1960s however, faith in the transformative propensities of the increasingly prosperous industrial working class was beginning to wane. Frantz Fanon in his indictment of Western imperialism sneered that European workers 'believe, too, that they are part of the prodigious adventure of the European spirit.'[48]

It became increasingly evident that workers in Western society were unlikely to explode into spontaneous revolution, and thus it became necessary to christen a new revolutionary vanguard. Fanon located his *agent provocateurs* in the decolonizing world, and Herbert Marcuse agreed. The Frankfurt School philosopher argued that the vanguard could now only come from 'the substratum of outcasts and outsiders, the exploited and persecuted of other races and other colours, the unem-

---

[44] Jeremy Prestholdt, "Resurrecting Che: Radicalism, the Transnational Imagination, and the Politics of Heroes," *Journal of Global History* 7, no. 3 (2012), 506–26.

[45] Braunstein, "Forever Young," 269.

[46] Kammisek and Kreienbaum, "Imperial Cloud," 164–82.

[47] Tom Wolfe, *The Kandy-Kolored Tangerine-Flake Streamline Baby* (New York: Farar, Straus and Giroux, 1965), 212.

[48] Fanon, *Wretched,* 253.

ployed and the unemployable'.[49] These marginalized groups could come from the American ghettoes or the Third World, the point was that they were un-co-opted and immune to the hypnotising but incapacitating seductions of advanced industrial society.

Armed with these theories and suitably assuaged of their middle-class guilt, the young Counterculturalists came to see themselves as the agents of change, prophets of an approaching age. Thus, to be perceived as marginal became an integral feature of the new man's make up. If you didn't have the good fortune of coming from the Third World then this meant somehow showcasing your scorn and disregard for societies' mores, be that through a rejection of monogamy or the choice of drugs one imbibed. The grand irony of all this was that, in spite of their valorisation of the revolutionary potential of the Third World, Counterculturalists failed to make any real connections with the most marginalized within their own society, namely minority communities or the impoverished. This led to the uneasy dynamic whereby groups like the Diggers would venerate and emulate African-American or Native Americans from afar, ultimately caricaturing their cultures and producing a kind of appreciation that was disturbingly reminiscent of modernist discourses of primitivism.[50] Additionally, while a desire to spring from the margins might have been born of a noble logic, it was ultimately flawed. For to remain marginal one could never attain true power. Thus, as the new man clung to the periphery, his idealised marginality was to become a self-fulfilling prophecy.

'Foco': Action-Oriented

Heavily influenced by the two previous phenomena I have referred to, the final feature of the new radical consciousness that I have termed the Sixties New Man was a profound belief that as an agent of change, the new man must be 'action-oriented.'

Inspired by the revolutionary vigour and dynamism of the decolonizing forces of the Third World, the new man spurned conventional modes of protest, for to protest through state sanctioned channels only conferred legitimacy on the system that one sought to undermine. The Old Left had become so entwined with the political order, directing it's anger down long-established channels, that it could no longer be considered a true revolutionary force, and was condemned to an eternity of navel-gazing and procrastination. They looked instead to Guevara's insurgents

---

[49] Herbert Marcuse, *One-Dimensional Man: The Ideology of Advanced Industrial Society* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1968), 256–57.

[50] For the epitome of the veneration of African Americans, see the canonical countercultural text: Norman Mailer, "The White Negro: Superficial Reflections on the Hipster," *Dissent* 4, no. 3 (1957): 276–93. Ralph Ellison called Mailer's essay "the same old primitivism crap in a new package." See: Louis Menand, "It Took a Village," *The New Yorker*, January 5, 2009. For an insightful discussion of the objectification of Native Americans and African Americans by The Diggers and hippies more generally, see: Tim Hodgdon, *Manhood in the Age of Aquarius: Masculinity in Two Countercultural Communities, 1965–83* (New York, Columbia University Press, 2008).

or the Viet Cong as inspiration, admiring their willingness to act rather than bicker internally and patiently wait for the 'revolutionary moment' to present itself. This approach was articulated most clearly in the *foco* theory developed by Guevara and Regis Debray that urged activists to take the initiative: 'It is not necessary to wait until all conditions for making revolution exist' declared Guevara, 'the insurrection can create them.' Ultimately, he reminded his contemporaries around the globe, 'the duty of the revolutionary is to make revolution.'[51]

It was to visible icons like Guevara and Fanon, men on the frontline of the global struggle that Counterculturalists increasingly looked, and it was these men that defined the ideal image of the new man. In a 1969 interview, Abbie Hoffman, co-founder of the Yippies, made the distinction between those that theorised and those that acted: 'Men like Marcuse… I respect them but I don't love them…they have a way of looking at society that might be correct… But dammit, I don't love them; they are not participating in the struggle, and they are not going to build a new society.'[52] Clearly, we see a hierarchy being established in which action is granted predominance over all else. In the eyes of some, action naturally equated to violence and as the Sixties progressed growing factionalization saw groups like the Weathermen and the Symbionese Liberation Army force 'action orientation' to its extreme, and increasingly utilise violence as their medium for change. As disparate as it always was, it was this disintegration of the Counterculture that saw the end of the Sixties new man, as a changing socio-economic and political climate made an alignment of all the characteristics detailed above a virtual impossibility.

Conclusion

This year marks the fiftieth anniversary of 1968 and has brought with it a host of retrospectives, nostalgia enterprises and commercial ventures that attempt to extract some kind of meaning, truth or profit from the Sixties and its legacy. In this atmosphere of heady nostalgia, and with regard to this study, we might be prompted to wistfully ask, what became of our Sixties new man? Does he wander in our midst? An anti-authoritarian-individualistic-transnational-marginalized-action-oriented *übermensch?* Or did he retreat into an excess of his foundational characteristics—pickled in his own resplendent isolation; compulsively self-marginalizing; violently unpredictable? Clearly, the utopia that the Counterculture perceived as imminent never materialized and so the new man that they envisioned as its natural inhabitant was never given the conditions in which to blossom, a mighty seed scattered on barren land.

---

[51] Prestholdt, "Che," 506–526.
[52] Menniken, *Marcuse*, 287.

Rather than simply disappear though, I would suggest that, like the Counterculture itself, the legacy of the new man had far reaching implications, diffusing into wider society and shaping much of the world around us today. In a compelling study, Paul Berman has argued that the '68 generation have come to exert a significant influence on contemporary politics, with their emphasis on personal freedom and human rights.[53] I would echo this by pointing to figures with roots in the Counterculture who have come to define our post-modernity, particularly those affiliated with the SiliconValley tech industries. Jerry Rubin, for instance, gave up fermenting revolution to become an entrepreneur and businessman, amassing a small fortune in the process, yet maintaining his Countercultural worldview. Steve Jobs on the other hand is infamous for the fresh approach that he brought to the tech industry, much of which was forged in the Counterculture. Although, we can't claim him as one of the Baby Boomer generation, Mark Zuckerberg's now notorious incitement to 'move fast and break things' sounds like it could have spilled directly from the mouth of our Sixties new man.

We should not allow this modern resonance however to obscure the fact that the new man was a highly racialized and gendered subjectivity, one that only extended agency to certain actors and so represented only a highly exclusionary universalism. In spite of this and perhaps even because of this, I would argue that many of the characteristics enshrined by the new man have come to be regarded as ideals and even norms amongst the millennial generation. Theorists like Eve Boltanski and Luc Chiapello have shown the links between the Sixties and the reformation of capitalism and I would place the new man at the core of this process.[54] Take for instance that we now think nothing of the radical individualism of modern society or the way companies have adopted the anti-hierarchical structures of the Counterculture. Though it may have led only to capitalism's development rather than its destruction, I would argue that the Sixties new man was highly successful in one of his main objectives, the attempt to assert agency within a complex, changing world, although perceptions of *who* was able to exercise agency remained and remain as narrow as ever.

---

[53] Paul Berman, *Power and the Idealists: Or, the Passion of Joschka Fischer and Its Aftermath* (New York, WW Norton & Company, 2007).

[54] Boltanski and Chiapello, *Capitalism,* 57–99.