

culturally transmitted and maintained. We tried to identify the positive trends in modern country music and blues that still represent its origins as a mass art that crossed racial lines and reflected a class experience. We also tried to examine the music that demonstrated co-optation and bourgeois values, as well as a lot of the music in between that just expresses the dilemmas many people feel.

These tapes were played on Sunday afternoons over listener-supported KDNA-FM for thirteen weeks. While of course we don't know the total effect they had, we are encouraged by the feedback we have received. Many workers told us that they liked the music we were playing and that what we said about it coincided with their own experiences. People who previously couldn't stand country music told us they saw a lot more in it, and a lot of people from different backgrounds have told us that we helped them put a lot of ideas together. We were invited to speak to classes at two local high schools with very satisfying results, and we found that we had generally stimulated a lot of interest in these concerns and topics.

ROCK AND POPULAR CULTURE

SIMON FRITH

Robert Christgau, *Any Old Way You Choose II: Rock and Other Pop Music, 1967-1973*; Penguin.

Jon Landau, *It's Too Late to Stop Now: A Rock and Roll Journal*; Straight Arrow.

Greil Marcus, *Mystery Train: Images of America in Rock 'n' Roll Music*; E. P. Dutton.

*Q.: Why is rock like the revolution?
A.: Because they're both groovy.*
(CHRISTGAU, p. 94)

In the 1960s, rock 'n' revolution wasn't such a joke. Bob Dylan infiltrated left-wing organizations as slyly as the FBI, political solidarity was sustained by record collections, and ideologues like Tom Hayden and Eldridge Cleaver were agreed that the "liberation" of white youth could be rooted in rock 'n' roll. Rock music was, in fact, central to the claims of the counterculture.

In this review I don't want to examine these claims or rock's contribution to them. My interest is not in rock as counterculture but in rock as popular culture. The questions I want to raise concern the analysis of rock music as a form of mass communication—questions that are begged in the numerous attempts to assess the political significance of the counterculture. The books by Christgau, Landau, and Marcus provide the necessary way in to these questions—their writers are not only intelligent and incisive, they also function as rock ideologists, teaching their readers how to listen and respond to the music. Landau and Marcus in their work for *Rolling Stone* and Christgau in his for *Village Voice* not only record the values and assumptions of rock culture, they also help to form them.

More words are written about rock than about any other mass medium (in Britain, for example, there are four newspapers devoted to the subject, with sales ranging from 80,000 to 180,000 per week), but most of them are part of the phenomenon itself, central to the process of music promotion and advertisement and publicity. Christgau, Landau, and Marcus are important because, in contrast to the usual hack pros of the record business, they seek to establish rock as a serious area for both artistic and social criticism. It is this combination that makes them interesting. Other critics have treated rock as art (see R. Melzer's *Aesthetics of Rock*, for example, or Paul Williams's pioneering reviews in *Crawdaddy*), and numerous commentators have asserted rock's importance for the "youth movement." Few, however, have tried to grasp rock's "relative autonomy" or to relate

D. Lazere (ed),

America Media & Mass Culture :

Left Perspectives

(Berkeley, U of California Press, 1987)

its social meanings to its artistic form. (I should mention Lester Bangs and Dave Marsh and their work for *Creem*, but this has not been systematized or collected in book form.) The three authors I want to consider here are certainly not Marxists (though they have radical concerns of various sorts), nor are they spokesmen for the counterculture. Their concern is to uncover and clarify the positive aspects of rock while remaining critically conscious of its negative ones, and their arguments must be taken seriously by Marxists, whose analyses of mass cultural products tend to be wholly negative. In this review I shall stress the (1960s-based) affirmations of rock criticism and neglect discussion of the apparent decline of rock's artistic and social power in the 1970s. Discussion must begin with the correctives made by these rock critics to the negative Marxist treatment of mass culture.

I

A Chilean socialist, in exile from Pinochet, told me that the most disturbing thing about living in England was that he couldn't see the class struggle. He reads about it in the newspapers, politicians pronounce that British capitalism is in its worst crisis ever, but all he can see is a complacent and conservative people taking care of business. Except in Northern Ireland, there are few signs of struggle or repression—after the last decade in Chile, Britain seems to be in a state of suspended animation. "Where is the working class?" he asks; "When is something going to happen?"

When ideological forces are working well, as they are still in Britain, they are difficult to observe. The same problem faced another group of socialist exiles forty years ago in the United States: the Frankfurt scholars fled a repressive state for a more advanced capitalist society and found a shadowy working class and the least developed socialist movement anywhere. Little wonder that one of the ob- sessions of the Frankfurt School became mass culture, how it was created, how it worked.¹

Their arguments were remarkably influential. In the thirties, when American intellectuals agonized over joining the Communist party and the New Deal sponsored "people's art," the dominant left ideology was a populism that found authenticity in mass culture and attacked the elitism of high art. The debates about socialist realism and proletarian literature brought aesthetic values, political truths, and mass popularity into an uneasy unity, and for committed artists the problem was not the control of the means of ideological production but, more directly, the correctness of their work, and this was to be judged not against bourgeois or traditional cultural standards but by the spontaneous response of the masses themselves. Antimass arguments came from the right.

By the 1950s the position was reversed. It was the left, led by the Frankfurters, who denounced the mind-numbing trivia, the philistinism, the debilitating political effects of mass culture, and the right, pluralists and defenders of America's cold war honor, who proclaimed the democracy of popular culture, its wealth of choice, its enriching and educational effects. (*Encounter*, as Conor Cruise O'Brien once pointed out, even felt obliged to explain to the world the

noble purpose of horror comics.) The left argument (and variations of it can be found in all Marxist analyses of ideology, those of Gramsci and Althusser as well as Marcuse) was a straightforward combination of social and artistic judgments. The sociological effect of the mass media was an alienated, depoliticized, passive working class; aesthetically, mass art was worthless, but politically it was of great significance, a crucial mechanism by which the capitalist system instilled a habit of thought and life and ensured its reproduction.²

It was the very negativity of this argument that made the experience of the counterculture of the 1960s so exhilaratingly positive. Christgau parodies the result: "Rock and roll, as we all know, was instrumental in opening up the generation gap and fertilizing the largely sexual energy that has flowered into the youth life-style, and this life-style, as we all know, is going to revolutionize the world" (p. 95). The terms of the previous argument were reversed. If straight mass culture was of crucial political significance, then counterculture must be of crucial revolutionary significance. Its art objects, notably rock music, must be of great aesthetic value, and this value must come from the liberating effects of those objects, their ability to politicize, collectivize, and arouse an audience.

This argument doesn't have much credibility for anyone anymore, although different reasons are given for this. The rather supercilious post hoc Marxist point is that it never was credible. A cultural community cannot form a real power base, and anyway, the class basis of the counterculture made it politically suspect from the beginning. But this argument leaves open the question of what sort of social forces do operate in the superstructure. The strength of the counterculture's political claims derived, after all, from the orthodox left view of the power of ideology in American society.

This is evident in the subsequent suggestions of the countercultural radicals themselves. They claim that their position was once credible, but their ideological force was, by various means (including direct repression), diluted and fragmented and then absorbed into the dominant mode of mass cultural production, with fatal results. It is common for rock people to present the history of their music as a continual battle between Rock and Commerce. In the sixties, Rock won; in the seventies, Commerce came storming back and the fight goes on. Listen to Landau, for example:

Rock, the music of the Sixties, was a music of spontaneity. It was a folk music—it was listened to and made by the same group of people. It did not come out of a New York office building where people sit and write what they think other people want to hear. It came from the life experiences of the artists and their interaction with an audience that was roughly the same age. As that spontaneity and creativity have become more stylized and analyzed and structured, it has become easier for businessmen and behind-the-scenes manipulators to structure their approach to merchandising music. The process of creating stars has become a routine and a formula as dry as an equation. (p. 40)

The implication is that the usual negative judgment of mass culture is correct, but rock is, or can be, a special case.

II

The most popular way of distinguishing rock from the rest of mass culture is to claim it as a high art form. The art/mass culture distinction is common in cultural criticism and rests on a series of oppositions: individual sensibility versus lowest-common-denominator consciousness, moral enrichment versus escapism, self-conscious creation versus alienated consumption.³ To claim rock as art means to claim that rock songs and records are demanding individual creations. This raises two problems.

First, rock music, like other works of mass art in "the age of mechanical reproduction," is not made by an individual creator communicating directly to an audience. The basic means of rock expression is the phonograph record, and record making (as opposed to music making) depends on a complex structure of people and machines. Rock critics have had to establish their own version of auteur theory. Landau is most explicit about this: "To me the criterion of art in rock is the capacity of the musician to create a personal, almost private, universe and to express it fully" (p. 15).

The rock auteur (who may be writer, singer, instrumentalist, band, and even, on occasion, record producer or engineer) creates the music with his or her unique experience, skill, and vision. Everyone else engaged in record making is simply part of the means of communication. For many fans it is this process of individual artistic creation that distinguishes rock from other forms of mass music—the Beatles wrote their own songs!—and, as Marcus points out, one result has been the equation in the singer/songwriter genre of art and personal confession: honesty is all.

The second problem is rock's entertainment function. Entertainment, in this account of culture, is neither improving nor instructive; it takes its audience nowhere and comes easy. Art, in contrast, makes people work. (It is this sort of distinction between art and entertainment that Brecht was determined to deny.) One solution to this sort of distinction has been to make rock work, too, to complicate its structure (usually by aping classical music or jazz) and move it (both literally and metaphorically) from the dance hall to the concert hall. But the more subtle response (again echoing film criticism) has been to deny that the immediate reaction to rock exhausts its meaning: formal analysis, the hard work of decoding, is also necessary. Rock can't just be consumed; it must be responded to like any other form of art, its tensions and contradictions engaged and reinterpreted into the listener's experience. Such engagement is intellectual and moral; the results are enriching and can be disturbing. Landau, Christgau, and Marcus are all involved in this process of decoding (if without the formal techniques of structuralism that are beginning to be used by film critics), and, like literary critics, they experience their task as a demanding and responsible one. (The literary analogy is the correct one. Although no rock critic has the simple-minded notion that content can be reduced to lyrics, few—Landau is the exception—seem to have the ability or interest to provide the technical musical analysis of a classical critic.)

But, with their profession firmly established as an honorable one, all these

critics are uneasy. Landau, for example, suddenly declares that "rock is not primarily poetry or art . . . ; rock and roll may be the new music, but rock musicians are not the new prophets" (p. 134). His uneasiness has two sources. First, auteurism is often unconvincing—the image of the individual creator, the *Genius*, is too obviously part of the process by which a Star is born. Even worse, in the very distinction of rock from other mass art, the baby seems to have been flung out with the bath water. As Christgau admits:

I came to understand that popular art was not inferior to high art, and decided that popular art achieved a vitality of both integrity and outreach that high art had unfortunately abandoned. Popular art dealt with common realities and fantasies in forms that provided immediate pleasure—and it was vital aesthetically, as work. And because it moved and was moved by the great audience, it was also vital culturally, as relationship. (p. 3)

From this perspective, the power of rock depends on it *not* being high art. A new distinction is made—between mass culture and folk culture.

III

A distinction between mass and folk culture has always been essential for left theories of art. The oppositions here are community versus mass, collective creation versus fragmented consumption, solidarity versus alienation, activity versus passivity. The argument is that folk art is created directly out of a communal experience. There is no distance between artist and audience, no separation between the production and consumption of art. The cultural basis of folk art is destroyed by the means and relations of artistic production under capitalism. Cultural products become commodities, produced and sold for profit, alienated from both their producers and their users. The resulting processes of taste manipulation and artistic exploitation are made possible by the available technologies of art, the recording techniques that enable cultural objects to be mass produced and individually consumed.⁴

This argument was, in the fifties, central to the ideology of folk music, and placed it in a tradition of live performance in which the performer was not even distanced from the listeners by electric amplification. Pop music was condemned not just for being embedded in the relationships of commercial profit making, but for using the technology of mass production; Bob Dylan, for instance, was booed at the Newport Folk Festival simply for playing with electrified instruments.⁵

Undaunted by the commercial and technological trappings of their music, rock critics assert that it is, despite everything, a folk music: the genuine expression of a collective experience. Landau writes of classic rock 'n' roll: "It was unmistakably a folk-music form. Within the confines of the media, these musicians articulated attitudes, styles and feelings that were genuine reflections of their own experience and of the social situation which had helped to produce that experience" (p. 130). Marcus uses the image of rock as a "secret" that bound a generation and made it culturally independent of its elders. Christgau emphasizes that rock is a source of solidarity and a potential source of action: "If rock and roll is to continue to function politically, it must continue to liberate its audience—to broaden fellow-feeling, direct energy, and focus analysis" (p. 279).

All three writers suggest that it is not so much the lyrical content of rock 'n' roll that makes it relevant to youth as its physicality. Rock's entertainment function—as dance music—is essential to its folk function of giving form to the energy and needs of its users. Critical attention thus moves away from the producers of rock to its consumers, the rock audience. Landau stresses that, anyway, the rock artist is part of this audience: “There existed a strong bond between performer and audience, a natural kinship, a sense that the stars weren’t being imposed from above but had sprung up from out of our ranks. We could identify with them without hesitation” (p. 21). Christgau and Marcus both argue that it is the technology of rock, particularly radio, that enables it to provide a disparate audience with a shared experience:

We fight our way through the massed and leveled collective safe taste of Top 40, just looking for a little something we can call our own. But when we find it and jam the radio to hear it again it isn’t just ours—it is a link to thousands of others who are sharing it with us. As a matter of a single song this might mean very little, as culture, as a way of life, you can’t beat it. (Marcus, p. 115)

Rock music is not confined to ceremonial occasions but enters people’s lives without “aura” and takes on a meaning there independent of the intentions of its original creators. The rock audience is seen not as a passive mass, consuming records like cornflakes, but as an active community, making music into a symbol of solidarity and an inspiration for action.⁶

The work of criticizing rock as folk resembles anthropology rather than literary criticism: rock carries collective meanings, and it is these that must be interpreted. In Christgau’s account of the 1967 Monterey Festival, for example, the musicians and audience are treated as one, equal participants in a folk event:

No one stopped to wonder how soul and rock and blues and funk meshed with the “peace and acceptance” (*Newsweek*) of Monterey. The new rock has no more peace and acceptance about it than the old. To the adolescent defiance of the fifties has been added not only whimsy and occasional loveliness but also social consciousness and the ironic grit of the blues. The big beat has been augmented by dissonance, total volume, and a scientific panoply of electronic effects. But the paradox is on the surface. The music isn’t peace itself; it is a means to peace. It is how the love crowd mediates with an unfriendly environment. (p. 33)

Aesthetic and sociological judgments are, here, fused.

The assumption of the rock-as-folk argument is that rock’s mass audience is not manipulated but has real needs and makes real choices. The music doesn’t impose an ideology, but, in Marcus’s phrase, “absorbs” events, absorbs its listeners’ concerns and values. The problem of this assumption is its circularity—the music is folk music because its audience is a real community, but this community is recognized by its common use of the music.

The way out of the circle is via an independent measure of the rock community, and it is at this point of the argument that the idealism of the rock ideologues becomes evident. Little attempt is made to investigate the material conditions of the rock audience; class is not a concept of much use in rock criticism. For Landau the rock community is youth, plain and simple. He doesn’t (except in terms of immediate, ad hoc, situations) explain why the young in America—or

elsewhere, for that matter—should have generated a set of values that crossed class lines but distinguished generations. Christgau is aware of this problem but veers uneasily between a vanguard theory in which the counterculture is seen as the result of hard political thought and organization, and a populist theory in which the people are always right. In the former argument, rock is heard as the music of youth but not, therefore, as carrying any particular message. Musicians make political choices, too, and our judgment of their music must depend on the choices they make. In the latter argument, all popular art must, by definition, touch on real popular concerns, and real people are rarely concerned with politics but usually with tomorrow’s date or yesterday’s fight with the spouse. Popular art, including rock, can only tell people what they already want to hear, otherwise they wouldn’t listen. And the questions thus raised concern rock not as art or folk music but as ideology.⁷

IV

Christgau’s and Landau’s books are both collections of articles and reviews written for a variety of magazines between 1967 and 1973; the primary concern of both writers was to establish rock’s significance as a cultural force. Marcus takes that significance for granted. His book is “an attempt to broaden the context in which the music is heard; to deal with rock ‘n’ roll not as youth culture, or counter culture, but simply as American culture” (p. 4). In doing this, Marcus shifts attention back to the music makers; his concern is the relationship of rock artists’ visions and the ideological structures within which they work. He analyzes the music of six artists—Harmonica Frank, a Southern white street singer (born in 1908) who claims to have invented rock ‘n’ roll; the blues singer Robert Johnson; the Band; Sly Stone; Randy Newman; and Elvis Presley. What appears at first sight a perverse selection enables Marcus to cover every base: blues and country music, the South and rural America, California and the city streets.

Marcus’s assumption is that his musicians, disparate in background and interests, are equally patriotic: their visions are visions of America. Rock ‘n’ roll is a metaphor for politics, a form of self-expression and a source of democracy. The form/content distinction is dissolved: rock carries collective meanings, but it does more than simply communicate them—in its role as a mass art it symbolizes them. Rock’s vision of America as a political community is symbolized by its creation of the rock audience as a cultural community. Marcus measures the importance of rock ‘n’ roll by the numbers of boundaries it crosses: black music for white folk, white music for black folk, city music for the country, country music for the city. It is precisely the “massness” of its audience that gives rock its ideological force.

All popular art in America functions to provide a sense of community for people fragmented by the reality of competitive capitalism; all popular art involves an ideology of what it is to be “American” (and, by implication, un-American). Marcus distinguishes good and bad popular art by reference to the ideas of American involved. Most mass culture plays safe—American-ness is a bland and shallow acceptance of a life, that the way things are is just dandy. Mass

culture—rock—becomes art when its creator's visions are so individual, so powerful, that they can't be denied, even by mass consumption. The problem for all popular artists is that "if you get what you have to say across to a mass audience, that means what you have to say is not deep enough, or strong enough, to really matter" (p. 132), but, Marcus argues, popular art can communicate even disturbing truths if, in doing so, it exploits the contradictions that are already powerful and disturbing in popular ideology. In doing this, rock becomes a folk music.

The central contradiction of American ideology lies in the concept of equality. In its most immediate form the problem is that the assertion of equality is denied by everyday experience—American society is profoundly unequal in terms of both wealth and power. But, Marcus suggests, there are contradictions even in the American vision of equality: it opposes an individualistic ambition and a sense of private worth to an ideology of community, to the collective values and prejudices that support the unequal in their individual failure. It is this contradiction that Marcus finds expressed in the best rock music: on the one hand, ambition and risk-taking, a sense of style and adventure, a refusal to be satisfied, and on the other hand, a feeling for roots and history, a dependence on community and tradition, an acceptance of one's lot.

Rock 'n' roll music is rooted in the ideology of the American poor, black and white. As the central image of black music, Marcus takes the story of Staggerlee, the gambler who shook off the chains of religion and racism and cautious survival and in his freedom shot a man and became a myth—admired, feared, fated. The central image of white popular music is Elvis Presley, demanding good times and getting them, and finding them all too easy. And as rock 'n' roll music became rock, forced its way into a much wider community of white middle-class youth, its tense combination of dissatisfaction and guilt took meaning as a looser contradiction, between utopianism—California as the promised land—and cynicism—California as the final dead resting place of alien souls.

In many ways, *Mystery Train* reads like an old-fashioned text for an American Studies course. Marcus's America is an ideological place, a product of ideas, not material forces, and his rock 'n' roll is placed in a tradition of idealist political theory inspired by Tocqueville. Like his fellow critics, Marcus is uninterested in the material conditions of the production or consumption of popular art and confines analysis to the superstructural level. If he is hip to the problem of equality as an American ideal, he avoids the problem of fraternity—exploitation, like class, does not feature much in the rock critic's vocabulary. In the end, Marcus's vision of America is of a society not without capitalism or capitalists but without labor. He dreams not of a classless but of a one-class society, in which people are their own producers, meet in the marketplace, and make politics together.

The ideology of the petite bourgeoisie has always been central to American popular culture, with its individualism and fears of organized labor and big capital and state power; what Marcus makes clear is how far this ideology permeates rock culture, too. Rock even draws its rebellious element from bohemianism, and bohemians are petit bourgeois standing on their heads—the same individualism,

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the same paranoias, and a rejection of the social conditions of capitalism that is entirely aesthetic and moral and utopian.⁸

V

What are we to conclude about rock music? The first point to stress (because it is mostly ignored by rock ideologists) is that all rock records, whatever their artistic or folk or ideological status, are commodities, produced, marketed, and sold in the pursuit of profit. But the second point, the point made by all three of these critics, is that while its commodity status may constrain rock's meanings, it does not (*pace* the Frankfurt analysis) determine them. Certainly rock records are churned out, like all mass cultural products, for instant gratification, but it is at least possible for artists to use the forms of mass communication to disturb rather than comfort: mass art can carry critical ideological force, it can expose and work with the contradictions of popular ideology—hence the role of rock music in the counterculture.

In the face of the sophisticated idealism of the best rock critics (and Marcus's book is an astonishing tour de force), socialists have two immediate tasks. The first is to provide a materialist account of leisure. Popular culture is leisure culture, and our understanding of the mass media of entertainment depends on our understanding of leisure. The problem of most current understandings lies in their assumption that people work in order to enjoy leisure. The values expressed in leisure are then treated as independent of work—they are the result of ideological conditions, the product of the manipulation of the leisure industries. But the point that Marx made long ago was that under capitalism, people enjoy leisure in order to work. The function of leisure, its possibilities, is determined by relations of production, and it is this determination that now needs attention. Only by treating leisure as an aspect of production (and not just as an aspect of consumption) will we be able to provide the materialist analysis of the audience that is so obviously missing from the accounts of rock as youth/counter/popular culture.

The second task is to take seriously the argument that mass culture is an expression of popular ideology and not just a means of manipulation. The left has a tendency to be both crude and contemptuous in its treatment of mass culture. Assertions are made about the "meaning" of mass cultural products which are both ignorant and arrogant: the complexity of both the products and their audience's use of them is ignored when, for example, rock music is dismissed by reference to the banality of its lyrics, or when it is assumed (in good positivist social-scientific fashion) that "systematic content analysis" tells us all we need to know about the effects of television or film. More disturbingly, socialists veer alarmingly between believing the best of working-class culture and the worst. One day workers are spontaneously class-conscious and assertive and unforgivable, the next day they are irredeemably racist and reactionary. The truth, of course, is that working-class culture is made up of contradictions and tensions and competing tendencies; it is articulated in fits and starts and fragments. Mass

culture is a source of clues to these contradictions, and we must use it as such. (We need to explain, for example, the dominance of petit bourgeois values in so much of popular art.) And here I am in total agreement with these three rock critics. For the past twenty years I have enjoyed rock music as the most vital form of mass culture, and its vitality has come precisely from its contrary effects—a form of self-indulgence and escape on the one hand, a source of solidarity and dissatisfaction on the other. At one point in the *Grundrisse*, Marx comments that the capitalist, needing purchasers for his products, “searches for means to spur workers on to consumption, to give his wares new charms, to inspire them with new needs by constant chatter, etc. It is precisely this side of the relation of capital and labor which is an essentially civilizing moment, and on which the historic justification, but also the contemporary power of capital rests.”⁹

Cultural commodities may support the contemporary power of capital, but they have their civilizing moments, too.

Notes

1. Obviously the members of the Frankfurt School were interested in popular culture before their arrival in the United States, but it was as a result of their American experience that they made clear the political implications of their cultural theories: “Increasingly, the Institut came to feel that the culture industry enslaved men in far more subtle and effective ways than the crude methods of domination practiced in earlier eras.” See Martin Jay, *The Dialectical Imagination* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1973), pp. 212–218.

2. For American intellectuals and “the popular arts” in the 1930s, see Robert Warshaw, “The Legacy of the ‘30s,” in *The Immediate Experience* (New York: Atheneum, 1961). For the fifties, see Bernard Rosenberg and David M. White, eds., *Mass Culture* (New York: Free Press, 1965). The Frankfurt analysis was eventually popularized by Herbert Marcuse, particularly by his *One-Dimensional Man* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1964). Structuralist Marxism, in most respects an alternative version of Marx to that of Frankfurt, is in basic agreement with the Frankfurt School’s assessment of the mass media. See, for example, Althusser’s “Ideology and Ideological State Apparatus,” in *Lenin and Philosophy* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1971). There are significant differences between the various Marxist schools as to how best to read mass cultural objects, but not about their manipulative purposes and negative political effects.

3. These distinctions were bequeathed to cultural criticism by the Leavisite school of literary criticism. See Q. D. Leavis, *Fiction and the Reading Public* (1932), and F. R. Leavis and D. Thompson, *Culture and Environment* (1933), and more recently, Richard Hoggart, *The Uses of Literacy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1957); Dwight MacDonald, *Against the American Grain* (1962); and Raymond Williams, *Communications* (1962). These days the distinctions are not argued but assumed. See, for example, Pauline Kael, “Art, Trash, and the Movies,” in her *Going Steady* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1970).

4. These distinctions are present in both the Leavisite and Frankfurt analyses of culture (cf. Marcuse’s famous comment to the effect that it’s better to fuck in a field than in the back of a car), and on them rest the cultural practices of most Marxist political parties—hence, for example, the close connection of folk singers and the Communist party in both Europe and America.

5. The ideology of the folk song movement in the 1950s and 1960s was recorded in the magazine *Sing Out!*; see also A. L. Lloyd, *Folk Song in England* (New York: International Publishers, 1968).

6. The only “classical” Marxist critic for whom this argument would have made sense is Walter Benjamin. See his essay “The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction,” in *Illuminations* (New York: Schocken Books, 1969).

7. The problems of reading texts as ideological products have been most elaborately discussed by structural critics: for their analyses of films, see recent issues of *Screen or Film Quarterly*. The only attempt I know at any kind of structural analysis of rock is Andrew Chester, “For a Rock Aesthetic,” *New Left Review* 59 (1970).

8. Several people have discussed the petit bourgeois character of the counterculture and the American new left (e.g., R. Jacoby, “The Politics of Subjectivity,” *New Left Review* 79 [1973]), but without relating this to the general character of American popular culture. One question that this raises for the analysis of rock is its relationship to its source musics—blues on the one hand, country music on the other. How do their values enter into rock? I can only raise such questions here, and point to a fruitful area for future cultural and historical analysis.

9. Karl Marx, *Grundrisse* (London: Penguin Books, 1973), p. 287.