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“A Revolution in Motion”: Advertising and the Politics of Nostalgia

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As part of their “Revolution in Motion” advertising campaign in 1987, Nike introduced the controversial television commercial that featured, as a sound track, the 1968 Beatles song *Revolution*. Located within a contemporary framework of time and place, emotion and message, politics and consumption, and capitalism and pleasure, the commercial can be articulated to a critical debate that has increasingly come to determine our political and affective lives. This paper focuses on the nature of this debate as it has emerged over the last decade and addresses, among other things, the legacy of the 1960s, the rise of the fitness movement, the insertion of the Baby Boom generation into the marketplace, the definition of American quality of life, and the rise of the political New Right.

Music and Collective Memories of History

The category “youth” gets mobilized in official documentary discourse, in concerned or outraged editorials and features, or in the supposedly disinterested tracts emanating from the social sciences, at those times when youth make their presence felt by going out of bounds. (Hebdige, 1988, p. 18)

Life, Liberty and the Pursuit of Happiness

With the end of World War II, advanced capitalist states began to expand their activities in a more interventionist direction. In America it was a bipartisan political philosophy of tripartism that emerged as the dominant interventionist philosophy. Tripartism became the basis whereby a mutual compromise was reached by both capital and labor as each was integrated into a blueprint of the new emerging state (Ingham, 1985).

Entering into the stages of late capitalism required that the state become responsible for reconciling the interests of the major economic blocs in society while also providing for a whole institutional apparatus of individual, family, and public welfare to address social problems. To paraphrase Grossberg (1988), this “corporatist” or “social democratic” compromise established a “consensual politics” (p. 14) whereby the ideological differences between classes took a second-

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ary position to the advancement of the unified but plural interests of society at large. The result was a state infrastructure that was supposed to provide for the most educated and healthy population in American history.

As the postwar boom continued, this massive growth in the state apparatus increasingly came to redefine exactly what was meant by the term quality of life. This was particularly true with regard to the appropriation of the concept of leisure. Entering into this moment of late capitalism, as Gruneau (1984) mentions, it was the concept of leisure that came to represent all the success and happiness of the postwar social democratic formation. With increases in public services and a booming consumer marketplace, leisure became the sign of the broader political and cultural advances in the quality of American life (Gruneau, 1984).

Not that all Americans were so awed by the prospects of this leisure society. While it was the youth of the 1950s and 1960s who celebrated consumer capitalism and the new American versions of the quality of life, it was also this youth that represented the possible dysfunctions associated with the commodification of culture. There was great concern over the repercussions of too much leisure time in the hands of young people. Nowhere was this more eagerly played out than in the way in which the commodities and technologies, the sounds, narratives, and images of rock 'n' roll were consumed and symbolically appropriated by the 77 million Americans born between the end of World War II and 1964, the Baby Boom generation.

A Generation in Revolt

The Beatles emerged in Liverpool and London between 1962 and 1963 heavily influenced by the R & B sounds of James Brown, Motown in Detroit, and Stax in Memphis (Marcus, 1989). But it was with their 1964 appearance on the *Ed Sullivan Show* and a live concert at Shea Stadium in New York City that the "Fab Four" brought their successful and now legendary version of rock to the American shores, beginning what has since been known as the musical "British Invasion." With the postwar Baby Boom under way, the single largest age group in America by 1964 was 17 years of age. It was to this group that the Beatles appealed. Confronting the conventions of adult life, assaulting old fashioned values and behaviors, and reveling in their media image of play and fun, the "lads from Liverpool" became the cultural pied pipers for a whole generation.

By 1968 the Beatles still had much of that same Baby Boomer youth as an audience, but now it was a youth positioned not just by opportunity but by the turmoil associated with the deaths of John F. Kennedy and Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., deeper involvement in Vietnam, and the gathering momentum of the Civil Rights movement. Regardless of their own personal convictions and intentions, the Beatles' music increasingly took on new political meanings in that it came to signify an era of possibility and a broader cultural criticism of both the capitalist establishment and bourgeois morality (Frith, 1981).

I say regardless of conviction and intention because of the Beatles' own ambiguous location within the cultural and political climate of the late 1960s. That ambiguity was evident in the controversy surrounding the 1968 song *Revolution*. Released in August as the "B" side to *Hey Jude*, *Revolution* was interpreted by some cultural critics as a tongue-in-cheek commentary in support of the counterculture movement. But for other critics, the song was interpreted as an attack on the counterculture's more radical elements. What the latter critics

saw as especially revealing was the line "when you talk about destruction, you can count me out." As Robert Christgau of *The Village Voice* stated in 1968, "it is puritanical to expect musicians, or anyone else, to hew the proper line. But, it is a reasonable request that they ought not to go out of their way to oppose it" (Wiener, 1987, p. 13).

The ambivalence and uncertainty surrounding the song was further escalated with the release of the much acclaimed *White Album* in November 1968, two months after the single. The album contained a much slower reflective version of *Revolution* that included the ambiguous line "when you're talking about destruction, you can count me out—in."

A Generation on the Move

In March 1987, as part of their "Revolution in Motion" advertising campaign, Nike introduced what has been to date their most controversial television commercial. Shot on black and white Super 8-mm film and synched to what Kevin Brown, Nike's director of corporate communications, termed "the Beatles classic *Revolution*" (Cocks, 1987, p. 78), the commercial was a montage of real-life athletic moments technologically edited to resemble a nostalgic long-lost family home-movie heirloom. It showed the feeling and exhilaration in the actions and movements of professional athletes such as John McEnroe and Michael Jordan, as well as average sports enthusiasts.

As a rock commercial, it was an attempt to magically recapture feelings of the past, to convey, with the use of rock nostalgia, the collective memory and moods of the 1960s. For music does play an important part in the reappropriation of the past. It does act as a truly nostalgic and active sound track to our everyday lives and memories. Replete with time, music does recapture and apprehend. As the commercial's producers and directors Paula Greif and Peter Kayan put it, the commercial was "a kind of radical sports documentary . . . about emotional moments" (Cocks, 1987, p. 78). Yet the commercial was not simply a nostalgic reentry into generational moments long past. It was also an attempt to affectively reposition those moments onto a contemporary revolutionary stage, albeit a "revolution in motion."

Identifying and Interpreting the Text

A horizontal vista of mobile meanings, shifting connections, temporary encounters, a world of intertextual richness and detail needs to be inserted into the critical model. Complexity needs to be respected. (Chambers, 1986, p. 213)

Despite the ambiguity surrounding the history of *Revolution*, with the release of the Nike commercial there was a great deal of controversy over the nostalgic linking of a 1960s counterculture signifier to 1980s Madison Avenue hype.¹ It

¹Adding to the controversy was the fact that the use of the Beatles' song in a commercial was against the wishes of the surviving Beatles, and was only made possible by Michael Jackson's purchase of Northern Songs, copyright holder of much of the Beatles' music.

was as though the Beatles song had an authentic meaning that signified something far more sacred and important than exercise and the marketing of Nike athletic footwear. But is this the case? Can the meaning, politics, and effects of the song—its identity—simply be read right off its historical surface, as though it is permanently waiting there for the critic to comprehend? Indeed, does a text actually have a true intrinsic meaning?

Communication Studies has told us over the last 20 years that there may be problems in isolating a text, fixing it artificially so as to critically scrutinize it. For the identity of a text can never be essentially given. It is always culturally and historically constructed or forged (Hall, 1986a, 1986b). The identity is always overdetermined by the network of relations in which it is articulated.

By articulation, I follow both Hall (1985, 1986b, 1988a) and Grossberg (1989a) to mean the act of actual production of contexts, the constantly changing process by which both texts and human practices are removed from and inserted into different structures of relationships. Articulation is about:

a connection or link which is not necessarily given in all cases, as a law or fact of life, but which requires particular conditions of existence to appear at all, which has to be positively sustained by specific processes, which is not "eternal" but has constantly to be renewed, which can under some circumstances disappear or be overthrown, leading to the old linkages being dissolved and new connections-re-articulations-being forged. (Hall, 1985, p. 113)

Of course this is not to say that any text is free from its encoded (the intention in its production) and ideological history. For instance, I have indicated that the song *Revolution* had already appeared somewhere, was already positioned. But that positioning is not enough to determine the identity of that text for all time. Neither is it enough to discover the individual ways in which the commercial is decoded, the different ways in which it is read and understood. This is not to discount experience but to state, as Probyn (1987) contends, that "accounts for experience mean little without an idea of the various historical and present articulations at work" (p. 118). So texts and practices need to be interpreted as part of a larger ideological complex or discursive formation (Hall, 1986a). In the end, what gives any text or set of texts its effective meaning is the way it is inserted or articulated into this ideological complex.²

Methodologically, this means that the intertextual nature of contemporary culture, "the proliferation of allied representations in the field of public discourses" (Johnson, 1983, p. 34), must be acknowledged and respected. Analyzing the Nike commercial means moving beyond an isolated look at "the singly, richly coded image," recognizing instead the "*textual thickness and visual density of everyday life*" (McRobbie, 1986, p. 108). It involves mapping the ideological complex or discursive formation into which the text is articulated, a complex made up of a variety of relatively autonomous texts, representations,

²Now this is not to say that a text is just studied by inserting it into an *already* formed context. Rather, it is to say that the text and context do not preexist each other; neither can be understood apart from each other (see Grossberg, 1986).

and practices that are linked together, overdetermined, through recurrent ideological themes, narratives, and images.

Throughout this paper, I argue that this ideological complex exists within a framework of time and place, mood and message, politics and consumption, and capitalism and pleasure—what we might call a politics of nostalgia. And the audience residing at the heart of this complex, at the point of articulation, is the Baby Boom generation.

A Revolution in Motion: Baby Boomers and the Fitness Boom

Music is replete with the meaning of time; Beatles music has to do with revolt, but the fitness game isn't revolutionary, it's conformism. The commercial's an attempt by advertisers to appropriate the missing past. (Blonsky, quoted in Cocks, 1987, p. 78)

When deciding on the music for the Nike commercial, Kelley Stoutt, an account executive who worked on the "Revolution in Motion" campaign at the Wieden & Kennedy advertising agency, stated that "We never considered sound alikes. We're Babyboomers too. This is our music. In our minds, it was the Beatles or no one" (Cocks, 1987, p. 78). Not only are Baby Boomers well represented as advertising copywriters but they are also the cornerstone of the fitness boom that Nike so well represents.

By the early 1980s, the Baby Boom generation was immersed in a fitness boom as the American market provided an array of personalized health and fitness products and services by which individuals could improve the quality of their lives. A stroll through any shopping mall would have shown that new technologies and sophisticated advances in automated production, synthetic material designs, computer modeling, and marketing strategies were producing a boom in the biological self-betterment market. American consumers spent \$3 billion on company fitness programs, \$2 billion on health clubs, \$20 million on Casio sport and exercise watches, \$2 billion on sport medicine, \$600 million on electronic fitness gadgetry, \$500 million on diet pills, \$6 billion on diet drinks, \$2 billion on vitamins, \$1 billion on bikes, \$400 million on stationary bikes, \$3 billion on health foods, and \$50 million on diet and exercise books (Reed, 1981).

It was the Baby Boom generation that brought us a design aesthetic that included bodies created by technology. It was the Baby Boom generation that was capable of supporting new lean cuisine restaurants, health centers, and body boutiques. It was that generation which provided the audience for the rash of secular cathedrals full of technological devices with which to develop the bronzed muscular Adonis-like body. It was the Baby Boom interest in health that led both men and women to fitness. Both stopped smoking marijuana and gave up the newer drugs. Both lowered their caloric consumption, stopped eating red meat, poured in the vegetables and whole grains, ran, worked out, and meditated regularly. For the generation that grew up in the turmoil of the 1960s, health, fitness, and cocooning appeared to overtake sex, drugs, and rock 'n' roll.

Yet much of this view of the quality of life remained nothing but a rearticulated version of the earlier philosophy of self-absorption and personal freedom that actually formed part of the counterculture politics of the 1960s. What is clear

in light of the Baby Boomers' concern with fitness is that one is no longer a marginal faddist and crank to preach against good old American enriched white flour products.

No longer are quality-of-life issues the private property of ecological movements and responses from a counterculture concern with some form of impending apocalyptic nightmare. For instance, when Adele Davis in 1954 introduced her book *Let's Eat Right to Keep Fit*, she was regarded as nothing more than a "village crank" (Reed, 1981). Nutrition was equated with health food "nuts" who frequented health food stores scattered throughout the United States.

Yet similar concerns took Jane Brody's *Nutrition Book* to best-seller status in the 1980s. The book was a lifetime guide to good eating for better health and weight control written by the Personal Health columnist of *The New York Times*. What all this indicates is that signs, goods, and commodities "can be discursively re-articulated to construct new meanings, connect with different social practices, and position social subjects differently" (Hall, 1988b, p. 49).

Nowhere is this positioning of social subjects more significantly played out than in the formation of the Yuppie (young urban professional). Since the emergence of the Yuppie, numerous writers have attempted to define what the term signifies. Yuppies are often regarded as people with incomes of over \$40,000 living in a major city, and working in professional or managerial jobs. If this is the case, then there are, according to Hertzberg (1988) in his definitive article on the Yuppie, about 1 million Yuppies. If on the other hand Yuppies are all of the Baby Boomers who went to college, who live in metropolitan areas, and who work in offices, then there are more than 20 million.

The point is that defining exactly what the term Yuppie means is difficult. In the end, it may be a relatively meaningless task because Yuppies are defined more by personal consumption, style, and attitude than by their social position within a job market. As *Newsweek* magazine put it, Yuppies simply "live to buy" and define themselves by what they own ("The Year of the Yuppie," 1984). For as far as the Yuppie is concerned, status and style have become a commodity resulting in a sensibility and attitude to life that cannot be contained by sociological categories and statistical parameters.

It is this sensibility that so many 1980s advertising executives and creative directors tapped into and which the Nike commercial tried to articulate. For while the market persuades you and provides you with the power to purchase, it also offers you the possibility, the power, of purchasing a change in terms of your quality of life (Chambers, 1986). And nowhere is this change more evident than in the Yuppie concern with improving the body. For the Yuppie sensibility and identity are defined by design aesthetics, the mood of Yuppiedom, be it design of the body, design of the things to put on it, or design of the things to put in it. For the Yuppie the body has come to measure the quality of life. As Glasser (1988) indicated, "We think having the right kind of body means that we've got our lives in control. The non-fat, non-smoking, Nautilus body has become a status symbol. Owning one of those is as good as owning a BMW" (p. 2D).

In this sense, popular discourse has seen the Yuppie emerge as something different from other members of the corporate sector:

They had utopian visions, they assaulted old fashioned values and behaviors.
But now they've merely shifted the focus of their selfishness from marijuana

and LSD to cocaine, from sexual to consumer promiscuity. And they had the moolah to "Do It!" and, after all, "If it feels good, it is good. (Lyons, 1989, p. 117)

It is in this light that Yuppies are commonly seen as the idealists of the 1960s who have sold their idealism to the devil of 1980s commodity culture. Yuppies have been seen to discard the utopian values of the Baby Boomers, instead buying into the consumer promiscuity of the 1980s, selling their idealism in search of life, liberty, and happiness through the marketplace. Thus Yuppies often suffer the double contempt of nostalgic dreaming of the 1960s and the shallowness associated with the consumerism and imagery of the contemporary age.

In the end, is this not what the movie *The Big Chill* and its television spin-off *ThirtySomething* is all about? In the ultimate contradictory act of this commercialization of bohemia, Nike introduced their "Revolution in Motion" advertisement campaign to the sound of the Beatles song *Revolution*. A counterculture signifier ironically becoming part of Madison Avenue hype. Yesterday's radicalism became today's common sense.

Common sense because the discourse of self-betterment associated with the Yuppie, the attitudes and patterns of relations that emerged out of a Yuppie quality of life, have found their way into the everyday life of so many Americans. As Hertzberg (1988) noted, the Yuppie was a "synecdoche—the part that stands for the whole. In a time of prosperity, boundless opportunity, soaring hope et cetera, et cetera, he is the vanguard, the leading edge" (p. 107). The Yuppie was the vanguard of the "Revolution in Motion," and the revolution was successful in that it profoundly overturned past patterns, social experiences, and expectations of what we want out of society.

It is these expectations that have dramatically altered and redefined the way in which we all now judge the quality of our lives. Wellness and lifestyle became the buzzwords of so much of 1980s American popular culture. That legacy is still with us, for as Ewen (1988) has noted, style "can encode our apprehension of the past; it can occupy our present and give shape to our expectations of the future" (p. 258).

In this sense, glorification of the body, absorption with physical beauty, pursuit of a sybaritic lifestyle, and an increased passion for health and youth go beyond simple concerns with the fitness economy. They affect what Americans now expect and hope for in their everyday lives. As Claire Schmais, coordinator of the dance/movement therapy program at the City University of New York's Hunter College, states, "how you act and how you think are one and the same. The way you use your body is a metaphor for your life . . . there is no separation between your body and yourself" (Steinbaum, 1989, p. 113). As Bauman (1983) notes, "the body is charged with the responsibility for success and failure in earthly endeavours, and the urge to 'do something about my life' is most eagerly translated into a precept 'to do something about my body' " (p. 41).

But improving the quality of life via the body is never simply accomplished through personal consumption in the fitness and health market. Any transformation in a national conception of the quality of life is never just about commodities and technologies. Shifts in a nation's consciousness and character are about shifts in cultural life, that is, shifts in the pattern of relations that are established by the social use of commodities and techniques (Hall, 1988a).

This is the importance of Yuppies to changes in American popular consciousness. It is not that everyone in the United States simply wants to be a Yuppie. Clearly, there is a popular sentiment that does not associate itself with the Yuppie way of life in any way, shape, or form. Just as clearly, not all groups have the purchasing power of Yuppies. For instance, Rice (1989) states that over the next decade "Americans aged 35-44 will become the dominant spending force in our culture . . . the purchasing power of the aging boomers will grow an awesome \$195 billion to \$939 billion by 1997" (p. 69).

But it would be a grave mistake to assume that the market only works for a small minority of Americans with influence, money, and status. Obviously the market is skewed, thus preventing the majority of Americans from participating on an equal basis, but this does not prevent them from wanting, and having, certain conveniences and commodities (Hall, 1988b). It is the market of self-improvement that is providing the space wherein people can experience and play out their desires and emotions so as to construct, make sense of, and stabilize their own fragmented and mobile identities.

In this sense there are many Americans who, while not being Yuppies, will locate themselves somewhere in the model of everyday life that has been presented. That model remains a powerful determinant of those people's libidinal and affective lives. So, while not everyone may want to be a Yuppie, it would be wrong not to acknowledge that many of the health and fitness practices are desirable and may be seen to improve the quality of life for very many people.

A Revolution in Motion: The Politics of the Fitness Movement³

"In this present crisis, government is not the solution to our problem," Ronald Reagan said two minutes into his Inaugural address as President of the United States on January 20, 1981. "Government is the problem." (Reeves, 1985, p. 15)

Lyons (1989) has noted that Yuppie is an important political keyword. The Yuppie is, Lyons continues, part of the critical conversation that has taken place in the last decade or so over the "meaning and legacy of the sixties . . . the nature of the American Dream, the integrity of being affluent, the nature of work and its relation to reward, the system of social class and status in America, and the current political conservatism" (p. 11).

There are some important points to be made here. Until recently, popular discourse presumed the Yuppie to be an ex-radical or ex-liberal, part of the Baby Boomers brought up in the 1960s. It was the Gary Hart campaign in 1984 that highlighted the existence of a block of voters that were young and upwardly mobile professionals. Yet, despite that liberal social consciousness, their practices and identities have become increasingly aligned with the ongoing redefinition of a 1980s conservatism.

One reason for such a change is that contemporary conservatism is not con-

³The following discussion is indebted to both my conversations with, and the published work of, Alan Ingham.

servatism in its traditional sense. As Ingham (1985) notes, unlike the post World War II period when an expansion of the interventionist state was viewed as both morally justified and necessary to promote economic growth and national management, contemporary conservative policies were aimed at new issues.

In the 1980s a monetarist economic policy became the order of the day. A supply side system of tax reductions and incentives, spending and regulatory changes, was implemented in an attempt to reduce the supposed excesses of the interventionist state and to encourage the work, innovation, investment, and saving necessary to improve productivity and future growth. For New Right ideologue and best seller Milton Friedman (1980), the quality of American life was equated with the freedom of choice associated with the liberation of the possessive individual through the workings of the free market. For George Gilder (1981), a Reagan favorite, it was the power of business and a return to family values that would forge a new and better quality of life.

With the Reagan election in 1980, the New Right seized the historical moment and became a force to be reckoned with. Public expenditure cuts became the cutting edge of the whole monetarist strategy while deregulation of the marketplace became the key to economic reconstruction. The interventionist state's overtaxed citizen, robbed of incentive through state handouts, would now enjoy the benefits of the free market. It was the market and the increased "freedom of choice" that would be the means by which every individual would be free to improve the quality of his or her life.

The effect was that the budget reallocation process began to squeeze social expense in the form of welfare schemes and entitlement benefits (Ingham, 1985). As Friedman (1980) put it, the new social security in America would be voluntary and not personal: "moral responsibility is an individual matter not a social matter" (p. 106).

In this vision of the quality of life, the individual was seen as the motor force of social development. The social became translated into the personal and, to use Mills' (1959) famous adage, public issues became defined as personal problems. It was this independence of the individual from structural constraints that managed to change definitions of public good, social need, and the quality of life.

Clearly this definition of conservatism was different. New conservatism appeared to stitch up classical *laissez-faire* thinking on the market, freedom, open competition, and possessive individualism to more traditional conservative values on morality, religion, community, family, neighborhood, and patriarchy (Hall, 1988a, 1988b; Reeves, 1985). As Cockburn (1988) reported on the July 1980 Republican convention, "the platform wrap-up is an absolute reversal of the policies normally associated with a Republican government. They have the life-enhancing uplift of New Deal rhetoric" (p. 249).

What this implies is that conservatism is not something whose meaning is etched in stone forever and a day. Conservatism does not represent the same people, proposing the same interests all of the time. There is no necessary correspondence between social position (class, gender, race, generation) and political identity. That correspondence is actively produced.

The Yuppie was a key in this production for two reasons. First, the Yuppie was caught up in the individual self-betterment ethos of the contemporary age. Second, the Yuppie was recognized by a consumerist definition of the quality of life. Together these two became articulated to new conservative self-betterment,

and specifically to the realm of biological self-betterment. That is why ex-liberal Yuppies have been positioned in a politically contradictory way.

In this way, new conservatism did not take the state out of daily life. Through the messages and parables of moral individualism and self-betterment, via the workings of the market, the state rearticulated a new vision of politics back into the everyday. This in turn became the new cultural politics of the popular. It was not so much a politics in which everyone had to experience self-betterment. It was more a politics of feeling. It was a politics that danced in under the stage lights of mood and emotion. It was a politics that encompassed the desires and design aesthetics of social uplift and *self*-improvement. It was a politics that was cocooned in the workings of the market and commodity culture. The message of the market came at us quickly and from all directions, and that message was one of do-it-yourself self-betterment.

This is the wider context in which “public” discussions on the contemporary quality of life took place in the 1980s. Hall provides the following account of the current craze with body maintenance and the widening concern about questions of health and exercise:

This appears as a spontaneous popular movement in civil society, ahead of rather than sponsored by the “authorities”. It can look rather like a mere personalized fad-biological Do-It-Yourself: Very apolitical and retreatist. And yet, they touch very popular attitudes indeed and form part of a distinctively contemporary consciousness. (1988a, p. 217)

Defining and measuring the quality of life now encompasses a self-preservationist conception of the body. Individuals are encouraged to adopt instrumental strategies to biologically better themselves so as to avoid deterioration and thus better the quality of their lives. Such strategies are politically encouraged and applauded by state bureaucracies who seek to reduce health costs by educating the public against bodily neglect, combining such encouragement with the notion that the body is a vehicle of pleasure and self-expression (Featherstone, 1982; Ingham, 1985).

It is this pleasure and self-expression, this attitude, that finds itself articulated across many sites of daily life, from jogging to workout clothes to fashion to diet to everyday social relations. It is an attitude of a new look, a new aesthetic of self-betterment, that itself is articulated to a new quality of life.

Ingham (1985) views this whole rearticulation as a policing of the crisis of the Welfare State, through a policing of the body, a “strengthening of the superego” (p. 50). The self-discipline in biological self-betterment gives the individual a sense of freedom and autonomy. Instead of being the victim of a vast and confusing system run by other people for you, by experts on your behalf, the discourse of self-betterment places the emphasis on a do-it-yourself form of self-help. You become the expert, not only of your own body but of the quality of your own life. The “lean machine” lifestyle of self-betterment is one of independence and self-sufficiency; it signifies pleasure, freedom, success, mobility, and self-esteem. In this sense the biological do-it-yourself discourse of self-betterment provides, via the workings of the market, personal freedom and the opportunity to share in the good life: To control one’s own future, to have “individual control over one’s own destiny” (Wachtel, 1981, p. 14).

A Crisis in the Collective Memory of History

But is this what an achieved utopia looks like? Is this a successful revolution? Yes, Indeed! What do you expect a "successful" revolution to look like? It is paradise. Santa Barbara is a paradise; Disneyland is a paradise; the US is a paradise. (Baudrillard, 1988, p. 98)

At the cornerstone of this politics of self-betterment, this politics of sensibility, lies a broader crisis in the collective cognitive mapping of history. It does seem that new conservatism has defined itself, in part, out of the new articulations of collective historical and social imagery. For instance, as Grossberg (1989b) has noted, if the crisis that new conservatism addressed was constructed via the familiarization of history, politics, and the media, then it should come as no surprise that the crisis has been lived out and addressed in these terms. It has been lived out via its defining affective relations and models of communication.

This is the context, the ideological complex, into which the Nike appropriation of the 1960s is articulated. The "Revolution in Motion" commercial is an example of the politics of recovering collective memory, and hence political sensibility, in an age of polyvalent symbols (Buhle, 1990). In the intertextual workings of the market and consumer culture, in the social message of social uplift and do-it-yourself psychotherapy, the Nike "Revolution in Motion" commercial gets its identity in the powerful affective relations that it articulates to its audience, relations that flicker in a politics of nostalgia. History coming back to us "in the hollow, if appealing, form of a sales pitch" (Ewen, 1988, p. 255).

Throughout the 1980s, our political positions and identities have increasingly been constructed within such a rearticulated version of the past. This seems particularly true of a younger Baby Boom generation that, with the loss of past liberal associations, appear to be making sense of their own practices, identities, and allegiances within the contemporary imagery and narrative of self-betterment. It is on this terrain that the New Right continues to struggle to achieve cultural and political ascendancy.

However, if we are to take the theory of articulation seriously, then we must acknowledge that there is no necessary correspondence between political identity and nostalgia. There is always the possibility of a brighter future. And there is no fundamental reason why a politics of nostalgia has to be a politics of the Right in American popular culture.

For instance, with regard to the Yuppie generation, sex, drugs, and rock 'n' roll may have been overtaken by careerism, cocooning, and fitness, and that may have been articulated to the market, but the meaning, politics, and effects of the latter cannot be guaranteed in advance. Striving for comfort, security, and health, having a cholesterol/fat-free low-sodium diet, drinking wine coolers at Yuppie bars and restaurants, and listening to ambience music on your brand new compact disc player does not necessarily mean you've been duped into conservatism.

Is the desire for travel, nice furniture, computers, VCRs, answering machines, and natural food the guaranteed artifacts of a particular social group or class forever? Are the meanings of these artifacts inscribed into their form, never to be articulated in any other way? Are exercise and fitness, aerobics and jogging, any more conservative than polo and a night at the opera? In fact, is opera itself an art form with its politics inscribed within itself?

Articulation is always a production. It is not a historical given. If there are no guarantees as to how texts, events, and practices are articulated together, and into broader ideological configurations, then there are always alternative articulations.

In the first 1991 edition of *L.A. Style* magazine, Joie Davidow, editor in chief, states,

Welcome to the bleak '90s. We're on the brink of war and the water supply is dwindling. The economy has taken a major nosedive and the Bill of Rights is in increasing danger. The planet is suffering from our wanton excesses, traffic on the freeways is worse every month and the police chief has suggested that casual drug users should be shot. Is this what we have to look forward to? No wonder we're all so nostalgic for the '60s! (p. 16)

With this possibility of a new articulation of the 1960s to perhaps a current crisis being experienced by the New Right, I wish to return to the starting point, the relationship of leisure, youth, and history. It is interesting to ask how a nostalgia for the 1960s might be rearticulated at a time when the sick, the poor, the obese, the unemployed, and the unemployable are increasingly alienated from their bodies; when jogging in parks can lead to rape, mugging, or murder; when one in eight Americans lives in a family whose income is below the federal poverty level; when the mortality rate for black infants is twice that of white infants; when the risk of death for heart disease, still the number one killer of the population, is more than 25% higher for low-income people than for the overall population; when the programs for low-income families and single-parent families comprised less than 10% of federal expenditure but yet sustained 30% of all cuts between 1981 and 1985.

In one of his last lectures, the "Welsh European" Raymond Williams (1989) argued that any measurement of the quality of life should

have to do not only with per capita income or individual choice, but with people's enjoyment of and fulfillment in their work, participation in public life, roles of responsibility as active citizens and contributions to a shared culture through arts, sports, or other kinds of expression. We need to recover the idea of a more dense and participatory culture, not merely endorse the goals of greater individual freedom to choose between commodities or services. (1989, p. 68)

These are important arguments because it is what the politics of the everyday is all about: the ongoing struggle to forge links, to direct the identity of events, texts, and practices, to articulate the existence, meaning, and effect of such events, texts, and practices that are not guaranteed in advance (Grossberg, 1986). In the end they are questions that must involve new visions of the quality of life.

Are there new possibilities of foreseeing a new and brighter future, one in which the meaning and effects of past discourses and practices of fitness and health no longer hold sway? Are there new ways in which popular texts, representations, and practices of the body, the props of the exercise boom, can be linked to new relations of politics, so that the props themselves take on new meanings and effects?

In the movie *Flashback*, Dennis Hopper (himself a symbol of the 1960s and 1980s) says, "once we get out of the '80s, the '90s are going to make the

'60s look like the '50s.' Yet despite the possibilities for alternative articulations to the quality of life, the legacy of a Baby Boomers' politics of nostalgia remains a powerful determinant of the new conservatism that continues to define and shape the place of exercise and the body in the quality-of-life debate in contemporary America.

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NASSH to Convene at Dalhousie University

The North American Society for Sport History will hold its 20th annual convention at Dalhousie University, Halifax, Nova Scotia, May 22-26, 1992. Those interested in presenting a paper or organizing a session should contact or submit abstracts by November 15, 1991, to Prof. Joan Paul, Dept. of Human Performance and Sport Studies, The University of Tennessee, Knoxville, TN 37996-2700.