

PLYMELL, John - The Last of the Moccasins

The remarkable experience of the late fifties and sixties remains in the American life as a scar which, "like a medal", is pleasant to our eyes and "easy to show". The American spirit was deeply touched by the anxious search for new values and styles as it had never been before. The result? A fertile artistic production-poetry, music, novels - which subsequent generations could not neglect.

The pushing and to a certain extent destructive wish of abandoning or escaping from the materialistic American way of life, recently deeply involved in the Vietnam war, International imperialism and national accumulation of capital, produced an anxious exploration of spiritual values. But how could this emergent generation react against the impersonal and machine-like world? Many alternative solutions came up. The first one was the insatiable desire of breaking the routine of everyday life through new experiences. Bumming all over the country, to and from places, all the time, until a California could be found to be their home.

Another possible move into spiritualization was introduced by the use of drugs, acid, LSD etc. . . Fantastic dreams, marvelous and terrible dreams never heard of before could be produced by a narcotic chemical provocation of the brain cells. In this context, it is clearly understood why a book like Naked Lunch, by W. Burrough was so popular in the underground of the California of the sixties.

Art was another choice. Open public poetry readings became popular. The number of poets and writers and painters grew significantly, and got together to get their poetry known to the public. Burrough, Ginsburg, Kerouac are just three examples of this period. In fact, a large number of other writers could be mentioned as representatives.

In an impersonal world what is needed are relations which deeply involve people one with another, so that intensity of feeling and high spiritual proximity can be reached. It is this

attitude which is highly responsible for the liberalization of sex and also for the expression of sex-maniac attitudes and tendencies, which seem to have been commonplace at the time.

If the American society's philosophy was machiavelic, pragmatic, materialistic and utilitarian, what kind of philosophy could replace it and offer a satisfactory alternative. Some tried to stick to Hayakawa, a well-known Japanese-American semanticist, all of them, however, turned their eyes to the lands of the rising sun - India and China, actually. It is by this time that Zen becomes popular and yin and yang become a symbol of the search for spiritual values in a world hardened by materialism.

Plymell's book - The Last of the Moccasins - describes the genesis and the appocalipsis of this movement. The murder of John Kennedy and the arrival of Johnson confused the nation and repressive measures started curtailing the free expression of art and life. Acid has by now become a fashion and what once meant to be a refusal of cooperation, a fight, now means alienation in the bad sense of the word. The Last of the Moccasins will be worn by those who understand the social implications of their attitudes, who see the value of the worker's unions, the alienation of work, the international imperialism carried on by the USA, the balance of forces and the problem of Indian and human exploitation. I agree with one of Plymell's critics: it is a 'sad book', but it is worth reading.

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