

*Anti-Disciplinary Protest: Sixties Radicalism and Postmodernism,*  
by Julie Stephens  
(Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 1998)

Miri Sonnabend\*

The decade of the 1960s has inspired many literary works, both popular and scholarly. It was a time which has come to be considered analogous to radicalism. Julie Stephens suggests that much of the literature has focused on the failure or demise of this radicalism, the breakdown in the revolutionary model of political change and the end to any possibility of grand social transformation.

In *Anti-Disciplinary Protest*, Stephens suggests a kinship between sixties radicalism and post-modernism, focusing on 'the sixties' as a particular constellation of ideas about political action and social change. She develops a theoretical framework for conceptualising the relationship between the sixties and later political and theoretical developments. The book concentrates mostly on the American experience of the decade.

The concept of 'anti-disciplinary politics' is detailed, establishing its relevance as a reconceptualisation of the radicalism of the period. Various expressions of these politics are then discussed, including the theatrical antics of the Diggers and Yippies, and the use of a 'countercultural' India during the period. The desire to break down the distinction between politics and culture, and between art and everyday life is examined, returning finally to an analysis of this account of the sixties and its problematic role in genealogies of post-modernism. The book concludes with an alternative reading of the relationship between sixties radicalism and the contemporary political/theoretical field.

Sixties radicalism, and its drawing on countercultures and everyday life, have been regarded by many as a general failure. Stephens asks us to look at some of the lasting effects of the era, in particular its legacy in the area of 'rights'. It has compelled the questioning of established norms and the consideration of alternatives. *Anti-Disciplinary Protest* provides a useful framework for understanding this significant time. ●

---

\* BA (Hons) LLB, Graduating 1999, University of New South Wales.