

## Preface

I was barely a teenager when the counterculture began to blossom in rural Maine. Long-haired, poncho-clad hippies from Boston, New York, and Providence began to appear in Waldo County, purchasing or renting old farmsteads and constructing strange, angular "hippie houses" deep in the woods. Of course, the mass-mediated *concept* of the hippie was familiar to us Mainers, as was the music of the popular rock-and-roll bands of the time, and some of the more adventurous of my older brothers' peers had already begun to grow out their hair, smoke marijuana, and talk of revolution. 1

But this infusion of people from afar transformed the area for those of us who were open to new possibilities. Like so many around me, I was at first suspicious of these outsiders—but I was gradually won over. They awakened in me a curiosity about why and how my culture was as I found it, and, through their politics and their cosmopolitan interests in the arts, they suggested alternatives that questioned many of my own culture's deepest premises. They pointed me in the direction of the life of the mind. It was my good fortune that a classical guitarist arrived from Manhattan in 1975. I showed up for the first group lessons he offered at my high school, and he steered me immediately into his private tutelage. Lessons went on for, in his words, "as long as they needed to," and they explored not only the music itself, but also the perspective on the world that artistic expression affords. He charged me what I could afford to pay, which, often, was nothing at all. He also encouraged me to "graduate" from his tutelage—to experience a larger world beyond rural Maine. 2

Eventually I took his advice and found my way into college in Minnesota, and there I came to know radical feminists who combined intellectual sophistication and community activism with the empathic qualities that had drawn me into the study of music. They seemed to know something I felt I needed to know: how to integrate a hard-headed realism with a compassionate heart and strong hands. They also offered a critique of countercultural sexism that revealed gender as a cultural premise that even my hippie mentors had largely overlooked. I wasn't sure what to do with what they shared with me; I quickly discovered that I lacked the temperament for activism. But as it became clear that a bicycling accident had blocked my further progress in musical studies, I entered the workaday world and read feminist theory and women's history, following my nose. The encouragement of friends guided me toward graduate school. 3

So in many ways this study of countercultural masculinity has been, for me, a coming to terms with the roots of my intellectual identity. By the time I began hearing of 1960s radicalism, hippiedom and New-Left activism had already become part of a larger entity, "the Movement." Without realizing it, I 4

absorbed—mostly from the sidelines—the deep fusion of hip and leftist stylistics that informed the protest culture on my college campus. Only later, through the process of my own research and with guidance from scholars before me, did I excavate and sort out, as competing tendencies within the Movement, the materialist radicalism of the New Left and the philosophical idealism of the counterculture. I wasn't there to witness the process of their fusion, and it will always be history to me. But now, I'm pleased to say, it is *my* history.

There are some practical matters to consider before dipping into the text that follows. Hip iconoclasm extended to orthography, and I render quotations from primary sources as they appear in the original, largely without resort to the admonitory *sic*. Additionally, in the pages that follow, I employ a number of terms for which historians have yet to arrive at settled usage. The term *counterculture* entered the scholarly lexicon (spelled *contraculture*) in 1960, through the work of sociologist J. Milton Yinger. In 1969, historian Theodore Roszak popularized the term.<sup>1</sup> Since Roszak, *counterculture* has been construed in contradictory ways: broadly, to include all of the movements of youth radicalism comprised primarily of Euro-Americans in the 1960s and 1970s (the understanding that I absorbed in Maine and Minnesota); or, more narrowly, as that idealist dimension of Euro-American youth radicalism that rejected the instrumental politics of the New Left, which is the meaning I intend in this book.<sup>2</sup> I use *the Movement* when referring to the broader spectrum of youth radicalism.

I also use the term *hippie* (along with *counterculturalist*, *head*, *freak*, and *longhair*) to designate those individuals engaged in countercultural radicalism. Hippies used all of these terms, except for *counterculturalist*, as forms of self-reference. By 1967, however, many had come to reject *hippie* as a label, feeling that its profligate use by the mass media and exploitation by commercial interests had rendered it worse than useless as a term of opposition.<sup>3</sup> For better or worse, however, it persists as the most widely recognized designation.

Hippies engaged in cultural opposition to the status quo—the latter, like the former, a complex phenomenon that they reduced to shorthand for the sake of convenience. They called the rejected way of life *straight society* and referred to those who practiced it as *straights* (or, occasionally, *civilians*). Throughout this work, *straight* serves as an antonym to *hip*, and not as a reference to sexual identity or orientation. I use the term *derepression* to denote counterculturalists' desire to reverse what they saw as the subordination of "nature" to culture, which, in their view, represented not progress, but decline. Hippies inherited this conception from postwar avant-garde circles. Historian Marshall Berman traces it back to Rousseau and his contemporaries.<sup>4</sup>

I find the term *derepression* particularly useful because it captures the influence

of popularized Freudianism on American bohemianism.<sup>5</sup> Often not attuned to the finer distinctions of Freud's theories in their original form, midcentury bohemians emphatically rejected Freud's argument for the sometime-necessity of repression of desire. In the 1950s, Herbert Marcuse gave this rejection an intellectual rigor it often lacked in late-night conversations in coffeehouses and artists' lofts. Although Marcuse wrote of *desublimation* rather than *derepression*, the latter captures the sense in which many American bohemians understood Freudian concepts.<sup>6</sup>

This rejection of the necessity for the repression of desire informed the midcentury "sexual revolution," embodied in the 1960s by organizations such as the Sexual Freedom League. Michel Foucault's now-famous analysis of the "repressive hypothesis" criticizes the belief that the Victorians repressed sexuality in the name of religious moralism and that the science of sexuality served to liberate the modern mind from Victorian superstition. Historian Beth Bailey has demonstrated that hippies numbered among the leading exponents of a "sexual revolution" grounded in this hypothesis—actually, one of several concurrent sexual revolutions, each with its own aims and trajectory.<sup>7</sup> Yet it would be confusing to speak of the repressive hypothesis as the essence of hip cultural radicalism, because the countercultural brief against straight society included much more than attitudes toward sexuality alone. In *derepression* I find a term sufficiently broad to match the scope of hippies' social concerns, and one that foregrounds their prioritizing of the transformation of consciousness over the instrumentalist approaches favored by the New Left.

It is important to note that hippies did not use the term *derepression* to describe their activism. They, like many in the New Left, used words such as *liberation*, *deschooling*, *deconditioning*, and *reimprinting* to denote their project of transforming Everyman into the Noble Savage.<sup>8</sup> The several advantages of *derepression* will be lost if readers do not take care to note that this term represents my interpretation of their activism, and not theirs.<sup>9</sup>

I must warn readers that a good deal of salty language lies ahead. I doubt that any honest historian could analyze hippies' thinking and actions regarding masculinity without representing their sexual-liberationist celebration of "filthy speech," their homophobia, and their racism (including the racism sometimes implicit in various romantic, wishful, and ostensibly *anti-racist* constructions). Some readers may respond viscerally to this content. I hope that they will, nevertheless, understand that my intent is to represent the past accurately, not to defend it. The historical record of the counterculture is one of aspiration to cultivate the best in human beings, but it is also a record of the sordid deeds and speech-acts that sometimes followed in the wake of those aspirations. It is my hope that, by presenting the countercultural legacy as a mixed one, we who come

after will be able to select from it those elements that may yet help us to deal justly with one another.

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**Notes:**

**Note 1:** Michael William Doyle, "The Haight-Ashbury Diggers and the Cultural Politics of Utopia, 1965–1968" (Ph.D. diss., Cornell Univ., 1999), 450, citing J. Milton Yinger, "Contraculture and Subculture," *American Sociological Review* 25, no. 4 (October 1960): 625–35; Theodore Roszak, *The Making of a Counter Culture: Reflections on the Technocratic Society and its Youthful Opposition* (Garden City, N.Y.: Anchor Books, 1969).

**Note 2:** Peter Braunstein and Michael William Doyle, introduction to *Imagine Nation: The American Counterculture of the 1960s and '70s*, ed. Peter Braunstein and Michael William Doyle (New York: Routledge, 2002), 5–8.

**Note 3:** This same sentiment animates the discussion of Braunstein and Doyle, introduction to *Imagine Nation*, 11.

**Note 4:** Marshall Berman, *The Politics of Authenticity: Radical Individualism and the Emergence of Modern Society* (New York: Atheneum, 1970).

**Note 5:** Richard Cándida Smith, *Utopia and Dissent: Art, Poetry, and Politics in California* (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1995); Paul A. Robinson, *The Freudian Left: Wilhelm Reich, Geza Roheim, Herbert Marcuse* (New York: Harper and Row, 1969).

**Note 6:** Herbert Marcuse, *Eros and Civilization: A Philosophical Inquiry into Freud* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1955).

**Note 7:** Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality: An Introduction*, trans. Robert Hurley (New York: Vintage, 1990). One work exemplifying the deep scholarly commitment to the repressive hypothesis is Paul [A.] Robinson, *The Modernization of Sex: Havelock Ellis, Alfred Kinsey, William Masters and Virginia Johnson* (New York: Harper and Row, 1976; reprint, Ithaca: Cornell Univ. Press, 1989). Beth Bailey, "Sexual Revolution(s)," in *The Sixties: From Memory to History*, ed. David Farber (Chapel Hill: Univ. of North Carolina Press, 1994), 235–62.

**Note 8:** Braunstein and Doyle, *Imagine Nation*, 15.

**Note 9:** *Derepression* carries its own specialized meanings in Jungian psychology and genetics, but my usage will be readily distinguishable from that employed by those other specialties. A student of Marcuse has made the investigation of derepression, in its Jungian sense, his life work. See Michael Clyde Washburn, "The Problem of Self-Knowledge and the Evolution of the Critical Epistemology: 1781 to 1787" (Ph.D. diss., Univ. of California, San Diego, 1970); idem, *The Ego and the Dynamic Ground* (Albany: State Univ. of New York Press, 1995; reprint ed., Boulder, Colo.: NetLibrary, 1999); idem, *Transpersonal Psychology in Psychoanalytic Perspective* (State Univ. of New York Press, 1994; reprint ed., NetLibrary, 1999).